

HARAMBEE SCHOOL BUILDING IN KENYA

A. H. Muraya

Deputy Director of Education, Ministry of Education, Kenya

Before 1960 the former African schools offered a four year primary education course at the end of which pupils sat the Competitive Entrance Examination. The successful candidates, predetermined by the available classroom space, were admitted to the intermediate schools where they took a four year course leading to the Kenya Preliminary Examination. The best of the pupils were then admitted to a four year secondary education course. The above structure of education simplified tremendously the work of the education planner. By the turn of a screw at any stage of the school system he could control the enrolments to match the available resources for education and the employment opportunities of the school leavers.

Two developments took place in the early sixties which introduced a radical change in the structure of education: the standard four Common Entrance Competitive Examination was abolished and the primary education course reduced to seven years. It was now possible for an African child to have seven years' continuous education. The Government and the Local Authorities, though ready and willing to meet the additional recurrent expenditure and to employ extra teachers, were not in a strong financial position to provide funds for capital development except in the City of Nairobi and a few Municipalities.

The parents, the local communities and the political leaders rallied to His Excellency, the President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta's call of "Harambee" and organised self-help groups to construct the much needed classrooms and teachers' houses in the whole length and breadth of the Republic.

The buildings put up varied from locality to locality depending mainly on the prosperity of the people, their willingness to contribute material, money and labour for the projects and the availability of suitable local material for building. Plans for the classrooms and teachers' houses were provided free of charge. Education Officers and schools' supervisors gave freely their advisory services and made sure that the classrooms were of the standard size and well-lighted and lockable. The last requirement was an essential component of the building programme because, under the New Primary Approach (a method of teaching), equipment and apparatus had to be left in the classrooms.

The majority of the buildings were of mud and wattle with cemented floors and corrugated iron sheet roofs. A good number of them were of a more permanent nature - brick or dressed stone or cement block walls with corrugated iron sheet roofs.

The total cost to the community of this capital development in monetary terms is unknown but its impact on education may be evaluated, in terms of enrolments, by examining the following figures:

Primary School Enrolments 1960 and 1971

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1971</u>
Total enrolments	781,000	1,557,000
C.P.E. Candidates	23,200	176,100

Note: C.P.E. Certificate of Primary Education is taken at the end of the Primary course.

Some increases in enrolments may be due to the holding of larger classes but this gain is offset by the heavy losses of classrooms incurred when some intermediate schools were converted into secondary schools. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to assume, since no figures are available, that the national stock of primary school physical facilities was doubled, through Harambee efforts, in a short period of ten years. What is certain is that the social and political demands for primary education were to a large extent met. The efforts, moreover, were a pointer to the extent to which parents are prepared to go to provide education for their children.

Expansion at secondary level

Although secondary and higher education expansion had received some impetus at the eve of independence, the real secondary education 'explosion' came after independence. Critical shortages of trained manpower in the Government service and in the private sector of the economy had to be met. It became the deliberate policy of the Government to expand opportunities for secondary education, first to meet the immediate manpower needs and secondly to obtain recruits for training programmes and higher education.

In 1960, the Form I places available for primary school leavers were 6,500. By 1971 the available places in government aided and assisted schools had rocketed to 23,600. Despite this remarkable programme of expansion the hunger for secondary education places could not be satisfied. The parents and the pupils alike were impervious to the arguments advanced by the educationists, manpower planners and economists about the quality of education, employment opportunities and alternative investment openings. To parents and their children, secondary education was the golden road to salaried employment, higher education, prestige and success in life. It had to be acquired at any cost.

The situation was moreover made worse by a large output of primary school leavers, for the changes in the structure of primary education, made in the 1960's, were now beginning to bear fruit. It has already been noted that in 1960 there were 23,200 candidates for the Certificate of Primary Education Examination and that nearly 176,000 candidates are expected to write this examination in 1971. As the following table indicates, the index of opportunity for primary school leavers getting a place in a government secondary school was falling.

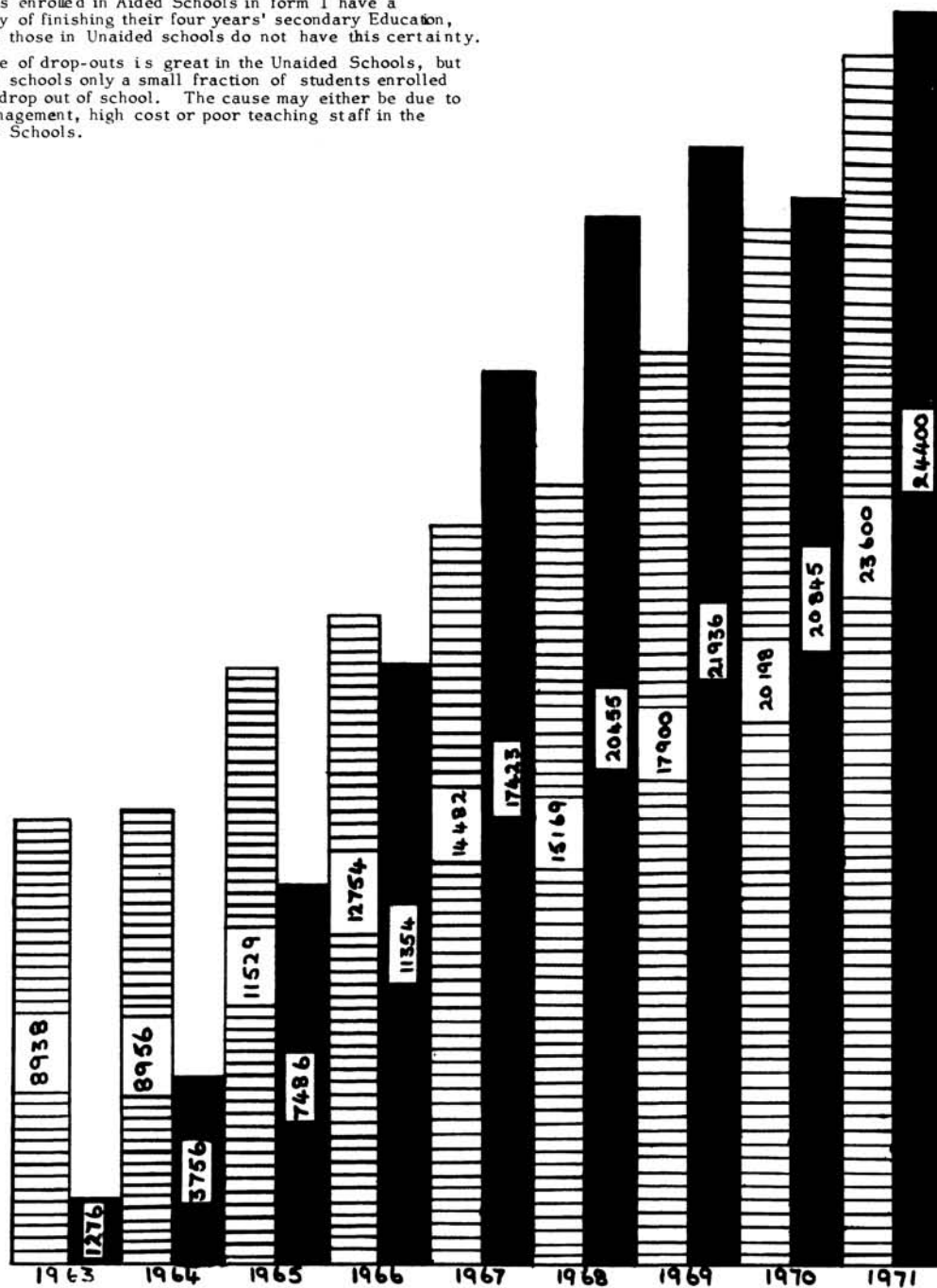
KENYA

ENROLMENT IN FORM 1 IN AIDED AND UNAIDED SCHOOLS 1963 - 1971

26
24
22
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0

- Notes: (1) Enrolment in Unaided Schools overtook that of Aided Schools for the first time in 1967.
 (2) Students enrolled in Aided Schools in form 1 have a certainty of finishing their four years' secondary Education, whereas those in Unaided schools do not have this certainty.
 (3) The rate of drop-outs is great in the Unaided Schools, but in Aided schools only a small fraction of students enrolled actually drop out of school. The cause may either be due to poor management, high cost or poor teaching staff in the Unaided Schools.

AIDED
 UNAIDED



N.B. Figures For 1971 Are Estimates

Index of opportunity for a Form I place in government
aided and assisted schools, 1964 and 1966

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1966</u>
C.P.E. Candidates the previous year	62,125	150,000
Form I places	8,956	12,754
Index of opportunity	14.4	8.4

As the Certificate of Primary Education candidates increased, the relative opportunity of a Std. 7 leaver getting a Form I place in a government secondary school declined. This decline was a threat to the parents' and pupils' education expectations. It had social and political implications which are outside the scope of this paper.

As an emergency measure the local communities began to build Harambee secondary schools in anticipation of government assistance. The Harambee effort was now being directed towards an area of development where heavy expenditure for capital and recurrent expenses was imperative. Co-operative Societies enthusiastically offered to meet some of the expenses for the schools that served their children. Parents paid fees and made building fund contributions. Occasional fund-raising rallies were organised and donations collected from all the well-wishers. Initially it was only the agriculturally rich and the densely populated areas that built these schools, but as the movement gathered momentum all districts joined, and today even the remotest district in the Republic has a Harambee Secondary School of its own.

Generally speaking, the buildings are of an acceptable standard in size and design, and some of the sites are very good from the point of view of future development of the schools. A few of these schools have managed to build standard laboratories for the teaching of science. The quality of the instruction given varies, depending on the availability of qualified staff, teaching material, text-books and equipment. Public examination results are generally reasonable, considering the conditions prevailing in these schools.

On the brighter side, the Harambee schools and the private schools combined (referred to in the Ministry of Education as the unaided schools) are providing a service of inestimable value to the people. In 1963, the unaided schools offered 1,300 Form I places to the primary school leavers. Three years later, in 1966, the unaided schools had created 11,350 Form I places. In January 1971, approximately 24,400 primary school leavers were admitted in unaided schools, that is, 800 more pupils than were admitted in the government aided and assisted schools.

In conclusion it might be pointed out that a development of this magnitude cannot fail to attract the attention of the Government and the public at large. Already it is beginning to influence the education thinking in planning, staffing, classroom construction costs, size of classes, intensified utilization of the available space and the use of the mass media. The Government is giving moral and material support to these schools. Some are assisted with teachers and others are taken over completely

each year as part of the secondary education development programme. The buildings form an important part of the accumulated assets of the nation in education; they are also monuments to the faith the common man has in education as a potential cure for all the ills of the developing world.

(The views expressed in this paper are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the official view.)