Household Poverty and School Choice in Low-income Areas of Lagos: A qualitative case study approach

Volume II

Volume I is reported separately in James Tooley: ‘School Choice in Lagos State’.

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1 Introduction: building on the survey findings.

1.1 Background to the study
This report is a qualitative field study of household poverty and school choice in low-income areas of Lagos. It is the second of two volumes of a study commissioned by DFID Nigeria on school choice in Lagos State. The overall research aims of the study are to ask the following questions among households in Lagos:

1. Who goes to which type of school, or not to school, and why?
2. How are schooling decisions made?
3. What is the influence and impact of poverty on who goes to which school and why?

Volume I of the study, reported separately, is a household survey which aimed to address the three main questions of the study using a representative sample of households from across the entire State of Lagos. The sample selected covered all children aged 3 to 14 attending Pre-Primary, Primary and Junior Secondary School. A small number of the sample also attended Senior Secondary School. Volume I is referred to throughout this report as ‘the household survey’.

Volume II, reported here, is a qualitative comparative case study of three low-income areas of Lagos (more details on the method are supplied at the end of this chapter and in Annex 1). Its overall objective is to build on the findings from the household survey. It focuses on the school choices of households with children in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools and is referred to throughout as the ‘qualitative research’.

1.2 Building on the findings from the household survey
The qualitative research builds on the household survey findings in a number of ways. First, it aimed to identify ultra-poor and vulnerable households and look at the school choices within this particular class of households. It also probes on findings from the household survey on the gender and ward status of children, which found that households make no difference between girls and boys in their school choices, but that wards are more likely to go to government schools than any other kind of school.

The qualitative research also documents in greater depth the process through which low-income households in Lagos make their school choices. The household survey focussed on identifying the main reasons that households send their children to different kinds of schools. The qualitative research focuses on these reasons but looks at the local supply of schools and how this influences
school choices. Key questions posed by the qualitative research are the following:

- What is the range of choice of primary and junior secondary schools for households, and how does this vary across case study sites?
- What are the limitations on travel and availability of transportation to schools? How does this affect school choice, and for which households, which children, and under what conditions?
- Are there households that only choose primary or junior secondary schools located near to their homes? For which households and which children is this the case, and why?
- Are there households for whom the convenient location of a school has no bearing on which school they place their child? For which households and why?
- What are the differences between primary and junior secondary school selection processes for low-income households? How and why are they different?

Bringing this analysis together, the study asks whether parents are able to choose a school within their sector of preference. In other words:

- Which households (if any) are pushed into the private sector by lack of a locally supplied government alternative? And to what extent is this likely to be the case elsewhere in Lagos?
- Which households (if any) are pushed into the government sector by a lack of low-cost private alternatives? And to what extent is this likely to be the case elsewhere in Lagos?

1.3 Structure of Report
The report has two Sections. Section I provides background and context to the study and has two chapters.

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of existing evidence on poverty and deprivation in Lagos Sate. It provides a rationale for the case study sites selected for the qualitative research study, and a description of each of the sites.
- Chapter 3 looks at the relationship between income poverty and school choice among the 38 households interviewed. It brings together the results on income and school choice from the household survey with those from the qualitative study, and probes further into ultra-poverty and vulnerability, the gender and ward status of school choices, and children out of school.

Section II maps out the school choice process for low-income parents in Lagos.
• Chapter 4 looks at parents’ preferences for government and private schools. It explores the reasons the majority of parents prefer private schools and why some households prefer government schools.

• Households weigh up a range of different factors in the school decision-making process. Chapter 5 looks at how households do this at primary level in the context of the range of schools choices available to them. It compares decision-making across the case study sites where the supply of government and private schools varies. It also looks at why some parents do not end up sending their children to schools within their sector of preference.

• Chapter 6 looks at how households select junior secondary schools - the factors they need to consider and the range of choices available to them. This chapter identifies some of the main differences between primary school selection processes and those of secondary schools. As noted in chapter 1, the data for junior secondary school choices was much more limited than for primary school, and therefore the results are not conclusive.

• Chapter 7 provides a summary of the main findings and conclusions.

1.4 A note on the comparative case study method

The comparative case study method allows for a certain amount of generalizability, since the method is designed to test a series of theoretical propositions that have been developed for a particular case study population that can also hold true in other cases, under the same or similar conditions. It requires the careful selection of comparable cases that are identical (or as close as possible) on the dependent variable but different on all but one of the independent variables (Levy, 2008).

This method works most effectively with a small number of comparable cases. For this research, due to time and other constraints, we selected three comparable cases in the more densely populated city areas as detailed in the following chapter.

In the real world, it is almost impossible to find three identical cases, but we aimed to get as close to this as possible to this ideal. All the areas selected are low-income areas of Lagos, with a range of households in the general low-income category. In each area, there was also a range of low-cost and medium-cost private primary schools. The main difference among the three areas was in the supply of primary government schools - one area selected had no primary government school and the other two had at least one government primary school.
Time also allowed for the inclusion of a brief fourth ‘case study.’ The fourth study site varied from the other research study sites in that there were no low or medium-cost private primary schools in the local areas. All schools were high-income or above. This allowed us to look at the school preferences and school selections of low-income households under these different conditions, and compare them with cases where there was a wide range of low and medium-cost private schools available.

The cases selected did not allow us to compare so effectively across junior secondary school selection processes. There were fewer households with children in junior secondary school, and therefore less interview data to work with for school choices at this level. The data however provides interesting and useful results on the school selection process for junior secondary schools; enough to show that household school selection processes differ at primary and junior secondary level, and to reveal some of the reasons that make them different.

In each of the three main case study areas, three different kinds of activities were undertaken for the research: (i) a scoping of private and government primary and junior secondary schools in the neighbourhood; (ii) focus groups with parents from private and government schools; and (iii) interviews with a minimum of 12 families from each case study area. For the fourth case study area, household interviews were not conducted. Annex 1 provides further details on the methods and tools applied for the qualitative research.
I. POVERTY AND SCHOOL CHOICE

2 Poverty in Lagos and selected study sites

2.1 Lagos State
Lagos, Africa’s largest city, is located in Lagos State in Southwestern Nigeria. Physically, Lagos State is the smallest state in the country, but it is also the most populated. Estimated population figures vary enormously from census figures of 10.5 million to figures of 21 million inhabitants reported by Lagos State Government who are disputing the federal figures.\(^1\) Whatever the actual size of the population, it is clear Lagos is one of the second fastest growing cities in the world.\(^2\) The high population growth rate of Lagos has been largely attributed to rural-urban migration, which accounts for up to 75 percent of the population increase (Abumere, 2004, cited by Adelekan, 2009).

Figure 2.1: Map of Lagos showing administrative areas. (Source: creative commons)

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\(^1\) The lower figure of 10.5 million is based on projections of the 2006 census. The higher figure of 21 million is reported by Lagos state government (http://www.lagosstate.gov.ng/ Sourced April 9, 2013).

Lagos State is made up of both rural and the more densely populated and urbanized Metropolitan Lagos. There are 20 administrative zones – or Local Government Areas (LGAs) - within the State. Figure 2.1 provides an administrative map of Metropolitan Lagos showing the 16 Metropolitan LGAs. Not shown on this map are the four largely rural LGAs.

Figure 2.2 provides a map of Metropolitan Lagos by land use. The highly urbanised and densely populated areas of Metropolitan Lagos are indicated by the red road network on this map, in contrast to the green rural areas on the outskirts of the city.

2.2 Poverty and deprivation in Lagos

Updated for inflation, the Lagos specific poverty line at the time of this study was calculated at ₦309 (in Nigerian Naira) per capita per day or £1.25 per capita per day. Based on this calculation, the household survey found that 53.1 per cent of the Lagos sample were living below the poverty line. This is considerably higher than the figure of 40.3 per cent calculated from the Nigerian Harmonized National Living Standards Survey (HNLSS) of 2009/10 (using the per capita method).

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3 The LGAs of Badagry (to the west of Ojo), Ikorodu (to the east of Kosofe), Epe (to the east of Ikorodu), and Ibeju Lekki (to the east of Eti Osa, fronting the Atlantic Ocean) are not shown on the map.

4 The official poverty figure for Lagos for 2010 was calculated at 48.0 per cent (NBS, 2010). A recent review of the 2009/10 HNLSS poverty data by the World Bank concluded that these figures were inflated. The figures were recalculated by the World Bank which concluded that the
The higher poverty figures in the school choice survey can be explained in a number of ways. First, the Lagos school choice study was undertaken four years after the HNLSS of 2009/2010, over which time the effects of the global economic downturn were being felt. There are strong indications that poverty and deprivation may have increased over this period in Lagos (see ODI, 2011). Additionally, the bias of the school choice sample towards households with young children as well as some under-reporting of incomes may also explain some of the difference.

Turning to other measures of poverty and deprivation, the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI) uses a measure of multiple but differently weighted indicators to produce a composite index of poverty and deprivation (Alkire and Santos, 2010). These include health, education and six standard of living indicators including housing, energy and water access. Using this method, OPHI produce a composite figure of 65 per cent of poverty and deprivation for the whole of Nigeria (OPHI, 2010). Given that poverty figures for southern Nigeria are consistently lower than for the north of the country, a slightly lower composite figure than 65 per cent would be predicted for Lagos. Figures from 2008/9 however reveal a mixed picture, with potentially higher levels of deprivation in Lagos than those indicated on the basis of income alone.

On education, housing and electricity, potentially low levels of deprivation are indicated. Here we find that 75 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women in Lagos have completed secondary school or above (results from this survey), the highest in Nigeria, and among one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, 95 per cent of Lagos households have concrete flooring at home, and 78 per cent have access to electricity for lighting (NBS, 2010), although supply is highly erratic.

However, on other key indicators, only 12 per cent of households in Lagos have water piped into their yard (NBS, 2010). Over 59 per cent of families live in one room (NBS, 2010) and although around 50 per cent of households report having flush toilets (NBS, 2010), most families living in rooming apartments share one toilet and bathroom among 6 or more families (see below). Child mortality rates in Nigeria are among the highest in the world, and there is no evidence to suggest that they are significantly lower in Lagos State (Ojikutu, 2008).

The latter figures in particular point to the fact that the majority of the poorer population in Lagos live in over-crowded, unplanned and unsanitary settlements, which lack basic tenure or tenancy rights (Agbola and Agundbiade, 2009). These settlements are characterised by lack of drainage, poorly managed solid waste
and limited access to basic services. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the Lagos population live in such conditions (LMDGP, 2006, cited by Adelekan, 2009). Population density estimates in these settlements range between 790 and 1240 inhabitants per hectare (Adelekan, 2009).

A much smaller but not insignificant proportion of Lagos’ poor population lives in the rural areas of the State. Here, actual rates of poverty may be higher than the more centralised urbanised settlements when measured in terms of income. The 2011 UN Habitat study of urban iniquities (UN Habitat, 2011), found that the three rural LGAs of Badagry, Epe and Ibeju Lekki had the highest proportion of poor households of all LGAs in the State. In Ibeju Lekki, the estimated poverty rate was over 80 per cent, while in Badagry it is over 60 per cent. Not surprisingly, these three rural LGAs have the lowest rates of electricity supply in the State, and the lowest rates of improved sanitation (UN Habitat, 2011).

2.3 The study sites
For this qualitative study, we were looking for three comparable low-income areas in which to conduct fieldwork for three case studies. Given that the majority of poor households in Lagos live in the Metropolitan zone, it was decided that the case study sites should come from these areas. Conditions in the three case study sites selected are described below.

Three neighbourhoods were selected from among those areas officially identified as low-income settlements in Lagos (See Agbola and Agunbiade, 2009). The three areas originally selected were (i) Ajegunle in the LGA of Ajeromi Ifelodun (ii) Ijora-Oloye in the LGA of Apapa and (ii) Ogudu located in Kosofe LGA. (Ajegunle, Ijora and Ogudu can be located on Figure 2.2.)

On visiting the third study site, Ogudu, we found that it was not a low-income settlement but a largely middle-class area with some low-income households. We therefore selected a third low-income area to the north of Ogudu - Alapere - to take the number of comparable case study sites to three. We also continued our investigations in Ogudu and used the findings to contrast with those from our three low-income case study areas.

As noted in chapter 1, using a comparative case study method, the aim of this study is to develop a set of propositions regarding school choice for the case study populations, and identify the conditions under which these propositions are likely to hold true elsewhere. With these case studies, we are therefore aiming to develop a set of propositions for school choice, which are likely to hold true for households living under similar conditions – i.e. the densely populated low-income areas of Metropolitan Lagos - and not for the rural parts of the State.

Ajegunle
Ajegunle is located at Ajeromi Ifelodun LGA. It is the largest slum settlement in Lagos (Agbola and Agunbiade, 2009: 89) and a thriving hub of market activity, which brings people and wealth into the area through trading and setting up small businesses. The predominant occupation in the study area is petty trading, with the ratio of formal to informal sector workers standing at 1:7 in 2008 (Lawanson et al, 2012).

Covering an area of 208 hectares, Ajegunle is one of the most densely populated slum settlements in Lagos, with an estimated multi-ethnic population of 500,000 (Lawanson et al, 2012: 809). It is a typical informal settlement, which developed with little planning and poor infrastructure. In 2008, the drainage situation in Ajegunle was described as open and blocked in most cases. The major method of waste disposal was by dumping along the roadside, the main cause of drain blockages. This situation has improved in the last few years, as solid waste management has been up-levelled in the city, though drains remain largely uncovered.

Over 80 per cent of people live in rented accommodation in Ajegunle (Lawanson et al, 2012). The lowest rent recorded for a single room was ₦3,000 monthly at current prices, with households more commonly paying ₦4,000 and double this for a room with a parlour. Housing type is mixed, with a combination of tin roofed shacks, and the traditional face-you face-me rented rooming apartments. In 2008, there were found to be as many as ten households per apartment building. In most cases, households of five persons or more were sharing a single room. In more than 70 per cent of cases, the building’s facilities – kitchens, bathrooms and toilets – were shared among all residents, and were located outside in makeshift structures, without access to pipe-borne water (Lawanson et al, 2012: 811).

There is a vibrant market for private primary and secondary schools in Ajegunle, and a wide range of choice in terms of cost and quality of provision in the private school sector. There are also a number of government primary and secondary schools in the area.

*Ijora Oloye*

Ijora Oloye is located in Apapa Local Government Area. The area classified as ‘slum’ covers nine hectares (Agbola and Agunbiade, 2009: 89), a significantly smaller settlement compared to the sprawling neighbourhood of Ajegunle. It is situated in the environmentally degraded coastal area of Lagos and lacks basic infrastructural and social services including water supply, electricity, roads, sanitation and quality housing. According to Adelekan (2009), many households live less than 500 metres from the coastline. The condition of all buildings is very poor, with the many houses and schools built with decaying zinc sheets. The area regularly suffers severe flooding. In 2008, the area was flooded three to four
times leaving communities flooded for up to four days (Adelekan, 2009). For all these reasons, of the three field sites selected for this study, Ijora Oloye could be described as the most vulnerable.

Ijora is largely settled by people from Kwara State. Population estimates were 20,000 in 2008, at which time 42 per cent of respondents said they lived in Ijora because of existing family ties. Low cost of rent was another reason given for living in the area (Adelekan, 2009). Rents were among the lowest of all four areas where we undertook research, with the cost of one room averaging N2,500 at current prices. Nearly 70 per cent of residents are tenants. Trading is the main economic activity in the area (Adelekan, 2009).

There is a range of private primary schools in the area and one government primary school, though the conditions of the schools were considerably poorer than any other of the sites we visited for the research. There are no secondary schools at all in the area. Parents send their children on the bus to government secondary schools in neighbouring LGAs.

*Alapere and Ogudu*  

Alapere is located in Kosofe LGA in the northern part of Lagos State. It is a low-income residential area, with average rent for a single room costing N3,000 monthly. It is a low-income area, but with the construction of the nearby expressway, the area has started to attract more middle-income households. There is no government primary school serving this community, but there is a wide range of low and medium cost private schools, as well as some higher-cost schools.

Just to the south of Alapere on the other side of the expressway in Ogudu, there are two government primary schools. Some parents from Alapere send their children to this school, although the majority said it was too far (and not safe because children had to cross the expressway).

Ogudu is predominantly a middle-income area, though it borders a number of low-income areas including Alapere and Ojota to the north (see Figure 2.2). It has a range of high-cost private primary and junior secondary schools, but no low or medium-cost schools.

______________________________

5 No secondary source material was found for Alapere or Ogudu.
3 School choices among the study households

This chapter looks at the relationship between poverty and school choice among households interviewed for this study, and compares the results with those on income and school choice from the household survey. The chapter also identifies and looks at the school choices of a further sub-category of ultra-poor households. It probes into school choices by gender and ward status and identifies some of the reasons that children are not in school.

3.1 Identifying poverty and income categories for the study

As noted in Chapter 2, the Lagos specific poverty line at the time of the study was calculated at ₦309 per capita per day or ₦9,408 per capita per month, based on how much money is needed to buy adequate food and essentials for one person. For the household survey, data was also collected on a range of poverty-related variables to probe further into the relationship between poverty and school choice.

The following three-way classification of households was applied to both the household survey and the qualitative research:

- **Poor** households are those living at or below the poverty line, with incomes of ₦9,408 per capita per month.
- **Near-poor** households are those living at between one and two times the poverty line, with incomes of between ₦9,409 and ₦18,818 per capita per month.
- **Middle-class** households are those living over two times the poverty line, with incomes of over ₦18,819 per capita per month.

For the qualitative research, these same household classifications were applied to the data to render the results of the analysis comparable with those of the household survey. Additional criteria were used to identify a class of ultra-poor and vulnerable households (see below).

3.1.1 School types by sector and cost

The survey adopted a two-way distinction between private and government schools, with a further three-way sub-classification of private schools.

Using detailed information on household spending from the qualitative interviews (see Annex 2), average proportional spending on private schooling was calculated for each household type. Private schools charging total fees of ₦25,000 per annum or lower were calculated as affordable for the majority of (average sized) poor households, and are classified as ‘low-cost’ private schools in this study. Private schools charging between ₦25,001 and ₦50,000 per annum
are classified as ‘medium-cost schools. ‘High-cost’ schools are those charging ₦50,000 per annum or above.

Private schools were therefore classified as follows:

- Low-cost: up to ₦25,000 total annual fees and costs;
- Medium-cost: between ₦25,000 and ₦50,000 total annual fees and costs;
- High-cost: over ₦50,000 total annual fees and costs.

*The ‘lesson’, a lower cost alternative to schools*

In addition to government and private schools, there are also cheaper alternatives to low-cost private schools in Lagos. These are informal ‘lessons’ set up with few or no overheads – for example, in the front room of a house or perhaps outside on the street. These provide general childcare and some instruction. Proprietors of these establishments charge no registration fees and payment arrangements are flexible. They are not considered ‘schools’; they are low-cost alternatives to schools.

### 3.2 School selection patterns by household level of income

For the qualitative research, 38 households were interviewed from the three case study areas of Ajegunle, Ijora-Oloye and Alapere. The qualitative research confirms findings from the household survey, which shows that one or both natural parents most commonly make school choices for their children, and that the majority of children in Lagos live with one or both natural parents.

The numbers of households in each of the three income categories is provided in Table 3.1. Households from all three case study areas are found in the poor and near-poor categories. No households from the most vulnerable area, Ijora Oloye, are found in the middle-class income bracket.

#### Table 3.1: Households interviewed (by income level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household category</th>
<th>Per capita NGN per month</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>₦9,408</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor</td>
<td>From ₦9,409 to ₦18,818</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class</td>
<td>Above ₦18,818</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences across the income categories in terms of school choice are summarised in Table 3.2.

**The poor**

The poor include all households earning up to ₦9,408 per month per capita. These households are characterized by their capacity to select low-cost private
schools in addition to government schools at primary level. Some also select medium-cost private schools but in all cases the schools were only slightly above the ₦25,000 a year upper band limit for a low-cost private school. In the qualitative study, the poor are also characterized by their limited capacity to select private schools at secondary level. This is because the lowest cost private secondary schools tend to start in the medium-cost bracket (see also results of household survey).

The findings reflect those of the household survey, which point to a dominance of children from poor households in government and low-cost private schools. In the sample, 73 per cent of children in government schools and 69 per cent of children in low-cost private schools live in households on or below the poverty line. The household survey also found that single mothers and grandparent-headed households are more likely to be poor and more likely to send their children to government school. Similarly, the female-headed households in the qualitative sample had all placed their children in government schools.

The qualitative results further indicated that placements of children in private schools are not always stable among the poor. In a number of cases, children had been taken out of low-cost private schools and put into government schools, usually following a shock such as the loss of a home or death of a breadwinner in the family. In all cases, the households in question fall into the class of ultra-poor. The school choices of ultra-poor households are discussed in further detail below.

Table 3.2: School choice by household category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household category</th>
<th>Primary school choices</th>
<th>Junior secondary school choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Government only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low and medium-cost private (though placement may be unstable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low-cost alternatives to formal school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>(Low)*, medium and high-cost private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low, medium and high-cost private</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>High-cost private</td>
<td>**High-cost private/Elite government schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There are very few secondary schools that are in the ‘low-cost’ bracket.
The sample only contained households with children still in primary school - these are future options being considered by these households.

**The near-poor**
The near-poor are those households whose incomes fall between one and two times the poverty line – i.e. within ₦9,409 and ₦18,818 per capita per month. Their household selection patterns are similar to those of the poor in that they select a combination of low and medium-cost private as well as government schools. At secondary level, however, the qualitative findings indicate that they are far more likely than poor households to select either medium or high-cost private schools. These findings support those from the household survey, which show a significantly lower proportion of near poor households in government and low-cost private schools compared to poor households.

**Middle-class households**
At the top end of the income bracket are those households with per capita monthly incomes of over two times the poverty line – or above ₦18,818 per capita per month. Within our small sample, high-cost private school choices are the norm among this class of households. Government school choice at primary level was highly unlikely at this level of income. At secondary level, high-cost private schools or elite government secondary schools were considered.

These findings also reflect those from the household survey, which found that within the sample of middle-class households, only 10.5 percent of children were in government school and 61.2 per cent were in high-cost private school.

**3.3 School choices among the ultra-poor**
Applying a recent study of the urban working poor (ILO, 2103), an ultra poverty line was calculated at a ratio of 0.625 to the poverty line. This provides an ultra-poverty line of ₦5,880 per month. In the category of ultra-poor households, we have also included vulnerable households, or households ‘in decline’ – i.e. households who have experienced an economic ‘shock’ and are in the process of coping with it. In our sample, there were only five such households, and all had at some point in the recent past lost an income, a major asset or a major breadwinner.

There were only five households in the qualitative research which could be classified as ultra-poor or vulnerable to ultra-poverty. These households had all made one of the following choices: (i) placed their children in government school; (ii) recently removed their children from private school and placed them in government school or low-cost alternatives to formal schools; or (iii) were on the verge of removing them from private school when we interviewed them. These households were more likely than other households to select government schools at primary level (Table 3.3). The household survey found that the
majority of ultra-poor families use private schools but compared to other household types, a higher proportion of ultra-poor households use government schools.

**Table 3.3: School choices for moderately and ultra-poor households**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household category</th>
<th>Primary school choices</th>
<th>Junior secondary school choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ultra-poor (or vulnerable)</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Government only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low-cost private (though placement may be unstable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private low-cost alternatives to formal school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Government only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low and medium-cost private</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the qualitative research, we also encountered two other households classified as moderately poor at the time of interview. Both reported having suffered a setback in the recent past, and consequently both had removed their children from private school and placed them in government school. They did not want to move their children back to private school once their situation improved.

### 3.4 School selection by gender and ward status

The qualitative research confirmed findings from the household survey which show that parents (or other decision-makers) do not differentiate between girls and boys when choosing which schools to send their children to, either at primary or junior secondary level.

The household survey and this study both found that wards are represented in all household categories and are more likely to go to government schools. However, the qualitative research finds that the decision to send wards to government schools while other children in the family may go to private school does not necessarily imply discrimination on the part of host families or guardians.

Responsibilities for school choice among wards are likely to be different in different cases, but based on the qualitative interviews, the following principles
seem to apply. Decisions regarding the schooling of wards, and responsibilities for the payment of school fees, appear to lie with the child's natural parents. Other living costs may be borne by the host family. In the case of children who have no living parents, decisions regarding their schooling are more likely to lie with those who pay for the upkeep of the child. This is usually a relative, with whom the child in question may or may not be living.

3.5 Children out of school

The household survey found that the proportion of out-of-school children is highest among the ultra-poor: 5.5 per cent of ultra-poor households are out-of-school compared to around 1 per cent for all other groups.

In our small sample, three primary age children were found to be out of formal school due to fees being too high, but all of them were in low-cost private alternatives to school – the daily 'lesson'. These results also concur with those of the household survey which indicate a very small minority of school age children (1.3 per cent) are out of the school system altogether, the majority are from households living below the poverty line, and the main reasons are that school fees are too high. Other reasons reported in interviews for keeping children out of school include the following:

'The child’s English is too poor'. We were told that most schools will refuse to take a child who does not speak English to a standard needed to enter a class appropriate to their age. This is often the case with children who arrive in Lagos from rural areas not having studied, spoken or learned English. We encountered two cases of this and we were also told of other similar cases. One household in our sample who was in this situation had placed the child in the 'lesson' to improve her English until the private school would accept her. The other parent reported that her daughter had been out of school for a year or so, and was living with her aunt until her English improved.

Temporary displacement of the family. We only heard of one such case where a parent had kept her daughter out of school for a year when the family was temporarily displaced due to their house burning down. They did not want to put her in another school temporarily, but preferred to wait until they returned to the neighbourhood permanently and then send her back to her own school.

Boys who need to learn a trade. One secondary school in Kosofe had a much lower enrolment for boys than for girls. The headmaster did not know the reasons for this, but told us that it was common for boys to be taken out of school in Kosofe at secondary level to learn the fishing trade. Secondary sources also point to children not attending school in rural parts of Lagos state in order to work in the fishing trade (ICF, international, 2007).
II. THE SCHOOL SELECTION PROCESS

4  Households’ primary choice of schools

Interviews revealed that almost all parents in Lagos have a strong preference to send their children either to a government or to a private school. These preferences go along with often strongly held beliefs and opinions regarding perceived positive and negative qualities of private and government schools.

This chapter documents what parents think about government and private schools. ('Parents' is used here to refer to all school decision-makers, including those who are not biological parents but act as parents in making schooling decisions.) The opinions documented in this chapter come from a combination of parents’ own experiences, what others tell them, and what they themselves observe. None of what has been reported to us in interviews has been verified in the research. The reason to document these preferences, and the reasons behind them, is that they drive school choices.

4.1  Reasons the majority of parents prefer private schools

In the qualitative interviews, it was clear that the main reason many parents favour private schools is due to the perceived low standards in government schools.

*Over-population and poor learning conditions in government schools*

The majority of parents we spoke to complained of what they referred to as ‘over-population’ in government schools. Whether this is a problem of the large size of many government schools, or actual over-population, was not verified by this study. Either way, parents felt that this situation compromised the quality of learning and the welfare of children.

Parents in both interviews and focus groups frequently mentioned that class sizes in government schools were ‘too big’ and that the number of teachers was insufficient. Although we did not verify the figures when visiting schools, parents frequently reported class sizes of upwards of 60 children. In schools, where there were insufficient classrooms, a number of head teachers said they had resolved the issue by putting two ‘classes’ together in one classroom. Parents reported that from 80 to 100 or more pupils might be found one classroom and expressed concerned about the capacity of their children to cope with learning under these conditions.

Poor learning was also linked to the limited supply of basic equipment and adequate facilities in government schools. Parents reported that children were
often found sitting on the floor in lessons, or squeezed onto a limited supply of benches. Government school parents also complained that their children were frequently asked to bring money to school for different reasons - to pay for new benches, or cleaning equipment.

*Lack of teacher supervision, care-taking and concerns for child welfare in government schools*

Parents felt that government schoolteachers did not care for the children and did not supervise them properly. They said that their younger (and physically smaller) children were more vulnerable than older children and, in some cases; government schools were even unsafe for very young (pre-primary) children. Parents expressed most concern for the safety of small children in schools where bullying and fighting among older children was said to be common.

Complaints about government teachers’ capacity to teach were also widely voiced by many parents. When asked what they meant by this, most said that teachers often did not turn up for lessons. Some also claimed that teachers brought their wares and hawked them in the classrooms and in the school grounds.

*Smaller populations, better care for children and better learning conditions in private schools*

When asked what they thought about private schools, many parents said that the teachers ‘care for the children’ and that they ‘know how to teach’. Most private school teachers are not qualified teachers. However, private school parents (particularly at the lower cost end) were not concerned about teacher qualifications. They were more interested in their own observations of the presence of teachers in the classroom, the attention that teachers give to children, and assurances they had about the welfare of their children when they were at school.

**4.2 Reasons for preferring government schools**

Parents who send their children to government schools say that they prefer these schools because they are affordable, because the teachers are qualified and because the discipline is good. It is also easier to get a child into a government secondary school when they have attended government primary school but this was rarely expressed as a reason for preferring government schools.

Overall, finance was the main reason for choosing a government school. Households may be either too poor to afford private schools – and generally this is the case for ultra-poor households – or, if they are not strictly income poor, they may prefer not to have the financial stress of paying school fees, or may be unable to afford the initial registration fees. The following kinds of comments were common among government school parents:
'I don’t like private schools because of the financial stress.’

‘I don’t like private schools – they are always asking for money.’

‘Parents suffer to pay what they don’t have in private schools.’

It is not only the poor who select government schools for financial reasons. From the sample of 16 ‘near-poor’ households in the qualitative sample, five households send their primary age children government schools because they are more affordable. Due to the fluctuating and unstable nature of incomes (particularly those in the informal sector) and with limited capital, savings or investments, households emerging out of poverty can very quickly fall back into poverty with a single serious shock. Educating children is a long-term investment, so households may choose to take the long view on what they think they will be able to afford in the future, based on past experiences and future expectations. In these cases, government schools may appear to make more long-term financial sense.

Some households who said they ‘prefer’ government schools also believe that private schools are better quality but simply cannot afford them. This quote is taken from the transcript of a near-poor parent who has children in both private and government schools.

‘I like government but only because it’s cheaper. Private is better quality. If I had the money, I would send them all to private school. We are thinking of removing the ones in private and taking them to government because the fees keep going up.’

There is also a small minority of parents who express no preference for either type of school. The findings indicate that these households tend to be poor and simply believe that a private education is of the question. So for these households, government is the only option they consider.

4.3 Comparing with results from household survey

The household survey measured how far households favoured government and private schools, using twelve different criteria, including those for quality, convenience and other personal requirements. The survey finds that on almost all quality criteria - the only exception being teachers’ training - and across all income bands, private schools are favoured over government schools.

The only criterion on which government schools are heavily favoured over private schools is on the issue of affordability, and this is most evident among poor households. The survey found that 83.9 per cent of poor households think that government schools are affordable for their families, compared to 42.6 per cent who think that private schools are affordable. Even among the near-poor, government schools are favoured for affordability – 72.4 per cent of the near-
poor find that government schools were affordable while 62.3 per cent find that private schools are affordable.

The findings from the household survey also point to the two issues most frequently mentioned by parents as their main areas of concern in government schools – the poor care of children and over-crowding. On the question of whether children are well looked after at school, 95.3 per cent across all households said that this applied to private schools, while less than 20 per cent said that this applied to government schools. On over-crowding in schools, 96.5 per cent of all households across the income spectrum said this applied to government schools, while only 6.7 per cent said this applied to private schools.

5 The selection of schools at primary level

Households weigh up a range of different factors in the school decision-making process. This chapter looks at how households do this at primary level in the context of the range of schools choices available to them. It compares decision-making across the case study sites where the supply of government and private schools varies. It also looks at why some parents do not end up sending their children to schools within their sector of preference.

5.1 School types and choices in the three case study areas

5.1.1 Local markets for low and medium cost private schools

In Ijora Oloye and Ajengule, low-income parents who prefer and can afford to send their children to low or medium-cost private schools have a range of choice close to their homes, from which they can select a school. In Alapere, the lowest-cost schools are slightly above the low-cost upper band at ₦27,000. In both Alapere and Ajegunle, the market in private schools at all cost levels is thriving and appears to be attracting investment from outside. In Ijora Oloye, by contrast, there appears to be little outside investment in the area.

In Ijora Oloye, the environment is fragile and the infrastructure of poor quality. The market for private schools in these areas is limited to low and medium-cost primary and pre-primary schools. (There were no private secondary schools in Ijora Oloye at the time of the research.) Most schools appear to have been set up by local entrepreneurs, ex-teachers or recent graduates from the area. Almost all schools were reported to be in poor condition, with sub-standard and limited facilities. For example, one school visited had no flooring, and another school was a basic canvas structure with no windows. Most schools had no toilets, or limited and sub-standard facilities. The poor quality of infrastructure and basic facilities, as well as the recurrent problem of flooding, are among the main complaints of parents. Despite these challenges, the majority of low-income
parents from this neighbourhood do not consider sending their children to private schools in another neighbourhood.

Now we turn to low-income households living in Ogudu. This is a middle-income area just to the south of Alapere where a brief fourth case study was conducted. In this area, there is no market for low to medium-cost private schools. The range of schools available within the private sector is at the high-cost end – i.e. ₦50,000 or more per annum per child. In a focus group, parents said that school fees have been going up in the area for some time, changes that may be related to a rise in the cost of real estate, as the area becomes gentrified (rents are also reported to be on the rise).

Parents who can no longer afford school fees have been pulling their children out of private school. But they have not chosen to send their children to lower-cost private schools outside the local neighbourhood – for example in neighbouring Alapere. Instead, they have placed their children in government school. The range of choice for these low-income parents was restricted to, in their view, three lower quality but conveniently located government schools. Out of these, they had all deselected one school, which they said was so bad they could not consider sending their children there. Instead, they selected one of two others they thought had the best conditions and would provide the best quality education for their children.

5.1.2 Government primary schools
Parents preferring government schools appear to have the most limited range of school choices. In each community we visited, there were many fewer government primary schools than private schools, and in Alapere, there were no government primary schools.

In the neighbourhood of Ajegunle, where we undertook fieldwork, there are three government primary schools that parents could choose from. Government school parents complained about the quality of the school buildings and facilities, and that classrooms were insufficient for the numbers of children, but they did not distinguish among the government schools in terms of these issues. Parents tended to select the school that was closest to their home.

In Ijora Oloye, the range of choice of government primary schools is limited to one school, which serves the whole community and some children from the neighbouring community of Ijora-Badia. Private school parents, some of whom had removed their children from the government school and placed them in a private school, complained that the government school was overcrowded and they were concerned for the welfare of their smaller children.

In Alapere, there is no government primary school within easy reach of the neighbourhood where we undertook fieldwork. Poor parents who prefer
government schools and cannot afford private schools have to make difficult choices for their children. For example, one ultra-poor parent chose a cheaper alternative to private school, the daily 'lesson' for her small children, and sent the older child to a government school that was located at some distance from her home.

When AM moved to Alapere to live with her mother, she had lost most of her belongings, and her home due to some major family setbacks. She wanted to send her children to government school. But because there were no government schools, she looked at three private schools. She went round each of the schools and the initial registration and term fees for all three of her children was over ₦47,000. She didn’t have the money, so she put the 11 year old in the government school, which is far from her home. He goes there alone. The younger ones, she could not afford to put in school, so she put them in the daily 'lesson'.

A strategy to keep costs low is to send some children to private schools and some to government schools, as the following example of a near-poor household from Alapere illustrates.

RA says that government schools are her school of choice. If they were available, her children would be in them. They have also chosen private schools in the past, but now it is not a question of choice, the young girl (7 years) is in the private school because for her it is too far to go to the government school, but the 10 year old is in the government school.

5.2 Proximity to home as a key driver of school choice

The results of the household survey show that parents weigh up a number of different factors in making school selections. Overall, the quality of a school, the quality of its teachers, and its proximity to home are the three main reasons households select schools, including households living above and below the poverty line. After these reasons, good discipline, school reputation and affordability were reported as important for all households.

The results from the household survey further indicate that certain types of household place greater or lesser emphasis on some of these reasons more than others. For the purposes of this chapter, the following findings are of significance:

Lower-income families – i.e. those with children in government and low-cost private schools - who have younger children in primary and pre-primary school, put less emphasis on quality; put greater emphasis on affordability; and put greater emphasis on the school being close to their home than any other kind of household.
The qualitative results provide further evidence for this, and indicate that for households whose range of school choices are limited, proximity to home and affordability are likely to be the deciding factors in school choice.

In each of the case study sites, the majority of parents had a range of choice of schools close to their homes, and therefore experienced little or no difficulties getting children to school. Where there were no schools located close to their homes, and the journey involved such dangers as crossing busy roads, for example, parents said that they could not let the young ones walk to school, or go on public transportation, unless accompanied by an older sibling. Parents instead chose alternatives, where they could, that avoided any dangers.

Once children reach 10 or 11 years old, parents are more likely to let them travel to school alone, depending on the distance and perceived dangers, and these older ones may then escort the younger children to school.

For middle class households, the situation is very different. Middle-class households in our small sample had placed their children in the best private schools they could afford (all high-cost) outside the area where they lived, and at least one of these households said that they wanted their children to be educated outside the local area, which they thought was too ‘rough’ for their children. Transport was not an issue for any of these households. Some had a car, others used and paid for transport provided by the schools themselves. In other words, the range of choice of schools for these households was not limited to the local neighbourhood. The main factors determining school choice for middle-class households sending their children to predominantly high-cost private school were quality-related.

Low-income households do not have the same luxury to choose schools outside of their local neighbourhood. They generally cannot afford the time or expense required to ensure their young children arrive safely at school. These parents are therefore most likely to select a school *because* it is close to their home. For parents with a wide range of affordable school choices, proximity to home is unlikely to be the only reason for school choice. But for parents with a limited range of choice, this may well be the only reason for their choice.

### 5.3 How private school parents select among local schools

The household survey found that parents usually limit their initial school search to one sector, either government or private. Within the chosen sector, how do parents choose among available options? This section looks at the criteria households apply in school selections of private schools. In the government sector, parents rarely had options and when they did, they tended to go for the school that was closest to their home.
In Ajegunle and Alapere, most parents looking in the private sector said they prefer to rely on recommendations from relatives or neighbours to help them select a school, though they are also likely to visit the school they are interested in. Other children were also considered to provide evidence of the quality of a school – the neatness, discipline and overall behaviour of children out of school were believed to be good indicators of school quality.

In Ijora Oloye, all private school parents with whom we spoke, with one exception, send their children to private schools whose proprietor was a friend or acquaintance of the family. Knowing the proprietor may also help households with flexibility in payments and support with overdue payments.

These findings are supported by the household survey where school visits and personal recommendations were by far away the most important sources of information on schools. The household survey also found that around 20 per cent of low-cost private school parents reported getting printed information about schools in the household survey, and about half as many collected test scores. When asked whether they looked for or collected (printed) information about the schools they were selecting, all parents we spoke to, including middle-class parents, said that they preferred to rely on their own observation than printed information.

‘We didn’t think to find out any information about the schools. The way the children behave and [the teachers] teach is why we know they [the schools] are good’.

‘I didn’t think of [asking for information]. What things did I need to know about the schools before putting my children there? Just the things I could see for myself: the neatness of the children, the ability to teach and care for the children’.

5.4 Parents who cannot choose schools within their preferred sector

The qualitative research was conducted in three low-income areas of Lagos in the most densely populated Metropolitan area of Lagos, with a fourth higher income area included in the research for comparative purposes. The research found that the range of choice of private primary schools was generally good in all three low-income areas, supporting findings from previous studies in Lagos (Härmä, 2011; Tooley et al., 2005). However, in one area, Alapere there was no government primary school, and also no low-cost private schools but a range of medium-cost private schools. In Ogudu, there were no low or medium cost private schools. As a result, the research has identified three types of household that are unable to choose a school for their primary age children within the sector they prefer:
• Low-income parents who live in an area where there is no market for low and medium-cost primary schools, such as Ogudu, but who would prefer to send their children to private schools. These parents appear most likely to select government schools.

• Low-income parents who live in an area where there is no government primary school, such as Alapere, but who would prefer to send their children to government schools. Most of these parents appear most likely to select private schools, except the poorest households.

• Ultra-poor parents who live in an area where there is no government primary school and who cannot afford to send their children to locally available private schools. They may send their children to low-cost private alternatives to formal school, such as the lesson or they keep their children out of school.

Using available data from the household survey, this section assesses how far these situations are likely to be replicated in other parts of Lagos.

5.4.1 Low-income households preferring private schools but choosing government schools

As we have seen from the Ogudu example, where there are no low or medium-cost private primary schools near their homes, low-income parents who would like to send their primary age children to private school, seem most likely to opt for the nearest government school.

It is not clear how likely this situation is to be replicated in other parts of Lagos, though there are some indications in the data. The household survey sample was made up of 101 Enumeration Areas (EAs) or clusters. Of these 101 EAs, 16 had zero low-cost private schools. If we exclude the one EA out of these 16 with a zero rate of poverty, we find that there are 15 EAs where poor households could find themselves priced out of a local market for private schools and pushed into the government school sector.

5.4.2 Low-income parents preferring government schools but choosing private schools

Alapere is an interesting case because as well as having no low-cost private schools, there is no government primary school (though there is a large government secondary school). As noted above, the lowest cost schools were just slightly above the low-cost bracket at around N27,000. At the same time, according to survey results, one neighbourhood of Alapere has a higher than average rate of poverty at 77 per cent.6 For some poor parents the lowest-cost

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6 There were two EAs from Alapere included in the survey: one with relatively high levels of poverty where the qualitative research was conducted, and one with much lower levels of poverty. Anecdotal evidence indicated that since the completion of the new expressway, some
schools, which would be classified as medium-cost in this study, were just about affordable. For ultra-poor households however, they were not.

Some low-income parents in Alapere choose to send primary age children to local and affordable private schools because they are more conveniently located close to their homes than the government schools. Those who cannot afford private schools for all their children send the older ones to the government primary school in neighbouring Ogudu and look for the lowest-cost private schools near to their homes for the younger ones.

There is no data from the household survey to indicate whether households are likely to be in this situation elsewhere in Lagos. However, we do know that the supply of government primary schools is considerably lower than for private schools across Lagos State. The number of primary government schools is about 10 per cent of private schools (991 primary government compared to around 10,000 private schools).\(^7\) The likelihood of a government primary school being close to someone's home is therefore considerably lower than for a private school.

It could be concluded from this that one of the reasons for the high numbers of children in private schools in Lagos is the poor supply of government schools. Although there are clearly some households selecting private schools because they have no access to government schools (such as some households from Alapere) all the indications are that the majority of parents would rather send their children to private schools because they perceive the quality to be better than that offered in government schools.

5.4.3 Ultra-poor households unable to choose any formal school for their children

As we have seen, Alapere has no low-cost private schools, no government schools, and higher than average rate of poverty. It is also revealed to have a high rate of out-of-school children at 10 per cent. This is more than three times the State average.

The findings from the qualitative research indicate that the high rates of out-of-school children in Alapere could at least in part be explained by the lack of conveniently located government and low-cost private primary schools. Children that parents consider too young to travel to the government school are in 'the lesson', a low-cost alternative to formal school. It seems likely that in other cases, parents may keep their children out of school altogether.

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\(^7\) This figure includes both primary and pre-primary schools.
Are there likely to be other areas in Lagos with households in similar circumstances? There is insufficient data from the household survey to investigate this further. More research would be needed to understand the relationship between the low supply of low-cost and government primary schools, ultra-poverty and children out-of-school.

5.5 The school selection process at primary level among low-income households

Overall, the results show that the proximity of the school to home is paramount in the selection of primary schools among low-income households (i.e. government schools or those that are low or medium-cost). Beyond this, households weigh up a combination of criteria in selecting private primary schools, the most important of which are the quality of the school and its teachers (which include its discipline) and affordability.

Figure 5.1 summarises these findings on primary school choice for low-income households and outlines the school selection process in a decision tree. It begins with the school preference of households for a government or a private school, the place where households begin their school search. It then maps the questions that parents have to ask themselves, depending on their income and the local supply of government, private and low-cost private alternatives, in order to find the school they will eventually select. The map also shows how disadvantaged children –i.e. those from ultra-poor households - may end up out of school.

5.6 Concluding remarks: the economic strategies of poor and near-poor households

The findings from this chapter and the previous chapter indicate that the economic choices of the poor and many near-poor households are remarkably similar. This is because many poor and near-poor households live in similar circumstances, in the impoverished and deprived conditions of Lagos's informal settlements where livelihoods are precarious. Even if they are not classified as income poor, people living in these conditions think of themselves as poor and their living conditions also make them so. They are also more likely to share a similar and uncertain future. In this sense, the economic strategies of poor and near-poor households not only look similar, they are also distinct from those of middle-class households.
**Figure 5.1: The primary school selection process among low-income households**

Legend:

Italics: income level of household or area

Red: rationale for preference or selection

Bold: Preference and final selection.
6 The selection of schools at junior secondary level

This chapter looks at how households select junior secondary schools and the range of choices available to them. It identifies some of the main differences between primary school selection processes and those of secondary schools.

6.1 School supply and households’ selection of secondary schools

Table 6.1 summarises school choices among secondary school parents. It shows that ultra-poor parents only use government secondary schools, as do the majority of moderately poor parents, though some would prefer to send their children to private secondary schools. In our sample, we found no moderately poor households who sent, or intended to send, their children to private secondary school.

Near-poor households had preferences for both types of school – government and private – and were more likely to be able to select their school of choice at secondary level - but as the results below show, this was not always the case for all of their children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household category</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ultra-poor and vulnerable</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately poor</td>
<td>Medium-cost private</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor</td>
<td>Medium and high-cost</td>
<td>Medium and high-cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>private</td>
<td>private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-income</td>
<td>High-cost private</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elite government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 Reasons parents select secondary schools

The household survey results indicate that for all households, quality is the most important reason households select secondary schools. Overall, families with older children in secondary school put greater emphasis on quality issues; put less emphasis on affordability; and put less emphasis on schools being close to their home than those with younger children in primary and pre-primary schools, though this remains important for many parents.

The findings from the qualitative results do not entirely concur with those of the household survey. They indicate that even although quality is considered
important for households at secondary level, affordability and proximity to home still play an important role in school selections. However, the qualitative data on junior secondary children was limited. Results provided are therefore only indicative of the differences between junior secondary school selection processes on the one hand and those at primary level on the other.

The findings indicate that affordability of schools at secondary level is an important consideration among poor households. The cost of private schools at junior secondary level is the main reason why ultra and moderately poor households, some of whom would prefer to send all of their children to private junior secondary schools, are unable to. Not only are the school fees more expensive at secondary level, the additional costs are also higher (especially exam fees, books and other costs not incurred by primary school children). Near-poor households are more likely than moderately poor parents to enter the private market for secondary schools, but near-poor parents also struggle to send all their children to private secondary schools, as the following two examples show:

‘The first child went to government junior secondary school. The second child went to a private one. It is a struggle to keep up with the payments. The child asks for things all the time, and it has got too expensive. I can only afford private for one child, we don’t have enough money anymore for the other children, so they will all go to government’.

‘We cannot afford private for both children. One will go to government school and the other is now in junior secondary private school (Apostolic)’.

Parents are much less restricted in their school choices at secondary level than at primary level as the children have reached an age when they can travel alone. However, there are still reasons to keep children closer to home. One reason is that it costs less because children do not have to pay for transport. Another reason is the shortage of public transport in Lagos, particularly mentioned by poor and near-poor parents in Ijora Oloye, which makes it difficult for children to get to school. Some parents also simply prefer to have their children closer to home.

If parents want to keep their children closer to home, the main limiting factor is the availability of schools. There are fewer secondary schools in both the government and private sector in Lagos State. There also appear to be very few low-cost private secondary schools (also reported by the household survey).8

8 According to our sources, start-up and running costs for junior secondary schools are considerably higher than for primary schools, largely because of the need for specialised subject teachers. Junior secondary schools are therefore more likely to start out at the medium-cost
The situation varies across the study locations, according to what is available and according to parents’ preferences and means.

- In Ijora Oloye, there are no government or private secondary schools in the local area. Both poor and near-poor households send their children to the closest and easiest to reach junior secondary schools in neighbouring LGAs. Demand for private schools exists, but the supply is not there. For these households, shortages of transport are more acutely felt than for households living elsewhere.
- In Alapere, there is one government secondary school and a range of private secondary schools, which serve the population. The supply for both types of school appears to meet existing demand for schools that are conveniently located, and all households included in the qualitative sample sent their children to secondary schools in the local area according to what they could afford.
- In Ajegunle, there are a couple of large government secondary schools in the area where we undertook research, as well as a range of private medium and high-cost schools. However, Ajegunle covers a large area and the government schools are not conveniently located for all households.

PA (Ajegunle) has a preference for government schools but he sends his older children to private secondary school, the cheapest one he could find. The government secondary schools are a long distance from his home so he has selected a nearby low-cost private secondary school for his older children so he ‘can monitor them’. His primary age children go to a nearby government primary school.

The results so far tend to point towards proximity to home as a preference for the majority of low-income households. Further testimonies from near-poor households also point towards greater flexibility of choice for these households. For example, we encountered the following near-poor households who purposefully selected different schools for their children due to their different needs, and purposefully chose schools that were further away from home.

AB (Alapere) sent one secondary age child to a government school and the other to a private school based on the children’s different educational needs. The one who went to a private school ‘is wild and he will not do well in the government school because it won’t support him to behave better.’ However, ‘the older child is already hard working and therefore can cope better with the government school’.

level. This helps to explain the limited market for low-cost junior secondary schools in all the locations of this study.
HG (Ajegunle) has a son who ‘is stubborn and won’t study’ and ‘spends too much time hanging out with his friends’. She and her husband decided to separate him from his friends and sent him to a private school further away from home.
7 Summary of main findings and conclusions

This section summarises the main findings and outlines the main conclusions from this study.

Many of the poor in Lagos rely on low-cost private schools to educate their children; most believe that this provides a higher quality alternative to the government system. The qualitative research and the household survey find that poverty is strongly associated with school choice, and that households living below the poverty line are more likely than any other group to select government and low-cost private schools for their children.

The most disadvantaged children are more likely to go to government schools. The household survey found that children from disadvantaged households are also more likely to attend government school, including children from female-headed and grandparent-headed households. The qualitative research findings also point towards government school choices for households with only one breadwinner.

Discrimination by gender or ward status is not evident in the study. Nowhere in either the household survey or the qualitative research was there evidence of households discriminating between girls and boys in terms of whether or how they educate their children.

Although wards are more likely to go to government schools than private schools, parents continue to select (and pay for) schools for their own children, even when they are living elsewhere. In other words, there is no evidence to indicate that households discriminate against wards when sending them to government schools. For wards that are also orphans, the situation may be different. There is insufficient evidence from this study to determine what those differences might be.

Low-income households have educational strategies that are distinct from those of the middle-classes. Low-income households include all poor and near-poor households (i.e. those households who live from below the poverty line up to twice the poverty line). This group of households was found to have similar economic strategies, which are distinct from those of the middle-classes, and they face similar constraints in making school selections.
Building on results from the household survey, this research shows that quality, proximity to home and affordability are key considerations in the school choices of low-income parents for primary age children. The perceived welfare of small children while at school emerges as another important decision-making factor.

The main findings on school choice among low-income households reveal the following:

- Quality considerations are important in the selection of private schools among the poor, but are largely driven by the perceived sub-standard conditions in government schools.
- Low-income parents are most likely to select schools that are close to their homes for primary age children. Sending small children longer distances to school is not considered safe, and low-income parents cannot afford the time and expense to escort them to these schools.
- The proximity of a school to home is not essential to the selection of secondary schools. However, it remains important for low-income households for financial and other reasons, including the availability of transport.
- The welfare of small children while they are at school is one of the reasons parents choose private schools over government schools. This is a much lower priority for older children at secondary level, who are able to take care of themselves at school.

Household investments in schooling are long-term. A household’s assessment of school affordability is likely to take this into account. Households appear to make their affordability assessments based on current incomes and projected future incomes as well as how ‘poor’ they perceive themselves to be. The findings therefore support those of the household survey, which show that income poverty is a key factor in school choice. It also finds evidence to indicate that there are also other aspects of poverty, including those that are more subjective, which may be important in determining school choices.

Overall, poverty and the perceived higher standards in private schools are found to be major factors influencing school choice across households from all income groups with children of all ages. Among low-income households, especially those with younger children, a further factor influencing school choice is the local supply of schools.

Low-income urban settlements in Lagos offer a range of affordable private primary schools from which the majority of low-income households can choose one that is close to their home. This appears to be less the case for government primary schools. This does not mean that the relatively higher numbers of children in private schools in Lagos can be explained by the poor supply of government schools. Although some households do appear to select private schools because there are no government schools near their homes, all the
indications are that the majority of parents would rather send their children to private schools because they perceive them to be better.

There are also areas of Lagos that offer no affordable private primary schools for low-income households, although the extent of this across Lagos is unclear. Here we find that low-income parents, even those who express a strong preference to send children to private schools, are more likely to select nearby government schools for primary age children rather than send them the longer distances to private schools in other neighbourhoods. It is here that proximity to home emerges as a key driver of school choice for primary age children.

There is further evidence to indicate that it is the ultra-poor who are most affected when there is a limited supply of both government and low-cost private schools in their local areas. Preliminary findings from one case study area indicate that ultra-poor households in these circumstances are likely to find low-cost alternatives to private school, or may keep children out of school altogether. The findings are, however, limited and further research would be required to establish whether this situation was replicated in other parts of the city.
Bibliography


Annex 1: Description of methods and fieldwork tools

Three tools were applied in each area. The first two tools were designed to identify the range of available schools, the key factors that affect school choice at the community level, and the factors that differentiated one community and neighbourhood from another in this regard.

Scoping of neighbourhood schools
Aim: to scope out the options that parents have when selecting schools.

Activities: structured interviews with proprietors or head teachers of private schools and head teachers of government schools.

Description: between 8 and 10 schools were visited in each neighbourhood of Ijora-Oloye, Alapere and Ajegunle. The research team met with proprietors and interviewed them about the following: the number of teachers, the number of classes and the number of classrooms in the school; the numbers of children enrolled and average size of classes; tuition fees and other fees collected from parents; facilities; and services supplied by the school to parents (such as a school bus). This was not an exhaustive audit, but aimed to provide us with a good sense of the range of local private and government schools available to parents living in the area.

Focus group discussions with parents
Aim: to investigate the broader context of poverty and how people in the community generally make a living; community and neighbourhood issues related to schooling such as environmental, safety, infrastructure and transport issues and any perceived obstacles to getting children an education. Three focus groups were conducted in each of the low-income areas of Ijora-Oloye, and Alapere, and two focus groups in Ajegunle, and Ogudu.

Activities: with parents (who had children in either or both of primary and junior secondary schools, either private or government).

Semi-structured interviews with households/parents
Aim: to investigate the main research questions for the study.

We purposively selected a mix of parents who had children in either private and government schools, or both. Overall 38 households were interviewed, 12 from Ijora Oloye and Alapere, and 14 from Ajegunle.

In most cases, we interviewed only one parent and that was usually the parent who was available – in only two cases were both parents interviewed together. There were more female interviewees than male interviewees because women
were often trading near their homes, while men tended to be working away from home and not available for interview.

Detailed information was collected on:

- **Family structure**: who was living at home, who were the main breadwinners, and who was paying for whose schooling.
- **Household expenditure**: including details on schooling costs. Information on household income was also collected where available and reliable. Household expenditure was used as a proxy for income among low-income households where households had no salaried income and where incomes from trading or other informal sector activities fluctuated from month to month. Where both income and expenditure data were available, the information could also be more thoroughly cross-checked.
- **The livelihood history of the family**: to identify the effects of recent shocks to the household – the death of a relative or child, recent divorce, the loss of a home, a relocation - which also provide context power for household decision-making and investments in education.
- **School decision-making**:
  - Which schools were selected and why and for which children? Including:
    - How did they select the particular school(s) their children were attending? What things were they looking for? How many schools did they look at? How did they know it was a good school?
    - Were all their children (including wards) in the same types of schools and if not, why not?
    - Were girls and boys educated in the same way? Did they consider the education of girls and boys as equivalent?
    - Had any children been out of school in the last few years? If so, why had this happened?
    - Had any children moved schools in the last few years? If so, why had this happened?
    - Were parents happy with the schools their children were attending and why? If not, why were their children not in other schools?
    - How did children get to school? Were there any safety issues that parents were concerned about on the way to, or at, school?
Annex 2: Patterns of spending on schooling by household type and school type chosen

1. Households who send children to private school

An analysis of the data collected from individual households on how they allocate their incomes to schooling expenses shows a large variation across the different types of households. The findings are summarized below in table 1 and can be summarized as follows:

- *Moderately poor* parents spend between 5% and 8% of their income on putting all or some of their children into private primary and nursery school. These parents do not send children to private secondary school. The proportion rises to 11-15% when all schooling costs are calculated, including those of sending other children to public schools (uniforms, books, stationary, transport, additional tuition, excursions etc.). There is insufficient data to analyse the spending of the ultra-poor.

- *Near-poor parents who have three or more children in school* spend 12-16% of income on private school fees and levies, rising to 20-26% of total income when all schooling costs are included (uniforms, books, stationary, transport, additional tuition, excursions). The biggest expenses are transport and extra tuition fees. In most of these cases, at least one child is in private secondary school.

- *Near-poor parents who have two children in private primary or nursery school* (and no children in secondary school) spend between 8% and 11% of income on private school fees/duties and levies, and between 11% and 15% of total income when all schooling costs are included.

- *Non-poor parents* spend from between 10 and 15% for two children in mainly high-cost private schools, rising to 19-28% when all schooling costs are included. The biggest additional expenses on top of fees are transport and extra tuition fees.

Comparing spending patterns of the moderate and near-poor

- It is interesting to compare the educational spending patterns of the moderate poor with those of the near-poor, especially those households who only have 2 or fewer children in school – i.e. the two groups who have roughly similar numbers of children in private school.
Table A1: Patterns of spending on schooling by household and school type chosen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household type and main school choice</th>
<th>Private school fees and levies</th>
<th>All schooling costs (including tuition, transport, and costs for those going to government schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ultra-poor private nursery and primary school</td>
<td>Insufficient data</td>
<td>Insufficient data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately poor private nursery and primary school</td>
<td>5-8%</td>
<td>11-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor private (2 children in school, none in secondary school)</td>
<td>8-11%</td>
<td>11-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-poor private (3+ children in school)</td>
<td>12-15%</td>
<td>20-26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-poor private</td>
<td>10-15%</td>
<td>19-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government only (ultra, moderate and near-poor households)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2-15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportional spending on school fees and levies is considerably higher among near-poor households (who have only 2 children in school) compared with moderately poor households - by almost 50 per cent (8-11% compared with 5-8%). This is because near poor households are more likely to choose schools in the medium-cost range, while moderately poor households are more likely to choose households in the low-cost range.

By contrast, proportional total educational spend is roughly the same for both types of household (11-15%). For moderately poor households, expenditure on schooling almost doubles when these additional expenses are added up, and this is because these households are usually sending children to government secondary schools (sometimes primary too) on top of their younger children in private school. The costs of sending children to government schools, including transport and additional tuition costs (which most households pay for all their children) are discussed below.

2. Patterns of spending among households who send children only to government school

The average household spend on educating their children in government schools (across all households) is 7% of overall household income. Households who send
their children to government schools spend between 2% and 15% of income on schooling costs – or an average of 7% as Table 2 below shows. The majority of this additional spending goes on extra tuition and transport – and average an of 34% for tuition and 24% for transport. These items also account for the variations among households in proportional spending – i.e. how far children have to travel to school, and how much parents choose to spend on after school tuition.

Other schooling costs incurred by households include uniforms, PE kits, stationary and books, though the latter is usually for older children in secondary school. Where there is no spending on either transportation or tuition, educational expenditure is low – in the two cases of this study spending falls to roughly 2 per cent of income.

Table A2: Parents who send their children to only government schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of children in school</th>
<th>Annual spend on schooling</th>
<th>As % of total income</th>
<th>% Tuition</th>
<th>% Transport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>127,800</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>67,050</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>95,500</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>36,850</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50,300</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>38,950</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22,800</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14,700</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7,050</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>47,182</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Spending patterns and affordability of private schools for different households

Table 3 shows patterns of all spending across four households of different types. These are not calculated averages of all households where data was collected: they provide individual examples of households in an attempt to illustrate the
incomes and the spending patterns across such households. Tables 4 and 5 show educational spending across all households in the moderately poor and near-poor household brackets. These tables indicate the capacities of households in these two income brackets to afford to send their children to private schools.

Table A3: Examples of spending patterns across households who send children to private school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ultra-poor family of 8 w./6 children</th>
<th>As % of income</th>
<th>Poor young family of 5 w./3 children</th>
<th>As % of income</th>
<th>Near-poor established family of 6 w./4 children</th>
<th>As % of income</th>
<th>Non-Poor family of 4 w./2 children</th>
<th>As % of income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent and electricity</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>10.73%</td>
<td>3,983</td>
<td>10.81%</td>
<td>8,920</td>
<td>10.91%</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>4.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>8.47%</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and cooking fuel</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>63.51%</td>
<td>21,500</td>
<td>58.36%</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>48.92%</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>38.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generator fuel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1.71%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>4.52%</td>
<td>1,167</td>
<td>1,43%</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2.03%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly schooling</td>
<td>5,329</td>
<td>15.04%</td>
<td>6,100</td>
<td>16.56%</td>
<td>16,425</td>
<td>20.09%</td>
<td>36,417</td>
<td>29.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowance to parents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,22%</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>15.29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (e.g. transport, phone cards, leisure)</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2.26%</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>5.16%</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>6.11%</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>20.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>35,429</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>36,842</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>81,772</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>123,417</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A4: Near-poor households who educate children in private primary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Primary + Private Secondary children</th>
<th>Total no. children in school (includes KG and nursery)</th>
<th>Annual household spend on schooling NGN</th>
<th>% Annual spend</th>
<th>Annual fees etc</th>
<th>% Annual spend on schooling (as % of expenditure)</th>
<th>Average spend per child in private school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1+2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>197,100</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>155,500</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>51,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>208,700</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>131,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>32,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>350,200</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>221,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>44,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>203,900</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>107,500</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>53,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>142,100</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>100,500</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>33,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>128,600</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>78,600</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>33,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>94,920</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>64,800</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>110,775</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>59,500</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>102,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>95,050</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>49,600</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>24,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>102,400</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0+2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>104,500</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>66,300</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>33,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>47,500</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>145,711</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>102,400</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>33,955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A5: Poor households who educate children in private schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children in private school</th>
<th>Total Number of children in school</th>
<th>Annual spend on all schooling NGN</th>
<th>% Annual spend on all schooling</th>
<th>Annual spend fees and levies</th>
<th>% Annual spend on schooling (as % of expenditure)</th>
<th>Average spend per child in private school (primary school only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>73,625</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>27000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>94,150</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28,500</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>28500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>71,560</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28,400</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>28400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>73,200</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34,800</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>37,500</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>33,400</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22,300</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean 1.8 2</td>
<td>66,156</td>
<td>13.00%</td>
<td>29,750</td>
<td>6.33%</td>
<td>20,383</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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