



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Remove fees and other hidden costs of education

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Venezuela, Zimbabwe etc.

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Governments, World Bank, GPE

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Removing primary and secondary school fees combined with school grants and scholarships to offset costs

6. What makes it a best practice? *

It increases enrolment and extends years of schooling, especially for children from low-income households

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Removing primary and secondary school fees has affected all school-age children, with bigger effects on children from low-income households. School fees and other hidden costs of education is one of the major barriers of dropout and non-enrolment for children from low-income households. The objective of this policy is to abolish all fees so that no child would be denied access to school because of an inability to pay. The fees that were abolished had covered most of the nonsalary financing (a small amount) available at the school level.

In the past decades, countries that implemented fee-free primary and secondary education policies, through removing school fees and providing schools with replacement funding, have seen remarkable increases in enrolment and years of schooling – as studies showed in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Venezuela, Zimbabwe (Center for Global Development 2022; GEMR 2020; World Bank 2009). Studies also show bigger enrolment changes for children from lower-income households—in Pakistan (Alderman, Orazem, and Paterno 2001), Peru (Gertler and Glewwe, 1990), Madagascar (Glick and Sahn 2006), and South Africa (Borkum 2012; Garlick 2013) (Center for Global Development 2022). Gender parity index continued to improve as girls' enrolment increased in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique (World Bank 2009). In Tanzania, in addition to direct effects on increasing enrollment, free secondary school has also had spillover effects on primary school performance (Sandholtz 2021). Students who could suddenly afford secondary school did better on exams at the end of primary school. (Center for Global Development 2022).

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Although in the past some countries announced fee abolition with little prior planning (such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Malawi), many countries (for example, Ghana and Mozambique) did some prior testing of the provision of support to schools before scaling up fee abolition to all primary schools. Fee abolition is combined with capitation grants directly provided to schools, sometimes training material and school meal provision, per student head-count. In most countries, the free-fee policy applies to public/government-run schools, while in some cases, the policy includes private schools (e.g. Kenya and Malawi), or utilizes public-private partnerships and relies on private provision to meet the increasing demand for schooling (e.g. Uganda). Tanzania extended its Fee Free Basic Education Policy to lower secondary education in 2015. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and other line ministries, and district administration and school leadership are the key implementation actors. International development partners and donors are important collaborators. Countries receive financial and technical support from donors such as the World Bank.

Fee-free primary and secondary education policy implies a significant increase in the education budget. A simulation exercise estimated that full implementation of the fee-free policy for lower secondary education in Tanzania is likely to lead to an almost three-fold increase in the annual cost of lower secondary education by 2024 if the current model of inputs – for example, current pupil/teacher ratios, levels of capitation grants – is maintained, which further concluded that such a rapid increase in costs is unlikely to be sustainable and is likely to lead to inconsistent implementation and inequitable outcomes (World Bank 2019). Indeed, studies on fee-free education policy in many countries have noticed that the grant provided to schools are insufficient to cover the cost of school.

However, in the case of Tanzania, the MoEST is developing a revised School Infrastructure Strategy which would include strategies to reduce cost and the use of resources can be focused on those facilities that offer the best value in terms of learning. Some examples include reducing the use of boarding schools, providing teacher housing only when most necessary, introducing multi-science laboratories, employing classroom libraries, rather than dedicated library buildings, in new schools, making better use of existing infrastructure, and using teachers more effectively. (World Bank 2019).

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

Policy and programs that remove school fees and other hidden costs of education for all children have a transformative impact on the education and opportunity of children. The Fee Free Basic Education Policy in Tanzania resulted created a 'surge' of new students entering primary education: The intake of students into Standard 1 rose from 1.5 million in 2014/15 to 2.1 million in 2015/16 and 2.0 million in 2016/17, as large numbers of overage students entered the system in response to the policy. It also increased the transition to secondary school from an average of 55 percent in 2015/2016 to 70 percent in 2016/17. It is estimated that the transition rate to rise to 80 percent and lower secondary enrollment to increase by more than 50 percent by 2025. (World Bank 2019).

Free primary and secondary education in Ethiopia was announced in 1994 increased schooling for affected children by an average of 0.7 years. Consequently, each additional year of schooling then increased literacy by 12 percentage points, HIV knowledge by 5 percentage points, and the likelihood of knowing an HIV testing location by 6 percentage points. The policy also reduced a woman's preferred number of children by 0.8 and increased her likelihood of working professional or skilled jobs by 6 percentage points (Chicoine 2020). Other studies have found even greater post-policy increases in educational attainment for Ethiopian women, with increases of 0.24 years for those who were eligible for free primary school at 13 and an additional 1.5 years for women eligible by age 7 (Moussa and Omoeva 2020). The same women also experienced a 10-percentage point reduction in teen births and a 1.5 percentage point increase in salaried employment. Eligible women were 6 percentage points less likely to marry and have a baby before adulthood (Pradhan and Canning 2015). (Center for Global Development 2022)

The transformative impact is particularly for children who otherwise would not attend school. Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2021) report on a randomized trial of scholarships covering the cost of fees for senior high school (SHS) in Ghana. They find much larger effects on enrollment and attainment, increasing the probability of ever enrolling in SHS by 25 percent and of completing SHS by slightly more. Notably, the study population here included students who passed the entrance exam to SHS but failed to enroll due to costs (i.e., students who one might expect to be the most price-sensitive). Around half of these students had parents who had not attended secondary school.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

Countries' experiences have shown the following key triggers for the transformation: political leadership, careful planning, communication and building partnership, phasing in the reforms, fee abolition as part of more comprehensive reforms, measures to protect the quality, community involvement, support from development partners, use of school grants to replace fee revenues, the inclusion of private schools, and further research to improve the knowledge base.

For children from the poorest households and marginalized contexts, removing fees and other costs alone may not be enough to remove their barriers to education. Targeted programs are necessary. Two papers studying the abolition of primary school fees in Uganda in 1997 found that differential impacts of fee reductions by wealth quintile, though with a non-monotonic pattern. The second and third quintiles respond the most, while the higher quintiles and the lowest do not (Deininger 2003; Lincove 2012) (Center for Global Development 2022).

Building new schools at a scale that meets the demand of schooling and abolishing high-stake examinations are two policies that are often needed for the fee abolition policy to result entirely. Lack of schools and use selections for enrolment usually result in inequality in access and put poor and marginalized children into a disadvantaged situation.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice".

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

Removing school fees and other costs of education is a policy that has a bigger impact on the enrollment decisions of lower-income households, who receive more schooling when schooling is cheaper. The literature suggests that free primary and secondary education policies increased educational attainment, reduced teenage pregnancy, and had positive effects on inter-generational outcomes. Countries that intend to implement this policy need to have strong political leadership, careful planning, effective communication and building partnerships. Phasing the reform and using fee abolition as part of more comprehensive reforms can make the policy more effective and sustainable. The design and finance of school grants need careful study. The use of school grants also has other benefits related to decentralizing decision-making, empowering schools and communities, and promoting greater local-level accountability (World Bank 2009).

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

Abolishing School Fees in Africa: Lessons from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique (World Bank 2009) -

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/2617/482370PUB0AFR0101OFFICIAL0USE0ONLY1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Schooling for All: Feasible Strategies to Achieve Universal Education (Center for Global Development 2022) - <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/schooling-all-feasible-strategies-achieve-universal-education>

Fiscal implications of free education: The case of Tanzania (World Bank 2019) -

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31466/Fiscal-Implications-of-Free-Education-The-Case-of-Tanzania.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

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