SCHOOL Drop-Out and Out-of-SCHOOL CHILDREN in Namibia

A NATIONAL REVIEW 2015 (ABRIDGED VERSION)
Since 2010, UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) have been working with governments worldwide to address the challenges of out-of-school children or those who are at risk of dropping out. In 2015, Namibia joined more than 50 countries to complete a report on children who are at risk of dropping out of school or who have dropped out of school.

This report investigates a national problem in our country: children who are out of school (or out-of-school children, OOSC). It focuses mainly on children who are out of primary school and secondary school, the main issues out-of-school children face, and to further research the problem in Namibia. The main objectives of this report are:

1. To find out who the out-of-school children are
2. To understand why they do not go to school
3. To discuss the current policies for out-of-school children
4. To suggest solutions for these problems

“The School Drop-out and Out-Of-School Children” Report follows a similar format to UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on Out-of-School Children (OOSC) compiled around the world. Information from the 2011 census and the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) was used in this report.

These sources of information allowed us to understand why children are dropping out of school and what we can do to prevent this or ensure that children return to some form of education. Other sources of information used in this report include: literature reviews, surveys from selected regions, interviews with school principals, parents, community-based organisations, out-of-school children, and, a questionnaire sent to school children. These sources of information allowed general and specific insights into the factors which contribute to children being out of school.
Who is not in school?

The research shows that there is fairly good access to schools and that only a small number of children do not stay in school. However, there are major areas of concern, as the graph shows.

From the graph we can see that large numbers of children from the age of 15 years start dropping out of school. This includes many grade 10 learners.
Can we describe children who are at risk of not going to school?

Children who find it difficult to access schools will also find it difficult to complete school. That is why we need to know which groups of children in particular are at risk of not going to school in the first place, or who are at greater risk of dropping out of school before completing their education due to circumstances outside of their control.

Namibia’s National Policy Options for Educationally Marginalised Children (2000) identified thirteen groups of children most likely to be unable to access schools within the country. They are:

- **1.** Children of farm workers
- **2.** Khoisan children from remote rural areas
- **3.** Ovahimba children from remote rural areas
- **4.** Children living on the street
- **5.** Working children
- **6.** Children in informal settlements
- **7.** Children in resettlement camps
- **8.** Children in refugee camps
- **9.** Children with special educational needs
- **10.** Overage children
- **11.** Children in conflict with the law
- **12.** Orphans
- **13.** Teenage mothers
The first three groups namely children of farm workers, Khoisan, and Ovahimba children are unable to access schools because they live in remote areas. This makes education more expensive for them because parents have to pay for transport to the school as well as accommodation at the schools.

The San and Ovahimba are historically semi-nomadic, meaning that they move with the season of the year. This continuous movement is a challenge for children who want to attend schools. There has, however, been some progress in making sure children from such communities have access to the education system through the use of mobile schools.

Figure 2 shows, school attendance rates are low amongst the San (red dotted line) and Otjiherero (green dotted line) speakers, which include the Ovahimba. Leaving school early is particularly problematic amongst speakers of Nama / Damara (yellow dotted line).
The Seven Dimensions of Risk:
Understanding why children are not at school or at risk of dropping out.

UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics developed the global initiative on out-of-school children and set five dimensions for measuring the number of children who are out of school as part of the global initiative on OOSC children. Namibia has added two dimensions in its country report in order to include learners in secondary phase. These dimensions are:

- **Dimension 1** – Children of pre–primary age who are not in pre–primary or primary school;
- **Dimension 2** – Children of primary age who are not in pre–primary, primary, or secondary school;
- **Dimension 3** – Children of lower secondary age who are not in primary or secondary school;
- **Dimension 4** – Children in primary school at risk of dropping out before completing primary school;
- **Dimension 5** – Children in lower secondary school at risk of dropping out before completing that phase;
- **Dimension 6** – Children of senior secondary age who are not in primary or secondary school;
- **Dimension 7** – Children in senior secondary school who are at risk of dropping out.

The seven dimensions of risk can be shown as follows:
Below are the numbers which show us exactly how many children are out of school or at risk of dropping out of school in Namibia. The numbers are given according to the dimension of risk, that is to say, depending on the age of the children.

### Not in school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of risk</th>
<th>Number of out-of-school children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 1</td>
<td>13,082</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dimension 2</td>
<td>36,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 3</td>
<td>25,308</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dimension 6</td>
<td>29,294</td>
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</table>

### At risk of dropping out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of risk</th>
<th>Number of out-of-school children</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 4</td>
<td>41,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 5</td>
<td>34,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 7</td>
<td>22,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see, there were 103,768 children out of school in Namibia in 2011 in pre-primary, primary and secondary phases. An additional 99,200 were at risk of dropping out.
Although parents say that education is important for their children, there are times when there is no parental support for children who want to attend school. In rural areas, and in poorer communities, parental support is not strong enough to make sure that children go to school and stay in school. This may be because parents think it is more important for children to herd cattle or other animals, or for girls to stay at home and look after their younger sisters and brothers.

**Parental Support**

**Learner Pregnancy**

Despite policies which encourage pregnant girls to continue with their education, learner pregnancy continues to contribute to young girls dropping out of school.

The current levels of learner pregnancy as well as the discrimination which pregnant girls face also add to this problem. Some people feel that girls who have a child must stay at home and not continue with their education.

What causes children to be out of school?

**Bottle**

Transport to schools and accommodation at schools are two very important issues that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture is working to solve.

Namibia is a large country and its population is spread out. These two factors make it very difficult to take schooling to every child in the country.
Though Namibia has experienced high levels of growth, poverty remains a problem in the country. Poverty and unemployment have an impact on drop-out rates when they are combined with the costs of sending children to schools further from home, or when schools nearby do not provide secondary education.

Poverty can be seen in the high levels of stunting and malnutrition, which is one of the reasons why the school feeding programme is contributing to increased school attendance in primary schools.
For children with a disability, access to classrooms is restricted because of infrastructure (such as for those in wheelchairs) or because of the fear of being discriminated against because of their disability.

Principals also report that learners with special needs, such as the visually impaired, often enroll late. This leads to them being over-aged in their grade and leaving school earlier due to discrimination.
Access to basic services such as sanitation, water, and electricity are problematic in some schools within the country. The absence of these services at some schools makes the learners’ education particularly challenging given the health risks that come with not having them. Providing these services at all schools is important for teacher and learner morale, academic achievement, and keeping children safely in schools.

One important factor limiting school enrollment is that children who fail grade 10 are not allowed to repeat that grade, unless specific conditions apply. Every year, about 16,000 children drop-out of school after failing grade 10, more than in any other grade.

A related problem is the high rate of repetition throughout the school system. This problem is being addressed by a policy which states that a child may only repeat a grade once per phase.

High rates of repetition, however, indicate the need to strengthen the quality of education in the country.
Push and pull factors affecting school-going children

**Push**

Factors which drive children out of school or prevent them from attending school.

1. **DISABILITY**
   - School environment not conducive to learning for disabled learners.

2. **NO SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME**
   - No resources for school feeding programmes.

3. **EARLY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**
   - Invest and ensure on-time primary school enrollment.

4. **SAFE SCHOOLS**
   - Promote a school environment conducive to learning.

5. **REPETITION**
   - Repeating grades because of age difference.

**Pull**

Factors which keep children in school.

1. **QUALITY EDUCATION**
   - Invest in teacher quality.

2. **SAFE SCHOOLS**
   - Promote a school environment conducive to learning.

3. **DISTANCES**
   - Walking long distances to attend school.

4. **UNIVERSAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**
   - Ensure that all children will be able to complete a full course of primary and secondary education free of charge.

**Notes:**
- *early school enrollment*
- *invest and ensure on-time primary school enrollment.*
- *safe schools*
- *no school feeding programme*
- *repetition*
5. **QUALITY SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME**
   Allocate more resources to school feeding programmes.

6. **LEARNER PREGNANCY**
   Leaving school early because of pregnancy.

7. **WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)**
   Unhygienic facilities to use at schools.

8. **QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE**
   Invest in quality buildings and transport services for learners.

9. **POVERTY**
   Unable to afford basic necessary school items.

10. **SOUND AND WELL-IMPLEMENTED POLICIES**
    Invest in quality education systems and good learning facilities helping learners achieve their goals.
## What is the way forward?

Some recommendations on the bottlenecks.

### SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Early grades should be taken closer to the population where it is possible. Not having schools near people’s homes has serious consequences on young children’s social, emotional, and mental development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schools which only offer the first few grades, and not the full primary phases, should be extended to higher grades to make it possible for children to stay in the same schools near their homes in order to complete their primary schooling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More school hostels need to be provided to make sure private hostels, or children having to live in private arrangements near schools, can be avoided.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Hostels need more money to improve their quality so that they become attractive to children who have no other options allowing them to attend public school with a hostel.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Particular attention needs to be given to the large proportions of out-of-school children in the Kunene and Kavango regions.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Further research is needed to find solutions for the low school participation rate amongst the San and Ohavimba communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Further attention needs to be given to make sure that the official pregnancy policy is implemented and supported by teachers and education officials. This policy is being blamed by many for “creating” the learner pregnancy problem in schools. Discrimination makes it difficult for girls who have become pregnant to return to school, or if they do, to be fully accepted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Greater attention needs to be given to sex education to reduce learner pregnancy.</td>
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### INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>To improve quality of service delivery, communities need to be involved. This is important in dealing with matters related to learner pregnancy, bullying, and violence in schools. The communities around the school can also play an important role in helping schools to address the issues of out-of-school children in the neighbourhood. Without the support of parents and the community education cannot flourish.</td>
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### SCHOOL FEEDING

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>School feeding needs additional attention and financing at primary school level since it is an important source of nutrition for poor children in a country where malnutrition is widespread. The current cost of N$1 per child, per day, for food purchases shows that raising the costs or funds would not be difficult for the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>School feeding should be expanded to secondary schools, following the improvement of primary school feeding programmes.</td>
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### ECD AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ECD and pre-primary need more attention, but it is important that the focus should not only be on simply expanding numbers, but on improving the quality of existing programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DATA COLLECTION

Good census and Educational Management Information System (EMIS) data is important to understand the problems of out-of-school children. There are two main areas in which data can still be improved.

Recommendation 18
A dedicated investigation is needed to learn more about disabled children, as available data in this area are weak.

Recommendation 19
Greater attention should be given to removing ambiguity in responses regarding school attendance. For example, it is currently not quite clear whether some individuals are in pre or primary schools. More worryingly, the distinction between attending schools in the conventional sense (for example, up to grade 12) and other educational institutions (such as vocational or technical training or even universities), becomes blurred at older ages.

EXAMINATIONS AND CURRICULUM

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>School testing does not appear to inform teachers of when interventions for learners should be carried out. Better testing and support are needed for learners who perform poorly. This will improve the education quality, reduce repetition and keep more children in schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Junior Secondary Certificate must remain a minimum academic qualification despite the fact that so many children fail grade 10. Research on the high rates of failure will provide a solution to the problem.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>The restriction stating that learners who fail grade 10 may not continue in public schools needs to be ended or at the very least, the age limit for repeating needs to be changed. This would require additional places to be created in the school system. This is an important way of making sure children do not drop-out of school whilst there are chances to progress further.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Thought needs to be given to the establishment of a grade 10 curriculum providing options for children who are interested in the vocational or technical careers. This would be difficult to put into place in all schools but it should be considered as a way of helping some children to receive appropriate practical skills instead of pure academic education. Combining school and distanced-based curricula may be an option.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>More attention needs to be given to Mathematics education in many schools, as weak Mathematics often results in children failing the grade 10 and the grade 12 examinations.</td>
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