



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



FROM ACCESS TO EQUALITY

Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary Education

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Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary Education

Published in 2012 by the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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2nd edition

ISBN 978-92-3-001117-8

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Graphic design: Aurélie Mazoyer

Typeset and printed by UNESCO

Printed in France

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FOREWORD

On May 25, 2011, UNESCO launched the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, with the participation of the United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, because we believe that creating gender equality in education is, as we said then, "not just the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do". As part of the Partnership, the United States promised to support a new UNESCO study on the challenges to educating girls that would take a fresh approach to this age-old imbalance.

The result is this report, ***From Access to Equality: Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary Education***, which moves beyond statistical figures to offer ideas for effective strategies based on a more holistic approach.

Our goal has been to offer a report that focuses not only on the concept of access to education, but also addresses more fully the principle of equality in education. This study advocates for more ambitious approaches to transform education systems and learning settings to better meet the specific needs of girls and women.

Gender equality is a fundamental principle of the global Education for All (EFA) campaign launched in 2000. Gender equality in education is a basic human right – it is also essential to achieving sustainable development. In our increasingly globalized world, the societies that succeed best will be those which guarantee women and girls equal access to education, thereby giving them the skills and the opportunities to develop their talents and interests, so they can contribute to building stronger and more resilient communities.

When women and girls are empowered through education, societies benefit at all levels. The benefits extend beyond improvements in economic development to areas such as public health. Multiple studies have shown a strong correlation between educating women and girls and higher maternal and child life expectancy, as well as improvements in child and family health and nutrition. Educating a girl greatly reduces the chance that her children will die before the age of five. In many countries, having a mother with secondary or higher education more than halves the risk of child mortality compared to having a mother with no education. Girls and women who are educated are far more likely to immunize their children, and their children are less likely to be malnourished.

Under Education for All, significant progress has been made towards achieving gender parity in access to primary education, but more needs to be done in the area of literacy and secondary education, and this is



where the Global Partnership has focused its efforts. We are glad to note that UNESCO's partnership with Procter & Gamble, which has increased funding for literacy programmes for girls and women in Senegal, is already delivering results. Meanwhile, the Packard Foundation's support for a \$1.5 million UNESCO project in Tanzania and Ethiopia is countering the tendency of girls to drop out when they reach puberty. These and many more such initiatives – both public and private – are desperately needed to help lower drop-out rates and identify the best practices that will help keep girls in school beyond primary education.

As we approach the target date of achieving the Education for All goals by 2015, it is critical that we intensify efforts to achieve gender equality in education. Let us build on the many successes achieved to date in primary education to tackle the shortcomings in secondary education and women's literacy. The attempt against the life of Malala Yousafzai is a stark reminder of the need for all to join together to protect the right to education, and especially for every girl and young woman.

Now is the time to draw on our collective intelligence, creativity, and resources to produce a more prosperous and sustainable world. As we open the doors of education to all of tomorrow's global citizens, all of us have an important role to play. Let us partner together at all levels and across all sectors of endeavor – government, private and nonprofit – to ensure that girls and women have access to equal opportunities to build a better future for themselves and their families. The stories in this report show us why educating women and girls is both the right and the smart thing to do – something that our hearts have known all along.

Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This report, *From Access to Equality: Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary education*, is a production of the UNESCO Education Sector, Paris and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg.

Particular appreciation is due to Edward B. Fiske and Carmela Salzano for their major contributions to this publication.

Special thanks also go to the external peer reviewers, namely, Claudia Mitchel, Nora Fyles and Aarti Saihjee, who provided valuable feedback on the draft.

Data and map were provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Montreal.

The production of this report benefited from funding under the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) Fund supported by the United States of America.



I. GENDER EQUALITY: WHY IT MATTERS



In the years following the Dakar World Conference on Education for All in 2000, countries and development agencies vigorously stepped up their investments in education, focusing on those countries with the lowest primary school enrolment rates and where inequalities in access and retention appeared to be the most resistant to change. As a result, millions more girls of primary school age were enrolled in primary education around the world. Girls' enrolment in secondary education also began to increase, with girls even outperforming boys in certain subjects in some countries. While these positive strides towards reaching internationally agreed education targets are laudable, the latest data on improvements in the situation of girls at different education levels only presents one side of the gender issues at stake in education.

Secondary education, the invisible goal

Less attention was paid, after Dakar, to what might happen beyond the primary cycle and the consequences of expanded enrolment for future demand at secondary and higher levels. This includes the financial and qualitative implications of expanding secondary education systems and the need for second-chance alternatives to formal schooling. If these matters were overlooked, this was especially true for secondary education for adolescent girls and literacy for women. In fact, secondary education was quietly neglected, "...squeezed between primary education, the object of much attention, and higher education, which has never really lost its supporters."¹

Looking beyond the numbers

Progress on girls' and women's education has also mainly been reported in terms of highlighting increases in enrolment, promotion and completion at both primary and secondary levels. What the statistics do not reveal are enduring pockets of disadvantage within countries in relation to girls' and women's access to educational opportunity. The lives of millions of girls worldwide are moulded by multiple layers of disadvantage – formed by poverty, socio-economic status, cultural attitudes and expectations, social norms, ethnicity and geographical location. Inequalities in access to secondary education are especially prominent for girls from low-income and impoverished families, those living in isolated geographical areas, and those who are pressured into dropping out by family obligations, early marriage, domestic work, discrimination, violence, non-ownership of assets or disability.²

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- 1 Lewin, K. Caillods, F. 2007. *Financing secondary education in developing countries: strategies for sustainable growth*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.
 - 2 UNESCO. 2012. *Advocacy brief: Removing Gender Barriers to Literacy for Women and Girls in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok: UNESCO.



The data also tell us very little about the quality of the learning environment and what is being taught or learned in classrooms. The inequalities that influence girls' and women's lives in broader society are often compounded by policies, learning content, pedagogies, curriculum, textbooks, instructional materials and learning environments once girls arrive at school. These practices, in turn, generate additional barriers to girls' empowerment not to mention unequal education outcomes.

Thus while targets for gender parity may seem more achievable, the notion of gender equality (recognition, understanding and respect for the similarities and differences between boys and girls as they relate to the learning process, bias-free teaching practices, curricula and instructional materials) is still far from a reality.

Recognizing what is at stake

As countries advance rapidly towards achieving universal primary education, million more girls risk being excluded from post-primary education and pushed further towards the margins of society. New generations of girls also risk entering adulthood without basic literacy and numeracy skills because they did not complete schooling, received poor quality education or were unable to nourish their few-found literacy skills. Furthermore, their children are likely to miss out on educational opportunities thereby continuing the cycle of inter-generational illiteracy and poverty.

The discussion needs to go far beyond questions of expanding compulsory basic education and achieving gender parity however. It must take place within a broader conversation on the specific barriers that girls and women meet in their daily lives and how education policies and practices can contribute to empowering girls and women to overcome these obstacles. It should also address ways in which policies, instructional practices and the quality of the educational experience can be made more equitable for adolescent girls and young women.

Managing to enrol and keep girls and women in basic and secondary education is no easy task and alternative delivery systems are critically needed, especially for those girls and women who have missed out on education opportunities in their childhood or youth. The questions then are these:

What kind of education delivery mechanisms can work for adolescent girls and women, and ensure they can pursue their learning journeys to the highest level possible? How can the quality of their education experience be improved through formal secondary education, literacy training and adult basic education? What are the mechanisms that support the process? How can an enabling environment for change be generated?

“ Leave out women and girls, and you exclude 50 per cent of your brain power, 50 per cent of your creative genius, and 50 per cent of your economic drivers. ”

Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO



Making progress

Governments are making international commitments, but they also need to increase investment in affirmative, gender-responsive policies and actions within secondary education systems and literacy programmes that recognize the issues at stake for women. Given the limited amount of financing available, consolidated support for girls' education efforts will need to be sought through partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, international development partners and society at large. Outside the education sector, synergies with gender-focused policies in other sectors such as youth employment, health and the environment can complement different education initiatives. Underpinning all of this, and what may be needed most of all, is a fundamental shift in the mindset of many policy-makers, and in the perceptions of communities, regarding the education of girls and women.

The programmes featured in this advocacy paper have attempted not just to promote gender equality in education, but to empower girls and women through and beyond education. They are challenging conventional ideologies and practices through which unequal structures in society are maintained.³ Programme designers have moved beyond conventional approaches, recognizing the valuable contributions that all actors can play in the empowerment of girls and women. Through these noteworthy practices, we are beginning to understand how circuits of educational failure, poverty, economic and social exclusion can be broken.

3 Citation from the Asia Pacific EFA Goal 5 End-of-Decade Note (EDN) report, 2011.



II. GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION: HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?



Ensuring the right to education for girls and women: an international commitment

Access to basic education has long been recognized as a fundamental human right. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, proclaims that “*everyone has the right to education*” and enshrines this right alongside other basic rights such as freedom of expression and equality before the law. The status of education as a basic human right has been reaffirmed and enshrined in numerous declarations and conventions since then, many of which explicitly affirm that the right to education applies to both girls and women, and is critical in the combat against discrimination in all its forms.

As the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Equality of Opportunity in Education has stated: “*The human rights framework is pivotal in the struggle against multiple forms of discrimination, from which women and girls in vulnerable and marginalized situations suffer. Educating women and girls should, a priori, be viewed as a human rights imperative, rather than undertaken solely because of the potential benefits to one’s children or to society.*”⁴

Since the Universal Declaration, the international community has set ambitious goals for promoting gender equality in education. The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (1995), made specific reference for the first time to ensuring the right of women and girls to education, setting a target to ensure that by the year 2000 governments commit “*to provide universal access to basic education and ensure completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children; close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005; provide universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015*”. (Para. 80)

In April 2000 at Dakar, the **Dakar Education for All (EFA) Framework for Action, Goal 5** (2000) further articulated that the efforts of the international community should be directed at, “*Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality*

4 Kishore Singh, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Equality of Opportunity in Education, Human Rights Council, June 2011.



in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality."

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000 also articulated the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015 as one of its major goals: **MDG 3** (Target 1): *"Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015."* The 2nd goal of MDGs referred directly to achieving universal primary education.



International conventions affirming the right to education and gender equality

► **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination in Education (1960)**

Commits the States Parties to the Convention to undertake to formulate, develop and apply a national policy which will promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the matter of education without discrimination based on sex, age, ethnicity, language, location, or income level, etc.

► **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)**

Commits the States Parties to the Convention to take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in order to ensure their equal rights with men in the field of education

► **Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**

Commits the States Parties to the Convention to encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, and make them available and accessible to every child, both girls and boys

► **Convention on the Right of People with Disabilities (2006)**

Commits the States Parties to the Convention to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, through the exercising and enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms

Launched in 2000, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) was the first global partnership to specifically promote girls' education and raise awareness on gender equality issues in education. Since then, there have been many specific partnerships and initiatives launched at the global level which have been instrumental in maintaining policy dialogue and advocacy.⁵ Along with other international organizations, UNESCO as the United Nations specialized agency in education, has long emphasized the critical importance of gender equality in formal and non-formal education as a fundamental right. UNESCO's commitment to gender equality in education is inherent in its mandate to promote education as a human right.

Today, gender equality is one of the two global priorities of UNESCO under its Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013. This priority is supported by a dual approach which consists of gender mainstreaming and gender-specific programming. Recent initiatives include the Global Partnership on Girls' and Women's Education, 'Better Life, Better Future', the development of

5 UNGEI.2012. *Formative Evaluation of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative UNGEI, Global Report*. UNGEI. April 2012.



the World Atlas on Gender Inequality, and the World Inequalities Database (WIDE), elaborated by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Examples of major global level partnerships and initiatives for girls' and women's education

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI): one of the EFA Flagships launched in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal to promote gender equality in education.

The Coalition for Adolescent Girls: a coalition chaired by the UN Foundation that brings together more than 30 international organizations (governmental & non-governmental) involved in a wide range of programmes targeting girls in poverty.

CAMFED (Campaign for Female Education): launched in 1993, to support girls' education and the empowerment of women through community-based programmes in Africa, focusing on the individual girl, involving the community, and placing transparency at the core of its operations.

Because I am a Girl Campaign: a campaign launched by Plan International in 2006 to fight gender inequality, promote girls' rights and lift girls out of poverty. Since 2007, Plan International and its partners have been producing annual reports on the situation of girls under specific thematic areas of focus.

UN Adolescent Girls Task Force: launched in 2007, co-convened by UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), to improve interagency programming in addressing the most marginalized and disadvantaged adolescent girls, focusing on making their situation known and prescribing practical action to fulfill their rights.



Mixed progress towards internationally agreed targets



As mentioned above, at Dakar in April 2000, developing countries reaffirmed their commitment to increasing enrolment for their school-age children in primary education, along with the other five EFA goals on early childhood care and education (ECCE), literacy, skills for youth, education quality and gender equality in education. As a result of this and other international commitments to education policy targets for girls' and women's education, many countries around the world have made significant investments and progress in education in recent years. But progress has without doubt been uneven. This section takes a brief look at how the international community has shaped up in meeting its collective commitments.

Increased spending on education

According to the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report, "real spending on education in low income countries has increased by 7.2 per cent a year, on average, since 1999."⁶ These investments have produced notable overall improvements in educational opportunity at all levels, but most visibly in universal access to primary education. Worldwide, the number of out-of-school primary school-age children has fallen since 1999, from 108 million to 61 million in 2010. Certain countries have done particularly well. In India, for example, there were 18 million fewer children out of school in 2008 than 2001.

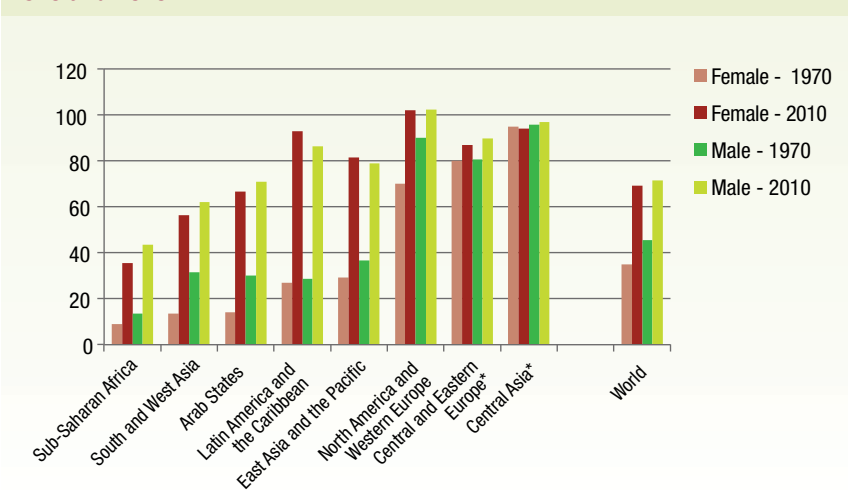
Gender parity at primary level

When it comes to gender parity at different levels of education, several countries across the world are also making significant advances. According to the *UNESCO World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education*, over two-thirds of all countries worldwide have now reached parity between girls and boys in primary school enrolment.

6 UNESCO. 2012. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*, Paris: UNESCO. p.141.



Regional trends in secondary education, gross enrolment ratio by sex 1970 and 2010



Note: Data for Central and Eastern Europe refer to 1971. Data for Central Asia refer to 1993

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, May 2012 release

More girls than ever before enrolled at secondary level

Indeed an upward trend in Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) at secondary level has been observed in almost all regions and for both sexes. Between 1970 and 2010, enrolment in secondary education nearly tripled, from 184 million to 543 million, and the female proportion of pupils grew from 42 to 48 per cent.⁷

Looking more closely at the GER within the different stages of secondary education, the gross enrolment rate for girls at lower secondary level increased from 69 to 81 per cent between 1999 and 2010, and from 43 to 58 per cent at the upper secondary level in the same period. In certain regions, notably Latin America and the Caribbean, the GER for girls at the lower secondary level has been higher than that for boys since 1999.

Significant progress has also been made at upper secondary level according to the Global Education Digest 2011.⁸ The most dramatic increases in GER at this level were registered in East Asia and the Pacific, where the GER soared from 43 to 71 per cent in 2010.⁹

Girls around the world are also demonstrating that, once they enter secondary education, they are outperforming boys in certain subject areas. The 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) found that 15-year old girls out-performed boys in every country by an average of 39 score points – the equivalent of one year of schooling.¹⁰

7 UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, May 2012 release.

8 UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Global Education Digest 2011: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*. UNESCO-UIS. pp.54-55.
http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/global_education_digest_2011_en.pdf

9 UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, May 2012 release.

10 OECD. 2012. *Education Indicators in Focus*, 2012/3 (March).



Positive steps forward in the fight against illiteracy

According to the UNESCO 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report, all countries that started with gender disparity in literacy in the period between 1998 and 2001 have made progress (with one exception, Zambia). Overall, the global adult literacy rate increased from 76 per cent in the 1990 census decade (1985-1994) to 84 per cent in the current census decade (2005-2010).¹¹

Significantly, the greatest gains in promoting female literacy have been within regions that had the furthest to go, notably the Arab States, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia.¹² In China, the number of female illiterates plunged from 128 to 46 million between 1990 and 2010, which corresponds to a rise in the female literacy rate from 68 to 91 per cent.¹³ Indeed, gender parity in adult literacy has improved in all but 1 of the 83 countries with data (UNESCO 2012 Global Monitoring Report).

There is nevertheless a crisis in education around the world and in the quality of learning

As the UNESCO 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report reminds us, 250 million children of primary school age cannot read or count whether they attend school or not. While the demand for lower secondary education is also soaring in many countries due to rising primary school completion rates, the rate of expansion is not keeping up with demand. As a result, 71 million adolescents who should be in lower secondary school are missing out on learning the vital skills they will need for future work and employment.¹⁴

Moreover, more girls than boys still remain out of school at this level. At lower secondary level, the gender parity index at lower secondary level in sub-Saharan Africa has not improved since 1999¹⁵, while girls remain disadvantaged in the Arab States, South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶

At country level, although there were 82 girls for every 100 boys enrolled at primary level in Yemen in 2010, this drops to only 62 girls per 100 boys at secondary level.¹⁷ In the Democratic Republic of Congo, only 58 girls are enrolled in secondary education for every 100 boys¹⁸ and in South Sudan, a country of 10 million people, there are less than 400 girls in the final grade of secondary school.¹⁹

11 UNESCO.2012a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*, Paris: UNESCO.

12 UNESCO.2012a. *idem*.

13 UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, April 2012 release.

14 UNESCO.2012a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*, Paris: UNESCO.

15 UNESCO. 2012a. *idem*.

16 UNESCO. 2011a. *Building a better future: Education for an independent South Sudan*, EFA Global Monitoring Report Policy Paper. Paris: UNESCO.

17 The GMR 2010 data for Yemen states that the GER GPI at primary level is 0.82 and GER GPI 0.62 at secondary level.

18 UNESCO. 2012a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*, Paris: UNESCO.

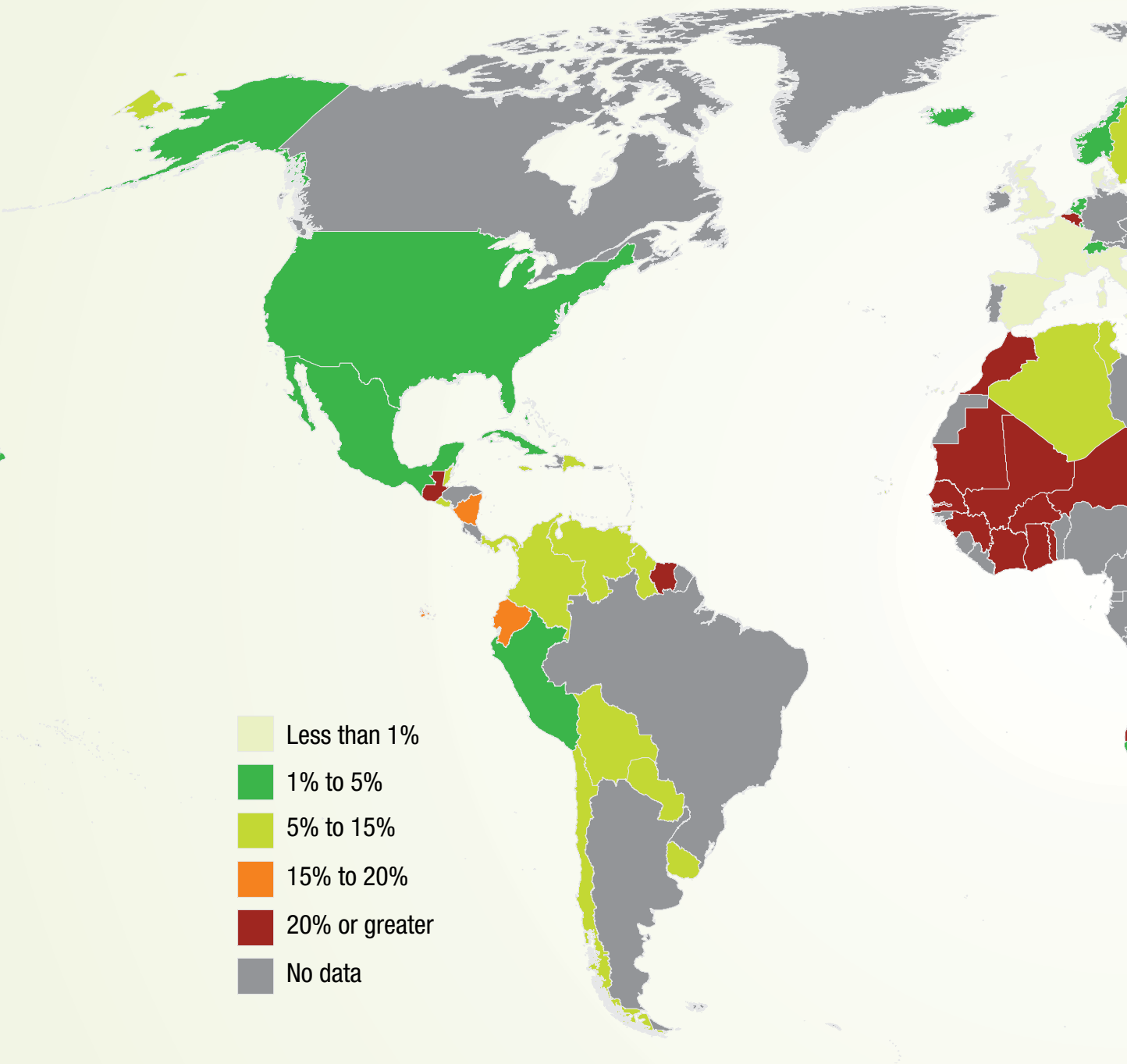
19 www.unesco.org/news/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/specials/south-sudan/

“ Literate women are more likely to send their children, especially their girls, to school. By acquiring literacy, women become more economically self-reliant and more actively engaged in their country's social, political and cultural life. All evidence shows that investment in literacy for women yields high development dividends. ”

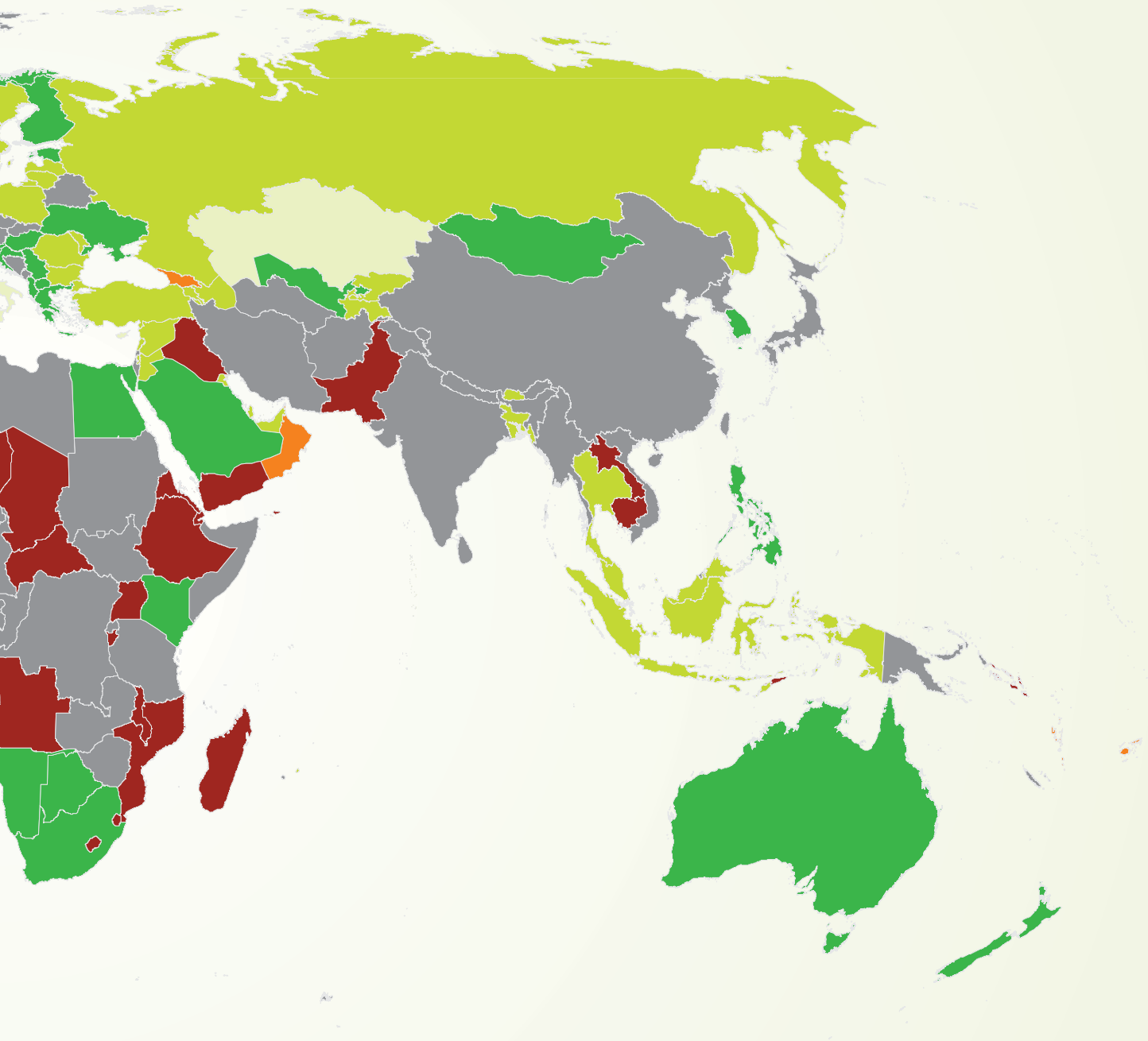
UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon
International Literacy Day 2010



High rates of out-of-school female adolescents in certain regions²⁰



²⁰ UNESCO. 2012b. *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education*. Paris: UNESCO, pp.72-73. Data refer to 2009.





In addition, while girls are increasingly participating in school, the UNESCO-IIEP Outcome Report on Gender Equality in Education cautions that there remain significant gaps in terms of learning achievement with multiple forms of disadvantage affecting the learning outcomes of girls from different backgrounds.²¹ Educational failure early on, combined with few opportunities to nourish newly founded literacy skills, quickly result in the loss of basic literacy skills. The World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality and Development²² states that gender disparities in literacy achievement remain large for girls living in low-income or impoverished households with few reading materials. Girls in such situations frequently have limited literacy, or experience a reversal of literacy because they leave school earlier.

Progress in advancing women's literacy more generally has been slow. According to the UNESCO 2011 Education For All Global Monitoring Report on armed conflict and education, progress towards the goal of halving adult illiteracy rates by 2015 has been "*disappointing at best and desultory at worst.*"²³ Similarly, the Global LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Report 2006-2011 noted it has been difficult to create, renew and maintain momentum for literacy. Insufficient funding by governments and development partners is a major factor contributing to unsatisfactory progress.²⁴

Given the different barriers that girls and women come up against, it should come as no surprise that among the 775 million adults worldwide without basic literacy skills in 2010, between 63 and 64 per cent were women. Indeed, this proportion has not changed over the last two decades.²⁵ At country level, the picture can be even bleaker. In India, for example, half of all women – 187 million people – are unable to read and write²⁶, while in Senegal, only 39 per cent of women aged 15 years and over are literate, compared to 62 per cent of men in 2010. In fact, in 81 of the 146 countries with data for 2005-2010, more women than men lacked even the most basic literacy skills. In South and West Asia, one of the regions with the greatest literacy deficit, it is estimated that it will take another 56 years to catch up with the rest of the world.²⁷

21 UNESCO-IIEP.2011. *Gender Equality in Education: Looking Beyond Parity. An IIEP Evidence-Based Policy Forum*. Paris: UNESCO.

22 World Bank. 2011. *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*. Washington DC: World Bank.

23 UNESCO 2011. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011: The hidden crisis – Armed conflict and education*. Paris: UNESCO. p.65.

24 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL).2012c. *Global LIFE Mid-Term Evaluation Report 2006-2011. Looking Forward with Life. Literacy Initiative for Empowerment*. Hamburg, Germany: UIL. p.20.

25 UNESCO.2012a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*, Paris: UNESCO. p.11.

26 UNESCO.2012b. *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education*, Paris: UNESCO.

27 Hanemann, U. "*Learning for a viable future: Quality education for women?*". Presentation made at the EFA Forum on Gender Dimensions of Quality Education. (Oslo, 5 May 2011). Unpublished.



In short, in spite of the EFA goals agreed on at Dakar in 2000 and subsequent adult education agreements (most recently reached at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education in Belém, Brazil in 2009), governments are simply not delivering on their commitments to girls' and women's literacy.

هـ وَالْكِتَابِ :

سُورَةُ الْحَيَاةِ

أَعْلَى

وَأَوْجَدَ

الْحُسْبِ

III. OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS



For generation after generation in certain communities, girls and women have faced serious difficulties in accessing quality education, as well as cultural and structural barriers in the family, school, community, institutions and wider society.²⁸ This chapter takes a look at these barriers in a little more detail.

Socio-economic barriers to access to education

Gender disparities in access to secondary education can be traced back to how families value the education of girls, as well as their economic means. When parents in low-income or poor households are weighing up which child should benefit from a long-term investment in education, they often consider the economic and social benefits of educating a son as far outweighing those of educating a daughter, especially at the secondary level where tuitions and fees can be steep.

A girl's immediate usefulness as a care provider for siblings, income contributor, or potential bride may be deemed more valuable than the uncertain return from her education. As a result, girls who may have only started their schooling at ten years old may be pulled out as soon as they reach puberty two or three years later.

“ In Turkey, 43% of Kurdish-speaking girls from the poorest households have had fewer than two years of education, while the national average is 6%; in Nigeria, some 97% of poor Hausa-speaking girls have had fewer than two years of education. ”

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010

There is also, however, a clear financial dimension to the decision-making. At secondary level, the UNESCO 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report underscores that gender disparities in access are usually greater or lesser according to household wealth.²⁹ For example, in a low-income country such as Bangladesh, almost 60 per cent of boys from richer households will enter lower secondary education, compared with 40 per cent of girls.

In Cambodia, research conducted by the National Education Partnership (NEP) in 2007 showed that the total school fees expenditure for parents sending one child to a public primary and lower secondary school are on average KHR443,800 (USD109) or 8.6 per cent of an average family's annual income. With an average of 5.7 children per family, the cost of educating all children becomes extremely difficult. Faced by such financial constraint, families tend to decide to send boys to school rather than girls.³⁰ The same trend is observed in Turkey, where girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school in response to low household budgets.

28 UNESCO. 2012d. *Removing Gender Barriers to Literacy for Women and Girls in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok: UNESCO.

29 UNESCO. 2012. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*, Paris: UNESCO. p.184.

30 National Education Partnership (NEP). 2007. *Education Watch Cambodia: Summary Report on the Impact of Informal School Fees*. Manila: ASPBAE.



Social norms and cultural expectations

Pressures to conform to social norms and cultural expectations have a heavy influence on a girl's life trajectory, even beyond shaping household and reproductive roles. Many parents fear that their daughters will become alienated from traditional lifestyles and values, or not make good wives and mothers, if they go to school. Parents also worry about the safety of their daughters traveling to and from secondary school. Daughters also learn from an early age that only boys can be leaders in the community and become seriously under-represented at the level of political and economic decision-making. In some countries, women may constitute less than 10 per cent of all elected leaders, such as councillors or mayors, at local levels.³¹

Women who do decide to pursue literacy training often receive little support, financial or otherwise, from their husbands or other relatives, sometimes due to concerns about the learning process, but most often due to embedded cultural attitudes towards women and their need for schooling. Fears are compounded when classes are held some distance away, clash with household and work commitments, or are organized at times of the day when it is not considered safe for women to leave their homes.

Rural dwelling

Life in a rural setting affects access to education for both boys and girls at the beginning of primary school, but by the later grades only girls are negatively affected.³² In Pakistan, for example, nearly half of females living in rural areas have never been to school, while this is true for only 14 per cent of urban males. The share of 15- to 19-year-olds who make it to upper secondary is also roughly twice as high in urban areas as in rural areas.³³

The reasons for this disparity may be that in rural areas, as girls grow up, more demands are made on them to perform household tasks. In the Gambia, where nearly two-thirds of the population lives in rural villages, many girls are expected to work in the home rather than go to school, and initiation rites at puberty sometimes require girls to spend extensive periods away from school. Rural girls may also receive less encouragement to pursue their education as it is considered that they should prepare for marriage. Since a girl's allegiance after marriage usually belongs to the family of her future


“ I hope international organizations, social groups and governments can pay attention to rural women's development and skills training. ”

Wang Xiuying, rural woman from Gansu, China
Source: Case study, the Gansu training project in China

31 United Nations. 2010. *The World's Women 2010: Status and Statistics*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. New York: United Nations.

32 UNESCO-IIEP. 2011. *Gender Equality in Education: Looking Beyond Parity. An IIEP Evidence-Based Policy Forum*. Paris: UNESCO.

33 UNESCO. 2012a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*, Paris: UNESCO.



husband, the parents may further perceive that any investment in their daughter's education will be lost.

Gender inequality is not just a concern for developing countries

Globally, women are responsible for 60 to 80 per cent of household chores and childcare, and account for 58 per cent of unpaid work.³⁴ In high income countries, women's roles as child carers influence the amount of time spent in employment later on. In the Netherlands, for example, where women have above-average educational attainment level among OECD countries, over 55 per cent of female employment is on a part-time basis as it allows women to free up time for childcare.

Source: OECD. 2011. *Doing Better for Families*. Paris: OECD. (<http://www.oecd.org/social/family/doingbetter>).

Education policies and financing

Some of the most enduring obstacles to equal opportunity in education are rooted in education policies themselves which tend to focus on formal schooling, with little attention paid to special difficulties that block the educational progression of girls and women and impact on their education outcomes.

There is often a lack of recognition of the special needs of minority population groups and indigenous knowledge systems in the school environment and classroom, particularly those of girls within such groups. These problems are heightened by the absence of diversity in schools and the lack of mother language education – factors which lead to early drop-out. Globally an estimated two-thirds of girls from ethnic minorities are out of school in their countries.³⁵

In addition, education systems are usually not flexible enough to enable re-enrolment for girls who have dropped out of school due to poor motivation, early marriage, pregnancy, motherhood or family obligations. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, more than 50 per cent of girls are reported to give birth before the age of 20. Yet countries continue to implement policies and practices at secondary schools that exclude pregnant girls and young mothers from continuing their education.³⁶

The unequal distribution of government educational resources poses another serious barrier to gender parity in secondary education enrolments. Irrespective of issues related to weak coverage of secondary schooling in geographically remote and rural areas, the funding available for the maintenance of school buildings can have a significant impact on girls' education. There may be concerns about the suitability of school buildings, especially when primary and secondary schools lack bathrooms

34 Michelle Bachelet. 2012. *Better skills and better policies lead to better lives for women*. <http://oecdeducationtoday.blogspot.fr/2012/>. Posted 23 May 2012.

35 World Bank. 2011. *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*. Washington DC: World Bank.

36 Plan International. 2011. *State of Girls' Education in Africa: Achievement since 2000, Challenges and Prospects for the Future*.



and sanitary facilities. An ASPBAE-UNGEI report on Gender, Equality and Education in South Asia found that many girls drop out of school at the onset of menstruation, partly because there are no separate toilet facilities for them.³⁷ A study in Nepal also reported that the lack of separate toilets for boys and girls – as well as school water supplies – can be damaging to girls in terms of their attendance and learning achievement, especially in higher grades.³⁸

Gender stereotyping through teaching practices and instructional materials

Within both formal secondary education and the non-formal education sector, teaching practices, learning contents and the learning environment can further serve to ingrain disadvantage. In Bangladesh, teachers in a focus group discussion said that they did not want their own daughters to work after finishing their education.

This suggests that teachers express values that systematically differentiate expectations and treatment of boys and girls in education and reinforce gender stereotypes.³⁹ One longstanding form of bias that becomes particularly acute at the secondary level, for example, is the view that mathematics and science are “male” subjects, which girls are neither expected to master or enjoy.

Gender stereotyping is also manifested in curricula, textbooks and teaching processes which discriminate against girls and transmit discrimination into the broader community. Meanwhile, differences in knowledge and basic skills acquisition and language competency can go unnoticed for a long time, especially for female students from linguistic minority groups, or in situations where girls are given fewer opportunities to speak up in class. The immediate impact of such gender bias is felt on girls’ motivation to learn. At secondary level, the availability of female teachers as role models can have an important impact on motivating girls to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or the so-called the “STEM” subjects.

Violence

Violence remains an important barrier to girls’ participation. The ASPBAE-UNGEI report on Gender, Equality and Education in South Asia noted that “*two out of every three school-going children in India have confided to being victims of corporal punishment or physical abuse*”. Girls often

37 Narayan, S., Rao, N., and Khan, M. 2010. *Gender, Equality and Education. A Report Card on South Asia*. Mumbai, India: ASPBAE.

38 Centre for Education Research, Innovation & Development. 2009. *Gender Issues in School Education*. Kathmandu: CERID. (Education for All Formative Research Project Study Report 34).

39 UNESCO. 2011. *Asia and the Pacific End-of-Decade Notes on Education for All Progress: Youth and Adult Literacy (Goal 4)*. (Unpublished).



experience gender-based harassment such as teasing and physical contact by boys and male teachers and these incidents go unreported.⁴⁰ School-based violence, particularly sexual violence and other threats to girls' physical safety, hinder girls' attendance at school and, therefore, acquisition of literacy. Furthermore, girls' mobility is often limited by parents for fear of attack or pregnancy.⁴¹

Lack of recognition and support for second chance literacy and non-formal education programmes

Lastly, ministries of education do not give full recognition to second-chance, non-formal education and literacy programmes that exist outside of the formal system. As a result, investments in non-formal skills training and adult literacy programmes for women tend to be modest and very few pilot projects are scaled up or replicated nationwide. Even when adolescent girls or young women succeed in enrolling in socio-economic empowerment, literacy and skills training programmes in their communities, little provision is made for them to build on their new skills by re-entering the formal schooling streams, obtaining equivalent qualifications or finding employment in the formal economy.⁴²

“ We really believe that we are creating a social movement of girls who can voice their own needs. ”

Staff member, The Colourful Girls Programme
Source: Case study, The Colourful Girls Programmes in Myanmar

40 DFID Human Development Resource Centre. 2012. *Gender Audit of Nepal's School Sector Reform Programme*. Cambridge: DFID.

41 UNESCO. 2012d. *Removing Gender Barriers to Literacy for Women and Girls in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok: UNESCO.

42 Unterhalter, E., North, A. and Parkes, J. 2010. *Gender Equality and Women and Girls' Education, 1995-2010: How much is there a space for hope?* Paper for UNESCO 15-year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action. London: Institute of Education.





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IV. WHY FOCUS ON SECONDARY EDUCATION AND LITERACY FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN?



Rapid and profound changes in the global economy over the past two decades have had direct and indirect impacts on increasing the demand for girls' and women's education overall. Steady progress in the education of girls and women at post-primary level has been more challenging however. This is of course related to the political, financial and institutional determinants of investment by governments. But within communities, it is also due to the fact that the period of secondary education coincides with the critical age of adolescence, when girls come up against the enormous societal and cultural pressures mentioned in the previous chapter, and are thus more susceptible to abandoning school.

There is ample evidence that secondary education (or its equivalent) and literacy programmes can nonetheless play a catalytic role in empowering girls and women with the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to make qualitative improvements to their lives and to claim their rights. Outlined briefly below are some of the main arguments for why governments should now renew their commitments to, and mobilize support for, secondary education and literacy for girls and women.

The empowerment perspective

While gender roles are shaped from birth onwards, it is during adolescence that socio-economic status, social norms and cultural expectations begin to generate a stronger influence on a girl's cognitive, socio-emotional and physical development. Outside the home, she begins to discover and explore her interests and, at school, her academic preferences and career options begin to become clearer. It is during this critical period that her trajectory in life, and her understanding of her place in the world, begins to take shape.

When girls and women go to school, or participate in a literacy programme, they not only acquire fundamental literacy skills and academic knowledge, but they are empowered to make key decisions and take charge of their lives. This has a transformative effect on their self-esteem, confidence and motivation.⁴³ Not only do newly literate women feel better about themselves, but they gain the confidence to seek out income generation and employment opportunities, financial services and information for meeting other social and health-related needs.

They also gain the confidence to participate more actively in their communities and are emboldened to exercise their right to political and economic participation. One study found that women who took part in literacy programmes in Turkey were more likely to vote and to participate in community organizations than peers lacking literacy skills.⁴⁴ Still another

“ The good thing was to learn at this age. We are demanding our rights and entitlements. We are confident and speak in front of people who are powerful. ”

Project participant, Sahajani Shiksha Kendra programme
Source: Case study, the Sahajani Shiksha Kendra programme, Nirantar, Uttar Pradesh, India

43 Martinez, R. and Fernandez, A. 2009. *The Social and Economic Impact of Illiteracy-Analytical model and pilot study*. Santiago: UNESCO.

44 Kagitcibasi, C., et al. 2005. Cited in *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life*. Paris: UNESCO. p.139.



study found that women who had spent two years in state-run literacy programmes in Nepal had more political knowledge and greater confidence that they could serve as political representatives, than women who had not.⁴⁵

Educated girls and women also tend to delay marriage and have fewer children which, in developing countries, reduces the risk of pregnancy-related mortality, as well as the costs associated with raising large families. Maternal education, furthermore, has proven benefits for other development goals, such as reducing child mortality and improving neo-natal health. The UNESCO 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report estimated that if all women in sub-Saharan Africa were provided with secondary or higher education, the under-five mortality rate in the region would be reduced by half.

To conclude, there is strong evidence to suggest that a mother's education and literacy level has a positive impact on the education of her children, particularly her daughters. The higher the level of women's education, the longer their daughters stay in school, with consequent improvements in social, health and economic outcomes.

The economic imperative and poverty reduction

Girls and women's education do not exist in isolation from the broader economic, political and social context. In a world with a greater youth cohort than ever before, and 1.3 billion young people living in developing countries, those who miss out on education and training, or have few marketable skills, face a higher risk of exclusion from the workforce, from decent work opportunities and sustainable livelihoods.

Primary education (regardless of gender) is certainly not enough for young people to be able to function optimally in an increasingly fragile, global economy. As the UNESCO 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report has argued, secondary education is a minimum today for all young people to gain the foundation skills they will need to keep them out of the poverty trap.

The possibility of social mobility out of poverty must become a reality for larger proportions of national populations, particularly for girls and women. Failure to ensure girls' access to secondary schooling increases the chances of transmitting poverty and illiteracy from generation to generation. A quality education, including in the areas of science and technology, can help ensure that girls and women can access decent jobs and make a real contribution to sustainable development in their communities. Non-formal education also becomes strategically important in the case of adult women who may have missed out on educational opportunities in their childhood or youth.

45 Burchfield, S., Hua, H., Baral, D. and Rocha, V. 2002a. *A Longitudinal Study of the Effect of Integrated Literacy and Basic Education Programs on the Participation of Women in Social and Economic Development in Nepal*. Boston: World Education/ Washington, DC: USAID Office of Women in Development.



V. DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN: SOME EXAMPLES



Increasing access to secondary education provision

Around the world, various policies and programmes have shown that it is possible to redress socio-economic and geographical inequalities in access to lower secondary education when they generate an enabling environment and are accompanied by targeted measures for reducing the financial burden on household income.

Bangladesh – Stipends open the door for girls’ schooling

In 1991, girls constituted only about 33 per cent of enrolment at the secondary education level in Bangladesh and only a relatively small percentage passed the Secondary School Certificate. Against this background, the Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Programme, introduced by the Government of Bangladesh in 1991, set out to increase girls’ access to secondary education in rural areas.

Covering 121 of Bangladesh’s 507 sub-districts, the project has significantly contributed to improving the quality of the learning environment through teacher training, establishing performance incentives for schools and students, and by improving water and sanitation facilities. To date, more than 33,000 teachers have been trained under this project, along with 64,000 members of school management committees and another 64,000 members of Parent-Teacher Associations. Twenty-five new schools were established to enhance access to secondary education in very remote areas and in disadvantaged communities and since 1993, the programme has provided the families of participating students with tuition stipends.

As a result of all these efforts, girls’ enrolment in secondary education in Bangladesh jumped from 1.1 million in 1991 to 3.9 million in 2005. Female enrolment in secondary education, as a percentage of total enrolment, increased from 33 per cent in 1991 to close to 55 per cent in 2008. Secondary School Certificate pass rates for girls in the project area increased from 39 per cent in 2001 to 63 per cent in 2008. Additional, indirect benefits have also accrued, including a reduction in early-age marriages and reduced fertility rates, better nutrition and more females employed with higher incomes.

Source: World Bank: The Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Programme (FSSAP).

Bridging the gap between formal and non-formal schooling



Non-formal education programmes are a powerful means of imparting literacy and skills training to adolescent girls and women who missed out on formal schooling when they were younger. The graduates of such programmes often find it difficult to cross over to the formal education system if they wish to explore continuing or higher education pathways.⁴⁶ As part of efforts to widen access to education and generate synergies between formal and non-formal education systems, NGOs have been working alongside governments to implement 'bridge year' approaches, as well as equivalency programmes. Usually corresponding to grades four to six of national education systems, such programmes bring women up to speed on literacy skills and key competencies as preparation for their reinsertion into formal education streams.

The Gambia – Challenging social norms through an education re-entry programme

Although the national government of The Gambia has an official policy on gender equality in education, as in many other countries, girls find it more difficult than boys to realize their right to a quality education. There is often a strict gender division of labour in households, with females largely confined to domestic chores and many girls encouraged into early marriage.

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education's Re-entry Programme for Girls targets girls who have dropped out of school due to social, financial or other reasons. Initiated in 2002, the programme employs a multi-pronged approach, including tertiary education, with each participant receiving extensive guidance and counseling services – including personal, social and vocational assistance.

The programme also addresses financial needs by providing each participant with a full scholarship. Regular discussions and conferences are held on issues such as sexual harassment and abuse, which are often factors in decisions to drop out of school, while participants are informed of their educational and other rights as girls and women.

Since it was introduced in 2002, the programme has helped 521 girls begin or resume their education, and 258 have now completed their secondary schooling. Others are still pursuing their studies or have moved into the private sector. One young girl who entered the programme in 2007 completed grade 12 two years later and went on to Gambia College for her teaching certificate. *"I teach mathematics and science at upper basic level,"* she reported. *"Had it not been for this programme, I would have many children and a husband not of my choosing."*

Source: Sock, A. and Jatta, T. 2012. The re-entry programme for girls in the Gambia: The Gambia Country Report.

46 Unterhalter, E., North, A. and Parkes, J. 2010. *Gender Equality and Women and Girls' Education, 1995-2010: How much is there a space for hope?* Paper for UNESCO 15-year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action. London: Institute of Education.



Indonesia – Non-formal Education Equivalency Programme

Indonesia has achieved its goal of universal primary education, but it faces a substantial gender gap in secondary education, with girls accounting for 70 per cent of dropouts at this level. The Non-Formal Educational Equivalency Programme in Indonesia is an example of how a diverse package of services can meet the needs of girls who drop out of school for different reasons in rural areas.

The programme offers three different packages – labeled A, B and C – each tailored to the time constraints, goals and aspirations of the participants and varying in the balance of academic and vocational coursework. Package C, for example, offers the equivalent of a diploma from a formal upper secondary school and has a strong vocational emphasis that gives girls the skills to become entrepreneurs.

The equivalency programme also uses a mix of delivery modalities to deliver educational services. Homeschooling is available for learners whose families may be opposed to their attending school in a structured environment, or for girls who have had to drop out of school after marriage or the birth of a child.

A special Disaster Service Mobile Class has been designed to reach girls in areas affected by earthquakes, floods and other disasters. This includes not only teaching materials but tents, wheelchairs, and psychological counseling services. Finally, classes may be offered morning, evening and night. As Yusuf Hadi, a programme director, put it, *“We work with each individual student to make their schedule. We just want them to finish school.”*

Source: Case study on Providing Education Opportunities to Adolescent Girls in Indonesia through Non-Formal Equivalency Programs, prepared for UNESCO Bangkok, May 2012.

“ Most of my students are girls, because parents send their sons to the formal school 40 kilometres away. They aren't comfortable sending their daughters that far, so they come to our centre. ”

Iwan, a tutor at a village-based non-formal equivalency programme in Indonesia.

Source: Case study on Providing Education Opportunities to Adolescent Girls in Indonesia through Non-Formal Equivalency Programmes

Literacy as a pathway to economic empowerment and social inclusion



Different programmes have sought to combine non-formal education, literacy, functional skills and competency-based training for marginalized girls, building on the recognition that, in the most impoverished communities, women can be dynamic activators of community micro-enterprise development and communal self-help mechanisms.

China – A rural woman fulfils her potential

Wang Xiuying personifies the talent waiting to be tapped when literacy training is made available to adult women in rural areas. Born and raised in Gansu in the west of China and the upper reaches of the Yellow River, Wang struggled in school and dropped out in 2003 while in the second year of junior high school. Her life prospects seemed bleak in a rural area where most of her fellow Zhenyuan County residents were struggling to make a living through agriculture.

In 2005, however, the Women's Federation of Zhenyuan opened the Secondary Vocational School of Zhenyuan as part of a government-sponsored project designed to train poor women to make the sachets for which the region is known. Zhenyuan sachets use simple materials – a needle, thread and colourful cloth or silk – and are traditional decorations associated with Dragon Boat Festivals. As symbols of blessings, good health and warding off evil, they are popular gifts.

Wang Xiuying learned the art of embroidering sachets as part of the China-UK Older Girls Training Project. The project also included instruction on how to purchase materials and market sachets in hotels and other outlets. Wang was captivated by the artistry and creativity involved in this folk tradition, but the experience also unleashed her entrepreneurial instincts. She convinced other girls to join her endeavour and created the Wang Xiuying Sisters' Sachets Embroidery Workshop, which has since evolved into a successful company serving markets as diverse as Japan, Malaysia and France.

The project allowed Wang to undergo training in her village and to make the sachets from her home. She, in turn, has transformed the lives of numerous women around her and their families. Wang believes that her experience need not be unusual. Peasant women, she says, are ready, willing and able to learn. "I hope international organizations, social groups and governments can pay attention to rural women's development and skills training," she stated.

Source: Case study on the Gansu training project prepared for UNESCO Beijing, 2012.



Myanmar – Girls taking charge of their lives through education

The Colourful Girls Programme in Myanmar harnesses personal and social empowerment as the key to increasing the educational and life prospects of 7th and 8th grade girls from disadvantaged families in Myanmar. Founded by a group of Myanmar female volunteers and supported by an international advisor, it began by dialoguing with local communities to garner the support of community leaders and parents towards generating a more supportive learning environment for girls and women. The programme then employed three main strategies to improve educational and career opportunities for the participants.

Firstly, it provides individual counseling for each girl to support “personal transformation,” including greater self-awareness and confidence to make decisions. Secondly, it builds a sense of connectedness with other girls through “by-girls, for-girls” activities such as advocacy projects and after-school discussion groups. Last but not least, the programme undertakes its own research and organizes advocacy and outreach activities on issues such as violence against women. The aim is to encourage governmental and non-governmental agencies to include preventive strategies in their own programming.

The programme is relatively inexpensive – about USD 100 per direct beneficiary per year – and is thus sustainable and replicable. Programme managers are frank about their desire to foster broad social change in Myanmar by giving adolescent girls a sense of empowerment. *“We really believe that we are creating a social movement of girls who can voice their own needs,”* said a staff member. But the most powerful impact thus far is apparent in the enhanced skills and sense of confidence of the individual participants.

Source: Case Study on Good/Noteworthy Practices on Girls’ Secondary Education in Myanmar: The Colourful Girls Programmes, prepared for UNESCO Bangkok, April 2012.



Niger – Adapting literacy training to the needs of girls and women

The government literacy programme in Niger is operated under the Directorate of Literacy and Adult Education and adopts targeted measures to address the needs of rural girls and women. Programme beneficiaries receive literacy and functional life skills training in mother-tongue languages in areas that are useful for their daily activities and for income generation. The programme was first established in 1987 and at that time operated in a single centre. It now exists in all eight regions of Niger.

The results are heartening: the programme has reached over 45,000 women, while more than 900 lifelong learning centres have been established and operate throughout the country. Part of its success is attributed to the content and teaching materials, which are all designed to respond to the real-life needs of girls and women, the primary programme beneficiaries. Another unique feature is that programme participants organize themselves into groups and earn money from the skills acquired in the course of the training. Under the supervision of decentralized literacy units, women are also given the opportunity to become independent economic agents.

To date, over 800 women's groups have been supported and over 2,000 management committee members of women's groups have been trained to participate in the management of income-generating activities. Girls and women are given a voice, and the skills to participate in, local development initiatives.

Source: 2012 Honorable Mention of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize: the Winners of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes, 2012. (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002175/217539E.pdf>).



Gender-sensitive competency-based training can lead to poverty reduction

Even though women create a substantial proportion of micro-enterprises in the informal economy in low-income countries and a significant percentage in the formal sector, the skills developed and long hours worked are often invisible to policymakers. As a result, vocational skills training for girls and young women tends to reinforce societal biases associated with household, reproductive and childcare roles, rather than recognizing the need for additional skills training as a pathway towards poverty reduction and expanding their businesses. In the non-formal sector, extending access to, and diversifying the content of, technical and vocational skills training can increase income earning opportunities for girls who have previously had little connection with formal learning environments, while empowering them to learn skills that have traditionally been viewed as the exclusive domain of men.

Cambodia, Indonesia and Nepal – Technology-based training for marginalized girls

In 2002, UNESCO launched its regional “Technology-based Training for Marginalized Girls” project to respond to the request for assistance from governments in South East Asia to facilitate the insertion of girls into occupations and technical and vocational training streams traditionally dominated by men.

Pilot projects were implemented in Cambodia, Indonesia and Nepal, which generated subsequent lessons for programme replication and policy formulation. The planning process took into consideration the multiple needs and struggles of young girls living in remote and impoverished communities and established a project framework, learning methodology and delivery arrangements around family and communal obligations as well as the natural learning rhythm of the trainees.

All of the courses built upon existing local technological systems and practical experience (for example, sericulture and silk weaving, livestock and poultry farming or mechanics), with entry points through the formal vocational training system. A diverse range of non-formal training providers played a role as intermediaries and development actors in the target communities.

Source: Technology-based Vocational Skills Training for Marginalized Girls and Young Women

(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001626/162605e.pdf>).



Camfed provides business skills to poor young rural women

Camfed, a major international NGO, has been working for many years to help girls get into education and finish secondary school. More recently it started the Seed Money Programme for alumnae who were poor, rural and economically inactive. The goal is to help them create livelihood opportunities in villages where opportunities are scarce.

The Seed Money Programme provides rural young women with training in business management skills (including record keeping, market competition and marketing), a grant to help set up an enterprise, peer mentoring to support the new business, and access to micro loans at low interest once the business is up and running. The programme started in Zimbabwe in 1998 and has been replicated in Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

In 2007 in Zimbabwe, 13,614 people took part at a cost of USD 6.20 each. The Zimbabwe programme was successful even in the extremely difficult circumstances of the economic crisis that started in 2008. Women have opened businesses in gardening and livestock, sales of produce and cooked food, and sewing and hairdressing. By 2010, 93 per cent of the businesses that were started via the grants had made a profit. Nearly all the women reinvested some of the profit into the business. Women interviewed said they felt it had made a major difference to their lives, improving their standard of living and the respect they received within their households and communities.

Source: UNESCO.2012. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*. Paris: UNESCO. p. 291.

“ The participation of women in upper secondary TVET is one of the factors that might influence their employment status. As such, it can be analyzed with other factors, such as their participation in TVET programmes provided outside of the formal education system and the demand for female workers in the labour market by industry and occupation ”

Source: Global Education Digest 2011, p.54

Senegal – Vocational skills training for girls at risk of social exclusion

Although gender parity has largely been achieved in Senegal at the primary level, on average girls do not stay in school as long as boys in middle and secondary schools. The *Education Qualifiante des Jeunes et des Adultes – EQJA* (Skills Development for Youth and Adults) project in Senegal targets young girls and adult women who, for economic or other reasons, have never attended school, or who dropped out along the way. Other groups targeted include young people with disabilities, those attending traditional Koran schools known as *daara* and girls participating in apprenticeships.

The project was established in 2003 by the Ministry of Education in Senegal and UNESCO, working with the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) in Paris as an implementation partner. EQJA's basic strategy is to teach reading, writing and numeracy skills through methodologies that equip girls with vocational skills. The teaching strikes a balance between national languages and international languages, notably French and English that are important for trade. The “learning by imitation” methods, often used by bosses in apprenticeships, are replaced by individual coaching, and teaching modules are shorter than those in the formal sector.

The programme organizes girls into small-scale production units where teams of five use their newly acquired literacy skills to perform tasks such as ordering supplies, using and maintaining equipment, preparing raw material, quality control, marketing and bookkeeping. For example, Francoise Malack, a 25-year old school dropout from Tambacounda region, learned how to use local produce in baking. The training “helped me work on my own producing local pastry to generate income and bring me social recognition in this area in my family and community.”

Source: Case study on L'Education des filles et promotion de l'enseignante dans le sous-secteur de l'enseignement moyen du Sénégal prepared for UNESCO Dakar, June 2012.



Promote labour rights and employment prospects through literacy training

In developed and developing countries alike, workplace discrimination based on gender and cultural acts as a brake on respect for women's labour rights and career prospects. Outreach activities targeting employers and empowerment for workers through literacy training can help women in vulnerable situations to assert their employment and other rights.

India – Affirming employment rights in India through literacy training

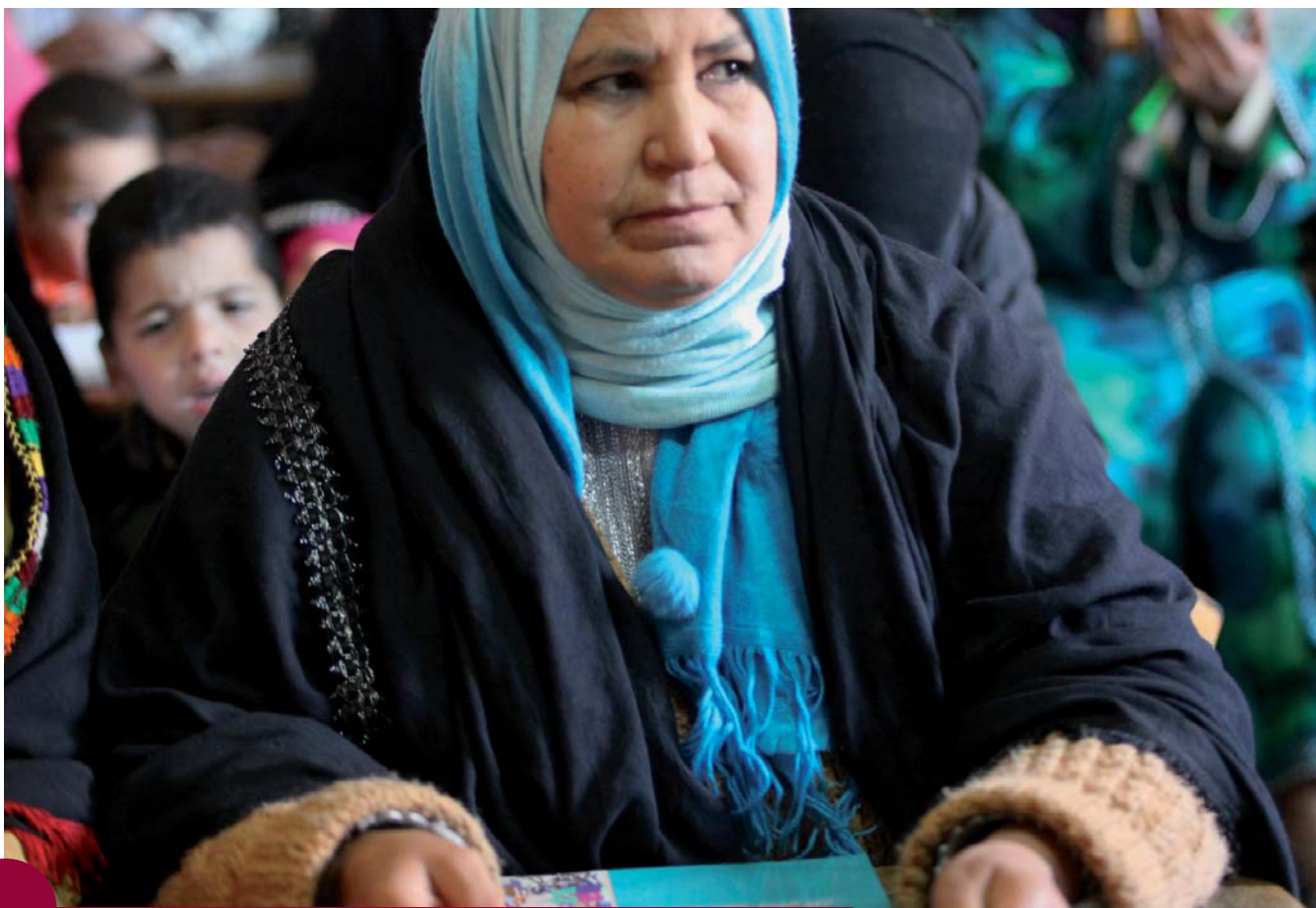
In the Lalitpur district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, poverty is widespread and gender and caste-based discrimination common. Women's literacy rates can be as low as 20 per cent in Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) areas. Large numbers of people are landless wage labourers and regular and secure employment activities are hard to find.

The Sahajani Shiksha Kendra (SSK) programme, launched in 2002, is implemented by the Delhi-based Centre for Gender and Education (or Nirantar) and offers 18 months of basic literacy training in village-based centres, as well as ten-day literacy camps to sustain and build upon what has already been learned. In 2005 the national government passed a National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) guaranteeing at least 100 days of employment annually to rural households and protecting equal wages for women and men.

In response, Nirantar launched a "NREGA-literacy" programme, to help women realize their employment rights. The programme arranged meetings with local bank officials who explained how to manage a bank account and women also received guidance in the early stages on how to withdraw their National Rural Employment Guarantee Act wages and deposit money, etc. A broadsheet is regularly produced to sustain the skills of neo-literate women and solidarity events bring participants together to share common concerns and demand accountability from local officials.

After participating in the NREGA-literacy programmes, which have now reached 2,500 women in 125 Lalitpur villages, women have used their new-found skills to negotiate a better wage rate in the local rural economy and gain recognition as individual rights bearers within their households. Forty newly literate women have been trained as supervisors and women have begun pushing for improvements in working conditions, including the provision of crèche facilities, water and first-aid boxes. Summarizing her feelings about the project, one SSK participant declared, *"The good thing was to learn at this age. We are demanding our rights and entitlements. We are confident and speak in front of people who are powerful."*

Source: Case study, Sahajani Shiksha Kendra, Lalitpur (Uttar Pradesh) – Literacy and Education for Women's Empowerment / A Project of Nirantar, prepared for UNESCO Bangkok, 2012.



Morocco – Socio-economic integration of women through literacy for employment

The Illiteracy Eradication Directorate in Morocco acknowledges the key role of women in the overall development process. The government sponsored Literacy and Post Literacy programme takes a holistic approach to service delivery, linking literacy with the socio-economic integration of neo-literate women.

All learners take up a module on 'literacy for employment' which has been designed using a participatory approach and which consolidates activity-specific language skills, occupational skills and generic skills. A post literacy training programme is in place to ensure that the results of the programme are sustained and that its beneficiaries can actually apply their newly-acquired skills and help themselves, their families and their communities to benefit from income-generation and other community activities. Community learning centres are also being established in order to enhance and sustain literate environments, conducive to lifelong learning.

Over a period of seven years (2005-2011), the programme has managed to reach over 4.5 million people, 80 per cent of whom are women. The current government programme envisages continuing its effort and reducing illiteracy to 20 per cent by 2016. It will be expanded in order to reach a million beneficiaries annually. The government's intension is also to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, particularly NGOs.

Source: 2012 Honorable Mention of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy: the Winners of the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes, 2012. (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002175/217539E.pdf>).



Sri Lanka – A rural woman takes on the gender digital divide

Despite relatively high literacy rates for both men and women, Sri Lanka has one of the highest labour force gender gaps in Asia – 65 per cent participation for males and only 35 per cent for females. Part of the problem is the country's substantial "gender digital divide." When A. G. Gampa Jeeval, a 40-year old Sinhalese woman, was attending school over two decades ago, she and her classmates had no access to computers. Given the growing importance of information and communication technology (ICT) in the workplace, Gampa understands that she and other women of her generation are at a disadvantage. *"The reason why many people are underemployed is a lack of computer knowledge,"* she believes. *"When you go for an interview they check how fast you are using the computer and your level of proficiency."*

In 2003 the Government of Sri Lanka launched a series of mutually complementary projects under the umbrella of the e-Sri Lanka Initiative to provide ICT access and training to under-served groups, especially women living in rural areas. The initiative included setting up Nenasalas ("Knowledge Centres"), which are shared public facilities that provide access to ICT as well as training in how to use these new technologies. As of 2010, 629 such centres had been established.

Gampa saw a leaflet at the local temple describing the weekly ICT courses and signed up for classes offering instruction on widely-used office applications and internet telephony tools. She was originally trained as a chartered accountant but had been running a bakery for the last 15 years. She now uses her new skills not only for managing her business accounts but for *"communicating with my husband when he's away."* *"It's a very good project,"* she says. *"People like me who don't know much can come and learn. Even if people at home know (about computers), coming to a place like this is very useful."*

Of the six women between the ages of 20 and 45 attending her class, only one or two currently have jobs. Nevertheless, Gampa sees the classes as giving her other classmates a professional edge. *"You can easily learn things you don't know about, keep in contact with people and meet people who can help you in your field,"* she explains.

Source: Case study on e-Sri Lanka Initiative: Improving women's vocational skills, prepared for UNESCO Bangkok, June 2012.

Health and well-being through literacy training



Low levels of education can have a harmful effect on the health of girls and women, just as poor health can severely limit their learning capabilities. For example there is evidence of increased likelihood of maternal death among poorly educated mothers (915 deaths per 100,000 live births) in countries that record high levels of gender inequality.⁴⁷ Another example comes from sub-Saharan Africa, which is one of the most challenged regions in terms of illiteracy rates among adult women, who constitute 62 per cent of the total adult illiterate population.⁴⁸

Many women living in rural villages have little or no access to formal or non-formal education or to information on matters of personal, maternal and family health. A number of literacy programmes therefore aim to strengthen reading and writing skills through practical issues such as the importance of boiling water for drinking and washing hands with soap, birth spacing, how to prevent and deal with diseases, hygiene in breast feeding and the importance of check-ups.

Cambodia – Teaching literacy while promoting maternal and child health

According to UIS data⁴⁹, the national literacy rate for adult women in Cambodia was 66 per cent in 2009, versus 83 per cent for men. However, a joint Government-UN survey also revealed that the functional literacy rates, especially for rural women, were much lower. The country's health status is also low compared with other countries in the region.

The Supporting Maternal and Child Health Improvement and Building Literate Environments (SMILE) project in Cambodia has generated content related to maternal and child health as the vehicle for teaching functional literacy skills to young mothers in rural villages. As a village chief put it, *“Education and health are the priority in our commune. They go hand in*

47 Gender inequality can be measured using the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which consists of 5 indicators (maternal mortality, adolescent fertility, parliamentary representation, education attainment and labor market participation) and 3 dimensions (reproductive health, empowerment and labour market). The UNDP Human Development Report (2010) records the 10 countries which are farthest from reaching gender equality: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Central African Republic, Papua New Guinea, Afghanistan, and Mali.

48 UNESCO. 2012. *EFA Global Monitoring Report: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work*. Paris: UNESCO. p.328

49 UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, April 2012 release.



hand. If you acquire knowledge, you will be happy to learn more, and you will be able to take care of health better."

The project was initiated by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO and implemented in partnership with a national NGO, the Cambodian Women's Development Agency. It targeted 158 expectant and new mothers with young children under five in five villages as well as two male learners. Nine local facilitators, all female, were recruited and trained, and the literacy classes took place in local community centres that were easily accessible on foot.

The village chief in Kchao observed that prior to the SMILE project adult women had little incentive to learn reading, writing and calculating but that these attitudes changed when the instruction produced "important benefits" related to their families' well-being. Participants learned to maintain a health card documenting their children's weight and vaccinations as well as an "income and expenditure checklist" to keep track of family income and expenses.

Suon Sokin, a participant from Kchao, stated that, *"After I attended the SMILE class for 3 months I came to know that my past habits on health were not correct. Now I have stopped chewing food and I have told my neighbour not to chew food for her children. The SMILE class taught me about infectious diseases, and I can now easily prevent them."*

Source: Case Study on Supporting Maternal and Child Health Improvement and Building Literate Environments (SMILE) prepared by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) for UNESCO Bangkok, June 2012.

“ I have attended school up to grade 3 but could not continue because my family was poor and I forgot the alphabet. I work as a farmer for somebody else's land, but I don't know how many vegetables I cultivate and how much I earn per day, as I cannot read, write and calculate to record it. I want to know about good hygiene and teach my children. That is why I would like to learn. ”

Yem Chanda, 40-year old mother of three in Kdey Chass village in Cambodia





VI. BUILDING ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE EDUCATION



Ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women through education should be the lens through which all education policies, processes and practices are planned and evaluated. However, these intrinsic values cannot be left to chance and need to be transformed into realizable actions generating an enabling environment. This report suggests that such actions might include the following:

- strengthening the knowledge base to generate solid information on the multiple struggles and situations that girls and young women face, as an input to evidence-based policy-making as well as for the establishment of implementation and monitoring frameworks for gender equality in education;
- generating a favourable policy environment and enhancing service delivery;
- looking more closely at alternative financing options for girls' secondary education and literacy for women;
- increasing access for girls and women to safe teaching and learning environments and to education opportunities and support structures that can offer not just basic education, but counseling and referral to other social and health services as needed;
- addressing the gender power structure by engaging boys and men as allies for gender equality; and
- raising community awareness and support towards girls' and women's education.



Advancing gender-sensitive research

High quality research and data on the status of girls in secondary education and the extent of adult female illiteracy can help to gain a better understanding of the contexts in which gender inequality persists, as well as the linkages between gender, poverty, employment, reproductive health and grave diseases. Research can further help to uncover why gender differences in learning achievement are stable in some regions and not in others. Such studies, as well as action-research, case studies of good practices and impact evaluations can then become powerful tools for communicating information on school and learning environments, teaching and learning practices. What works where, and why?

Research on the gender dimensions of learning and career orientation

The UNESCO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in October 2012 with the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) to undertake a new research initiative aiming to uncover the gendered dimensions of learning and the factors creating differences between girls and boys in terms of classroom performance, transition to higher levels of education, career orientation and the job market.

Despite recent gains in girls' educational outcomes in the Asia-Pacific region, disparities persist between boys and girls in learning achievements, educational specializations, career choice and labour market integration across many countries. Inadequate job and skills training, perceptions with regard to certain career fields (which may deter girls from pursuing them) and lower wages are just some of the structural barriers facing girls and women in many of the education and employment systems across the region.

Conducted over a timeframe of three years, each year of the initiative will focus on a different comparative research topic. The initial study, which will focus on skills and job training for girls and women, will be conducted in 2013.

The importance of sex-disaggregated data

Sex-disaggregated data enables education planners to move beyond national averages in education planning to identify and examine pockets of educational disadvantage at local level and to identify disparities in education level and literacy by gender, ethnicity, geographic location, disability and economic and social status. The improved quality of data then facilitates evidence-based policy-making and the conception of targeted measures for vulnerable population groups, for which national, donor and private-sector funding and in-kind support can, in turn, be mobilized.



Education management and information systems (EMIS)⁵⁰ at national level play a key role in this process. But quantitative and qualitative data from the community level should be used to provide a more holistic understanding of girls' education and literacy needs at sub-national and local levels to feed into informed policies and programmes.

Better quality indicators are also essential for monitoring and tracking progress towards gender equality targets in national development policies and international human rights conventions, such as on the Right to Education, the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).



Generating sex-disaggregated data

Mainstreaming the need for sex-disaggregated data has not been an automatic reflex across education planning systems. There has nevertheless been progress on the generation of sex-disaggregated education data at different levels of use.

► National level

Several countries, such as Rwanda, Yemen and Palestine, amongst many others, have concretely moved to mainstream disaggregation and analysis in all reporting, data collection and research by creating tracking systems for all school pupils. One area that could be developed further, however, is that of localized data collection, accompanied by training for district education planners and municipal level structures in collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data.

► Regional monitoring frameworks

At regional level, a draft indicators framework has been elaborated in support of the 'Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training (RIPET 2007-2015)' in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). RIPET has a significant place in the African Union Action Plan for the Second Decade of Education for Africa and it was agreed that the Plan's implementation required an ongoing and well-structured monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess and measure its performance, as well as to effectively manage inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes at national level.

One of the core indicators in this framework is related to gender and culture, with the overall objective of eliminating gender disparities while enriching education systems with positive African cultural values. The strategic interventions foreseen within this core indicator include: i) mainstreaming human rights instruments into education policies and plans; ii) advocacy in order to reduce gender, geographical and social disparities in access, retention and performance in basic education and secondary level; iii) enhancing literacy competencies and developing cultural industries for economic empowerment of women and men. In relation to the second strategic intervention area, all countries are expected to maintain or establish a gender parity index, while Central Statistics offices in the SADC countries are also expected to monitor Youth (15-24 years) and Adult Literacy rates⁵¹ by sex.

► Global level

The establishment of the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) is a significant step forward in the availability of comparative data to assess progress in advancing women's empowerment around the world. It comprises over 120 maps, charts and tables featuring a wide range of sex-disaggregated indicators produced by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. It further allows readers to visualize the educational pathways of girls and boys and observe changes in gender disparities over time.

50 A System for organizing and processing Information for the Management of Educational resources and services.

51 For the purposes of the RIPET, the literacy rate is defined as "the percentage of the population aged 15-24 years and over who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his/her everyday life."



Creating national repositories for housing knowledge and research on good practices

A wealth of information and research is already available among development partners and NGOs on policies and targeted measures aimed at ensuring gender equality in education and the empowerment of girls and women. At the international level, the work by the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), for example, has been instrumental in collecting, synthesizing and disseminating good practices. These are being used to inform education policy development and the partnership has provided a common platform for collaboration on priority strategies to overcome barriers and constraints to girls' education.⁵²

At country level, Ministries of Education and their NGO implementation partners must be supported in establishing national online platforms, or repositories of information, for access by policy-makers and potential partners, as well as by learners themselves. The e-Sri Lanka Initiative, providing ICT access to women living in rural areas through Knowledge Centres, offers a model for how such platforms could become a reality.



52 UNGEI. 2012. *Formative Evaluation of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative* UNGEI, Global Report. UNGEI.



Generating a favourable policy environment

A favourable policy environment is critical for the promotion of gender equality within secondary education and for the promotion of women's literacy. In the first instance, education systems need to focus more energetically on improving access for the population groups that are currently disadvantaged due to poverty, ethnicity, caste, race, or geography. Such a focus will help address the “gender inequality traps” that affect the poor and excluded in society.⁵³ Secondly, education policies need to explicitly recognize and address the myriad economic, cultural and social biases that girls and women experience in their daily lives. Such a shift will play a critical role in eradicating gender disparity and inequality both in access to education and in teaching and learning environments.

A number of countries around the world are responding to the call to review their education systems through the lens of gender equality, starting with some of the governments featured in this report. They have demonstrated their commitment to gender-focused education and social inclusion targets, especially in relation to excluded populations such as women in remote rural areas. Examples from the case studies include: the Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Programme; the Re-entry Programme for Girls, led by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in The Gambia; the Secondary Vocational School of Zhenyuan in China and; the Knowledge Centres supported by the Government of Sri Lanka under the umbrella of the e-Sri Lanka Initiative. The Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Programme, in particular, has worked because it did not attempt to tackle wholesale reform. Rather it has remained a demonstration policy within the wider education efforts championed by the Government of Bangladesh in partnership with its development partners. In this way, the initiative has stayed focused on its singular mission, channeling funding to targeted measures and increasing the chances of impact.

In the area of adult literacy and non-formal education, there are also encouraging signs around the world. The UNESCO 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report states that several countries “...with large numbers of illiterate adults are increasing investment in national literacy programmes. Since 2003, the Literate Brazil Programme (*Programa Brasil Alfabetizado*)

53 World Bank. 2011. *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*. Washington DC: World Bank.



has provided literacy training to about 8 million learners over the age of 15. India is reconfiguring and expanding its National Literacy Mission. With a budget of US\$ 21 billion, it combines initial literacy training with ongoing post-literacy courses, with a commitment to preparing literacy materials in local languages. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, Community Learning Centres initiated by the Literacy Movement Organization, a government agency, have enrolled 3.1 million illiterates between 2000 and 2006 in basic education courses.”⁵⁴

Notwithstanding this progress, the UNESCO 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report again underscored the continuing failure of governments to back up their declarations around secondary education for girls and women’s literacy with concrete measures, also noting donors’ lack of attention to adult literacy when compared with their efforts in formal education, in particular at primary level. The non-formal education sector must be given more attention if progress is to be made towards reaching girls’ education and literacy goals.⁵⁵ Currently, learning opportunities for young mothers, illiterate women and out-of-school girls through non-formal education are mostly short-term and on a project basis. In much of Asia and the Pacific, adult learning is dependent largely on voluntary services.⁵⁶

Still more could be done by governments to integrate gender issues into national, district and community education plans and to establish legislative and institutional frameworks to initiate, coordinate, monitor and evaluate targeted initiatives. As a first step, outreach and capacity development within line Ministries and education departments at different levels of governance would help to increase awareness and understanding of the situation of girls, as well as buy-in to decisions around different action plans, outputs and activities.



Monitoring through the “4-As” rights-based approach to gender equality in education

The “4-As approach” was first outlined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment No. 13 on the Right to Education. It describes government obligations to protect, respect and fulfil the right to education in terms of making education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable:

- a) **Availability** – functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity, including safe buildings, sanitation facilities for girls and boys, women and men, safe drinking water, and trained teachers, particularly female teachers.
- b) **Accessibility** – educational institutions and programmes have to be accessible to everyone, especially the most vulnerable groups, girls and women, without discrimination; to be within safe physical reach for girls and women, either by ensuring reasonably convenient geographic location or the provision of modern

54 UNESCO.2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Unreached*, Paris: UNESCO. Summary p.18.

55 UNESCO.2011. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011: The hidden crisis – Armed conflict and education*. Paris: UNESCO.

56 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2010. *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)*. Hamburg: UIL.



technology; and to be economically affordable by making primary education or an equivalent of non-formal education, «free to all», while progressively introducing free secondary and higher education.

- c) **Acceptability** – the form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, have to be acceptable to all learners, girls and boys, women and men, by ensuring that they are gender responsive, relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality.
- d) **Adaptability** – education has to be flexible so it can be adapted to the needs of adolescent girls and women within their diverse and changing social and cultural settings.

Source: Adapted from UNESCO/UN. 1999. Right to Education: Scope and implementation. General Comment 13 on the right to education (Art. 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).



Enhancing national capacities to meet the diverse needs of girls and women



Enhancing service delivery does not just imply equipped schools, materials and resources to accommodate heightened demand at secondary level. It also implies strategic leadership, ownership and accountability, with consensus and concrete buy-in across Ministries and governance levels. It requires improved capacities among education decision-makers to link research results to the formulation of targeted, gender-responsive policies and to mainstream the gender equality lens within education leadership and management practices at all levels. It should also encourage the participation of a broad range of stakeholders in defining key equality targets as well as partnerships with NGOs, the private sector, civil society and donors to consolidate service delivery.

Looking beyond parity: strengthening gender equality in relation to educational leadership, planning and management

Following on from the Evidence-based Policy Forum on Gender Equality organized by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in October 2011, the Institute organized an E-Forum on Gender Equality in Education in March/April 2012 to further promote knowledge exchange on gender equality in relation to educational leadership in planning and management.⁵⁷ As a result of the E-Forum, three priorities were identified to take forward to the post-2015 MDG discussion: (1) inclusion of gender-responsive policies and gender-transformative programmes in the education sector; (2) gender equality in learning outcomes through access to quality education; and (3) improving female representation at all levels of the education system.

IIEP is building on its existing strategies to include implementing programmes that move beyond the UNESCO definition of 'gender blind' towards being more Gender Aware (Sensitive) --> Gender Responsive --> Gender Transformative. Furthermore, based on three case studies (Argentina, Kenya, and Viet Nam) during 2011 on gender equality in leadership, IIEP will take forward the conclusions from the analyses in order to support ministries of education in developing strategies for monitoring progress towards greater numbers of women in decision-making positions at all levels of education systems.

Source: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning

57 The Forum also focused on gender differences in student learning achievement at school and classroom levels.



Innovative financing for gender-responsive secondary education and literacy

It is essential that governments, in partnership with multinational development partners, bilateral aid institutions, non-government organizations and community-based organizations financially support girls' secondary education, non-formal education and literacy programmes and the broader support systems required to sustain learning and decision-making by women. However a number of countries will find the expansion of their secondary education systems financially untenable and there is a pressing need to help these countries in exploring alternative financing options. Such initiatives should begin with consultation across the spectrum of civil society and private sector stakeholders who are already involved in, or could be interested in financing secondary education provision for girls and women.

The Global Report on Adult Learning and Education has also pointed to the importance of “*publicly-funded education to prevent and alleviate unemployment associated with structural changes in the economy by training, retraining, skilling and up-skilling or re-skilling adult workers and communities.*”⁵⁸ The report posits that rather than short-term unsustainable charity to individuals, “*adult education represents a mechanism for activating development, along personal, social and economic dimensions.*”⁵⁹

There also needs to be a related discussion on how to make access to secondary education more affordable for girls and women in terms of financial costs. The Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Programme recognized that family resources are a significant barrier to access for girls at secondary level. It therefore provided the families of participating students with tuition stipends. Similarly, in The Gambia, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education's Re-entry Programme for Girls addressed financial needs by providing each participant with a full scholarship.

Having said this, one of the major lessons learned through years of direct investment in girls' and women's education worldwide is that the way in which resources are planned, allocated, disbursed and reported are just

58 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. 2010. *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)*. Hamburg: UIL.

59 UNESCO-UIL. 2010. *Idem*.



as critical as the amount in ensuring effective expansion, improvement and sustainability of programmes for girls' secondary education and women's literacy. When the Republic of the Marshall Islands identified teen pregnancy as a significant issue related to gender inequality, for example, it used gender-responsive budget analysis to build links across government ministries that succeeded in securing a number of budget allocations. The Ministry of Education also identified a component of a federal United States grant for adult health education which could be used to support programmes relating to teen pregnancy.⁶⁰

Senegal – Better Life, Better Future

A two-year literacy project was launched in Senegal in 2012 as part of the UNESCO Global Partnership on Girls' and Women's Education, 'Better Life, Better Future'. The UNESCO/Procter & Gamble project aims to educate about 10,000 girls and women aged 15-55 in seven different regions of Senegal – a country where fewer than 45 per cent of women could read or write in 2006.

The Sowame village of about 500 inhabitants has been one of the first villages to benefit during the first phase. A major component of the project strategy is to reach out to girls and women through mobile phones and internet, working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education in Senegal and non-governmental organizations.

"More than an act of positive discrimination for women and girls, whom as we know are the first victims of the scourge of illiteracy, this project is an innovative approach that consists of integrating information and communication technologies in the learning process," said the Minister for Preschool, Primary and Lower Secondary Education and National Languages, M. Kalidou Diallo. *"We hope that this project will have a genuinely positive impact on reducing poverty and empowering women in the regions concerned."*

Source: http://www.unesco.org/eri/cp/factsheets_ed/SN_EDFactSheet.pdf

60 Sharp, R. and Vas Dev, S. 2004. *Bridging the Gap between Gender Analysis and Gender-Responsive Budgets: Key Lessons from a Pilot Project in the Republic of the Marshall Islands*. (Hawke Research Institute working paper series, No. 25). http://www.gender-budgets.org/index.php?option=com_joomdoc&view=document&path=resources/by-region-country/asia-documents/bridging-the-gap-between-gender-analysis-and-gender-responsive-budgets-marshall-land&Itemid=543



Teaching and learning environments

Schools and classrooms

Schools are urged to adopt zero tolerance policies towards sexism, discrimination and verbal or physical violence towards girls and take concrete measures to punish offenders and to offer school counselling for girls and boys who feel themselves victim to such discrimination. Procedural guidelines and school governance mechanisms are needed that allow girls and boys equal opportunities to participate in classroom learning and ad-hoc activities, such as sporting events and political debates. Career guidance and counselling in secondary schools can also play a key role in building confidence and self-esteem by proposing alternative futures, thereby challenging traditional views of the gender roles that girls and boys are expected to assume in families and communities.

Investing in mother-tongue based education

In many countries girls and women do not have the opportunity to learn in their mother tongues. Many are forced to learn in language(s) alien to them. Therefore, mother-tongue based multilingual education should be supported for girls and women – where language is used both as a bridge for learning and as a source of local knowledge for literacy programmes. Governments can further invest in mother language education by documenting local language and knowledge, developing learning materials in local languages, mobilizing local educators and training teachers in the essentials of mother language education.

The use of the mother tongue in literacy programmes should be complemented by learning in the national or regional languages that will enable women to participate in the wider economic and political community.⁶¹ In Senegal, the Education Qualifiante des Jeunes et des Adultes – EQJA (Skills Development for Youth and Adults) managed to strike a balance between instruction in national languages and international languages, notably French and English, that are important for trade.

61 UNESCO. 2012d. *Removing Gender Barriers to Literacy for Women and Girls in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok: UNESCO.

Teaching profession



There is a pressing need in those countries lagging furthest behind in achieving their education and gender equality targets to identify qualified girls and women in the community and to encourage them to become teachers and educators to serve as a role model for other girls and women in both formal and non-formal education sectors, offering incentives for female teachers who work in remote or rural areas. In the non-formal education sector, the Campaign for Female Education (Camfed), which works with vulnerable girls in poor communities in Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, builds support for its work by training teachers and leading sensitization sessions with community members and parents. It has worked with school management and with community development committees to monitor schools to ensure that children's rights are being protected, and it trains local government members, chiefs, police and others in the basics of child protection. Camfed also engages policy-makers at the national and international level.

The Delta Women Digital Media Training Project recruits volunteer teachers to facilitate online skills acquisition

Access to education has vastly improved with the Internet. High Speed Broadband, easy-to-use PCs and a broader acceptance of virtual collaboration enable the creation of classrooms with no physical boundaries. Internet telephony tools such as WebEx, Google Video Chat and Skype have also paved the way for a new method of learning, with anything from secondary education curricula to employment skills being offered online. Electronic Education, or e-learning, means a dramatic shift in how we learn. But it can also mean a dramatic shift in how we teach.

Delta Women⁶² is a Nigerian non-profit organization dedicated to empowering Delta state women, strengthening families and transforming communities worldwide. As part of the 'No Woman Left Behind campaign', Delta Women has been providing education for girls and women at grass-roots level in Nigeria in skills such as spoken and basic written English, maths, science, vocational skills (for example baking or knitting) and a foreign language. However, the NGO also launched a 'Delta Women Digital Media Training Project', employing distance education rendered by a core team of teacher volunteers. Online volunteering services are provided to participating women in all fields, skills and art forms, with volunteers dedicating a minimum of one hour every day to teach women any skill or subject that they are specialized in. Classes are held on week days, with classroom software such as 'Blackboard' and Skype or Google Video Chat as the teaching platforms.

Source: Deltawomen: <http://www.deltawomen.org/>

62 For further details, please see: Delta Women (<http://www.causes.com/causes/787882-no-woman-left-behind/actions/1666876>).



Alternative delivery arrangements

The case studies have offered a number of other significant lessons for successful education programming for girls and women.

The need to address head-on the issues which can lead to early drop-out

In the Bangladesh case study, the quality of the learning environment was significantly improved through teacher training, by establishing performance incentives for schools and students and improving water and sanitation facilities. In The Gambia, regular discussions and conferences were held on issues such as sexual harassment and abuse, which are often factors in decisions to drop out of school.

The necessity of multi-sectoral approaches

Since young girls face multiple barriers and layers of disadvantage, a combination of services and inputs is needed to ensure their right to access fundamental services and to reduce the risk of economic and social exclusion. At the level of government, bridging the sectoral, technical, financial and human resources gap calls for a participatory dialogue and cooperation across ministries and traditional and non-traditional actors – from NGOs and the private sector to the health sector, social networks and local business communities. In Senegal, inter-ministerial cooperation through a national technical team (duplicated at local government level) has played an important role in the EQJA model, with several ministries from agriculture and fisheries to crafts involved in the various production activities.

Ensure locally relevant, learner-centred programme design, curricula, materials development and assessment

Within this broad framework of multiple challenges and literacies, it is of critical importance to ensure the relevance of programmes to learners' lives and aspirations. Beyond learning academic subjects, or the alphabet and numbers in the case of women's literacy programmes, curricula within a women's empowerment framework should include topics linked to social participation. These include sustainable livelihoods, communication, negotiation skills and networking and managing shifts in family decision-



making. Indeed the majority of programmes described in the case studies have set out to respond to the real-life needs of girls and women, combining generic literacy skills with income-generation or occupational skills and building upon traditional and local technological systems. In Niger, programme beneficiaries were trained in literacy skills in their mother tongues, combined with functional life skills, which are useful for their daily activities and for income generation. In China, literacy training was combined with traditional handcraft and entrepreneurship training.


Ensure flexible delivery modalities and learning methodologies

Delivery arrangements in many of the case studies also tackled the barriers to access for girls and women, especially in rural areas. Schedules were adapted around the daily family and work obligations of learners with classes held in proximity to where the girls and women live or work. In Indonesia, the equivalency programme employed a mix of delivery modalities to deliver educational services. Home-schooling was available for learners whose families may be opposed to them attending school in a structured environment, or for girls who had to drop out of school after marriage or the birth of a child. Mobile learning units were also equipped with learning materials, ranging from books and whiteboards to tape recorders and televisions, to provide “door-to-door” services for learners in difficult-to-reach towns and to address safety concerns that may have been part of the reason for dropping out.

Learning methodologies also need to be shaped around girls’ degree of experience with learning environments. In Myanmar, the Colourful Girls programme provided individual counselling for each girl to support personal transformation, including greater self-awareness and confidence to make decisions. It also aimed to build a sense of connectedness with other girls through “by-girls, for-girls” activities such as advocacy projects and after-school discussion groups. In Senegal, in the EQJA programme, the “learning by imitation” methods often used by bosses in apprenticeships were replaced by individual coaching, and teaching modules are shorter than those in the formal sector.

The importance of partnerships with NGOs and the private sector

When governments neither have the capacities, nor the resources, to reach marginalized girls and women in remote geographical areas or disadvantaged urban areas, service delivery can be enhanced through partnership arrangements. Civil society organizations have a long history of implementing non-formal education programmes within the broad framework of women’s literacy and empowerment. These programmes should not remain at the periphery. The success of the equivalency



programmes featured in this report further suggest that governments and civil society must work more closely together to establish systems of recognition and accreditation for non-formal education so that out-of-school girls and women, and those who have learnt in other non-formal settings, can be (re)integrated into formal schooling or vocational and professional training. Accreditation of NGO facilitators and community educators in non-formal education and equivalency programmes would also help to fill teacher gaps.⁶³

The need for follow-through services and support networks

Policies and targeted measures for girls and women also have to be complemented by community-based institutions and structures so that learners are able to practice and sustain literacy and numeracy skills when literate environments are provided at the community level. Immediate access to literature which is relevant to the lives of women and men, including resources that have been produced by learners themselves will be valuable in promoting literacy use. Literate environments can be provided through community learning centres, reading corners in village halls, bulletin boards in markets and other ways of disseminating rich-text materials. Additionally, expanding opportunities for lifelong learning through partnerships with the media and publishing houses and by developing, for example, skills training programmes, can help create long lasting and sustainable literacy environments.

In Morocco, community learning centres have been established within the framework of the Government-sponsored literacy programme to sustain literate environments. In Sri Lanka, the creation of "Knowledge Centres" as shared public facilities have opened up access to information technologies for girls and women living in rural areas. The Seed Money Programme in Zimbabwe has provided rural young women with training in business management skills (including record keeping, market competition and marketing), a grant to help set up an enterprise, peer mentoring to support the new business, and access to micro loans at low interest once the business is up and running.

63 UNESCO. 2012d. *Removing Gender Barriers to Literacy for Women and Girls in Asia and the Pacific*, Bangkok: UNESCO.

Engaging boys and men as allies for gender equality



Men continue to occupy positions of power and privilege in many communities and their support is often the linchpin in whether a programme will gain acceptance and pick up speed and whether real changes can be initiated in overcoming gender stereotyping in relation to women's roles. Without stepping on cultural traditions and beliefs, there is obviously, therefore, a need to alter the perspectives of parents and community elders on the importance of girls' and women's education. Convincing fathers, husbands and brothers to become advocates for gender equality, rather than adversaries, certainly shows results.

The Technology-based Training for Marginalized Girls programme in Cambodia, Nepal and Indonesia demonstrates what is possible when time is invested in outreach and participatory decision making. The planning processes gently opened up discourse in the community on how adolescent girls and women can contribute to the welfare of their families and communal poverty reduction efforts through their new-found productive skills. Through understanding how economic empowerment is linked to nutrition, health care, sanitation, income and employment generation, the courses also acted as a nexus for broader discussion across different development themes. Thirdly, there was heightened awareness of gender and equity issues among the extended families of the trainees, village elders, vocational school instructors and local education planners. Participants in the SMILE program in Cambodia also found that support from learners' husbands contributed to their success. Although not all learners needed the support of their husbands to join the classes, many appreciated the fact that their husbands looked after children while they attended class and sometimes helped them with their lessons.



Raising community awareness and support

Policies and learning environments committed to the goal of gender equality are most effective when they are accepted and have the support of the families and communities where girls and women are educated. The Colourful Girls project in Myanmar understood that broad community awareness regarding the needs of adolescent girls is critical to programme success. When they found that community leaders had a poor understanding of the programme's goals, the staff redesigned their programme strategy to include more outreach and learning opportunities for parents, community leaders and school directors. It also reached out to a more diversified range of stakeholders by involving government representatives and local and international NGOs and CSOs. More efforts are still needed, however, to facilitate dialogue between governments and representatives of 'at-risk' and marginalized groups at local level to determine needs and priorities and to build sustainable solutions.





Bringing skills to adolescent girls in rural Egypt

The Ishraq programme was launched in 2001 by a coalition of international NGOs to provide skills training to 277 out-of-school girls aged 13 to 15 in rural Egypt. A “safe place” was provided in every community where the girls could meet four times a week over the thirty-month project period. But the programme designers also realized that, in this very conservative setting, parents would have to agree to the types of skills training their daughters would be receiving. Literacy and numeracy were among the most accepted and sought-after.

Participation in the pilot programme increased literacy and numeracy skills significantly. Of the participants who took the government literacy examination, 92 per cent passed, and 69 per cent entered, or re-entered, the formal school system. Ingrained negative beliefs among the girls about themselves and their families significantly decreased and girls were allowed greater freedom. The proportion of girls saying they wanted to be married before 18 fell from 26 per cent before the programme to 2 per cent among those who completed it. All in all, the girls were found to be more empowered and ready for roles as productive members of their communities.

Overall success has led to the programme being extended, and it currently reaches at least 2,500 girls in fifty villages. The challenge is ensuring that even more girls are reached, given the large numbers who still do not complete primary school in rural Egypt.

Source: UNESCO. 2012. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting education to work. Paris: UNESCO. p.286.



VII. CONCLUSION: MAKING GENDER EQUALITY EVERYONE'S BUSINESS



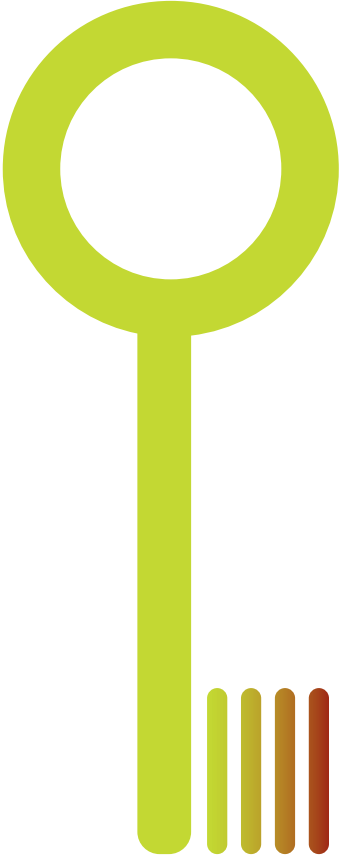
Making gender equality everybody's business means that each and every one of us is accountable for ensuring that policies and programmes to expand girls' and women's education opportunities are delivered on the ground. The stakes are too high to leave the fight for gender equality in the hands of the few who are directly involved in programmes and projects for girls and women's education.

Achieving consensus on the need for gender-responsive education policy and systems begins with advocacy and outreach at the highest levels of decision making and, in parallel, within communities themselves. While policy and structural shifts are necessary, as the case studies featured in this report have demonstrated, immediate impact is possible at grassroots level with long-term transformative consequences on the lives of young women and their families.

Over the past two decades, research and the strengthening of statistical databases have come a long way to improving understanding of the economic, sociological and demographic dimensions of disadvantage for girls and women and the barriers to gender parity, equality and social inclusion at community level. The next step is for governments to formulate and adopt a long-term vision and national policy framework for girls' education at secondary level and for women's literacy – keeping in mind a gender equality and empowerment perspective.

This vision should be crafted with the deliberate participation of girls and women themselves, who can help to translate the vision into national and local plans with clear roadmaps, goals and targets. Governments also need to ensure that such plans and policies are provided with the sufficient level of programmatic and sustained public financing. Government, inter-agency and civil society coordination mechanisms could help to monitor their effective implementation, ensuring that the qualitative dimensions of advances in girls' secondary education and women's literacy programming can be measured.

Many of the programmes featured in this report have shown massive potential for replication. The Seed Money Programme in Zimbabwe, for example, has already been replicated in Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Approaches and instruments pioneered under the Female Secondary School Assistance Programme have tended to find their way into other government and donor-funded projects, including primary school initiatives in Bangladesh and elsewhere. The lessons learned from all of these case studies need to be fed back upstream to the policy and legislative levels to continue evolving an enabling environment for gender equality in education and girls' and women's empowerment.



From Access to Equality aims to raise public awareness of the importance of investing in girls' and women's education. It highlights relatively neglected areas of education that are interrelated: secondary education and literacy. Published within the framework of the UNESCO Global Partnership for Girls and Women's Education – “Better Life, Better Future” – it provides the Partnership with a strategic vision and gives concrete examples of ways to tackle obstacles to both access and equality.

It is hoped that the Report will contribute to re-defining the role of education from a gender perspective in view of supporting the achievement of broader development goals by 2015 and contributing to the post-2015 discussions on gender equality and Education for All.



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