

FAMILY INFLUENCES ON WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN KINSHASA

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Abstract

This paper examines women's schooling and educational attainment in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The paper uses data from five surveys carried out in the city between 1955 and 1990 to show the evolution of school enrollments of youth and educational attainment of adult women and men. These data highlight a remarkable transformation, especially so for women: in 1955, the typical woman in Kinshasa had never been to school, while by 1990 the typical woman had attended secondary school.

Family influences on women's educational attainment are then examined, using the 1990 survey data. Father's education stands out as a particularly strong influence on the educational attainment of daughters. In addition, and in contrast to research findings for the United States, size of family of origin tends to be positively related to a woman's educational attainment.

The demographic implications of these findings, as well as the consequences for both women's education and fertility of the acute economic crisis that has characterized Kinshasa and the Congo since 1990, are also discussed. Overall, it seems quite likely that the progress in educational attainment that women had made before 1990 may well have been halted or reversed by ongoing economic crisis.