

“No enduring solution to the major changes of our day – from climate change to political and economic instability to poverty – can be solved without the full participation of the world’s women and girls. This means paying real attention to the State of the World’s Girls. By providing evidence and calls to action, Plan’s series of reports, and the Because I am a Girl Global Campaign, help all of us to advance gender equality as our individual and collective responsibility.”

**Michelle Bachelet**  
UN Women Executive Director

“Maybe one day when my siblings are a bit older I could go back to school. I would learn and pass all my subjects, and then I could have a better job and a better life. Sometimes, I dream about becoming a teacher or maybe a nurse.”

**Talent, 14, Zimbabwe**

#### The report series

‘Because I am a Girl’ is an annual report published by Plan mapping the state of the world’s girls. While women and children are recognised as specific categories in policy and planning, girls’ particular needs and rights are often ignored. These reports provide the evidence, including the voices of girls themselves, as to why they need to be treated differently from boys and women.

The first report was published in 2007 and the report series will continue at least to 2015, the final target year for the delivery of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For the same period, in our ‘Real Choices, Real Lives’ study, we are also following a cohort of girls in nine different countries born in the year of our first report.

In 2007, we gave an overview of the global situation of girls. In 2008, we looked at girls affected by conflict: those growing up ‘In the Shadow of War’. The 2009 report focused on economic empowerment, ‘Girls in the Global Economy: Adding it all Up’. In 2010, Digital and Urban Frontiers, Girls in a Changing Landscape’ looked at adolescent girls in two of the most dynamic arenas in the world today – cities and new technologies – and examined the opportunities and the dangers that these present. In 2011 the girls’ report, ‘So, What About Boys?’ looked at the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality.

[becauseiamagirl.org](http://becauseiamagirl.org)

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Because **I am a Girl**

*15 year-old Gifty addresses a village meeting  
on the importance of girls’ education.*

MARK PENGELLY

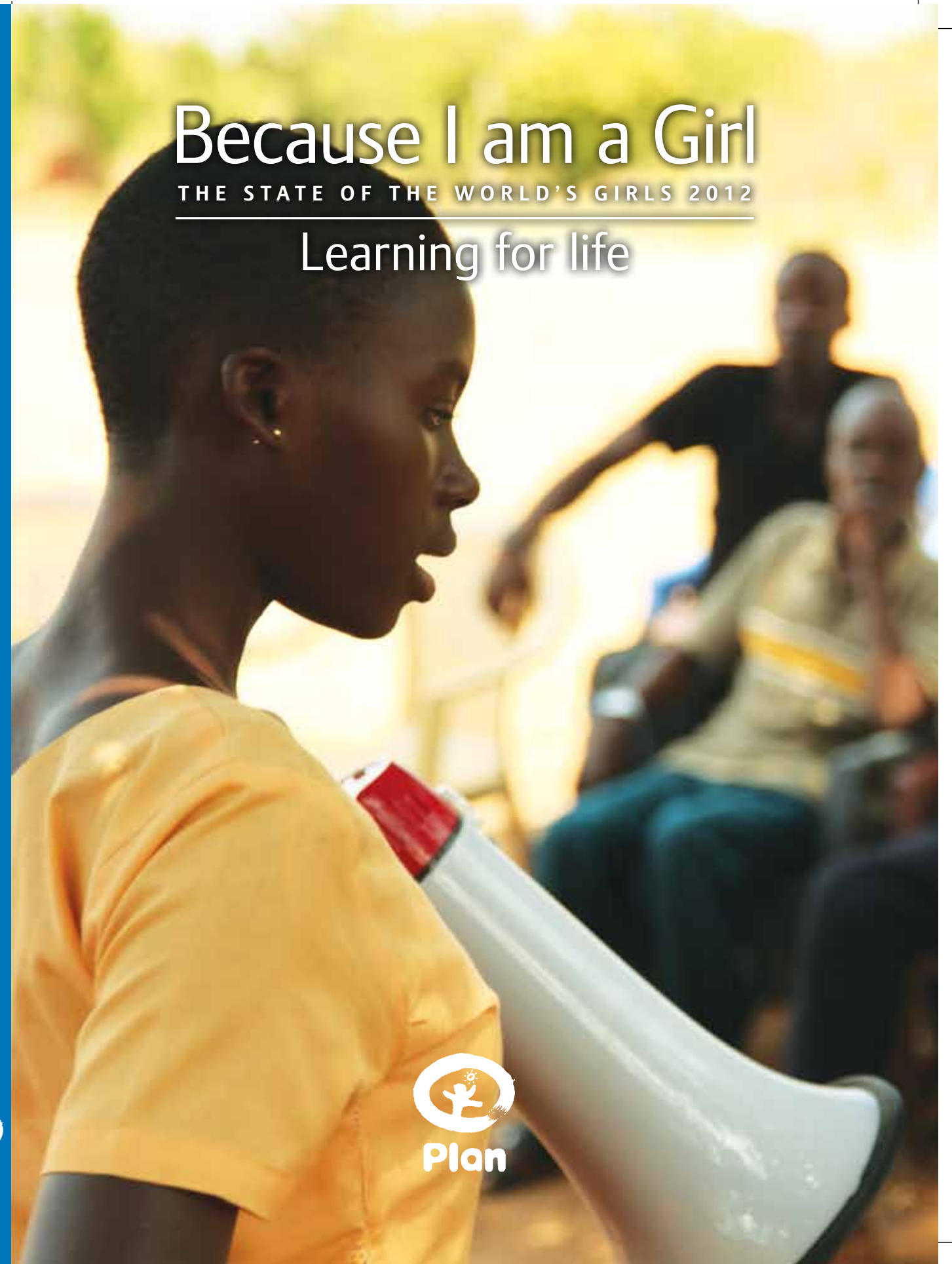


Because I am a Girl | THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S GIRLS 2012

# Because I am a Girl

THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S GIRLS 2012

## Learning for life



# Because I am a Girl

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S GIRLS 2012

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Learning for Life





# Because I am a Girl

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S GIRLS 2012

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At school in Ghana.

JANE HAYN

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ALF BERG

Household chores in Guatemala.

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# Foreword

## **Michelle Bachelet**

UN Women Executive Director

During the past century, we have witnessed a transformation in women's legal rights, educational achievements, and participation in public life. In all regions, countries have expanded women's legal entitlements. Today, more women are exercising leadership in politics and business, more girls are going to school, and more women survive childbirth and can plan their families.

Yet despite progress, no country can claim to be entirely free from gender-based discrimination. This inequality can be seen in gender wage gaps and unequal opportunities, low representation of women in decision-making positions, child marriage, gross violations of rights, and widespread violence against women and girls.

In recent years we have looked to education, girls' education in particular, as a critical investment to advance women's empowerment and economic development. But despite great progress in getting girls into school, we have not yet succeeded in fostering the transformational change that is needed for equality. In Latin America and other countries where girls' educational achievement surpasses that of boys, we have not achieved equality in the workplace, or in the relative socio-economic status of men and women, or in ending violence against women and girls. In many places, legal restrictions, early marriage, domestic chores and early childbearing continue to hinder equality of opportunity.

To make greater progress, we need to enlarge the choices that young women have in their lives. This requires special attention to the rights and challenges of adolescent girls. It is at this stage of their lives that pressures

increase; they are needed at home, they are seen in terms of their reproductive and domestic roles and this puts their education, health and future opportunities at risk.

Early socialisation can play a key role. When I was President of Chile, we provided early childhood education so that boys and girls grew up with the same values and opportunities. In addition, I believe that having a woman President began a change in perceptions and expectations among children – a growing belief that girls and women can reach the highest levels and that there are no limits to their potential achievements and possibilities of leadership.

Equality is not something that can be achieved by one organisation, one initiative or one educational establishment alone. Equality takes all of us. From the government that changes its laws, to the community that says NO to violence against women and girls, to the parents who teach their son and daughter that all human beings should be treated equally with dignity. We all need to be educated about gender equality and work together to advance social justice and human rights for all.

No enduring solution to the major changes of our day – from climate change to political and economic instability to poverty – can be solved without the full participation of the world's women and girls. This means paying real attention to the State of the World's Girls. By providing evidence and calls to action, Plan's series of reports, and the Because I am a Girl Global Campaign, help all of us to advance gender equality as our individual and collective responsibility.







# Setting the scene

# 1

## Introduction

The 2012 'Because I am a Girl' report is focused on girls' education. It is particularly concerned with what happens to girls when they reach adolescence and their domestic and reproductive roles begin to dominate their lives at the expense of learning.

Every girl has the right to education but there are 39 million 11-15 year-old girls out of school.<sup>1</sup> Despite reaching global parity at primary school level enrolment\*, completion rates for girls lag behind boys' and at adolescence the pressures of poverty and discrimination still mean that girls leave school: to help at home, because their families are not convinced of the value of their education; because they experience violence at school; because they get pregnant or married; or because school is too far away and parents think their daughters, and their reputations, are at risk.

They drop out just because they are girls; their primary role, and their value to their families and communities, is a domestic one and as future mothers. This is unjust; it limits a girl's life and opportunities and affects her health, her status, her earning power and her relationships with everyone around her.

It gives her no real choices. It also limits the potential of her community and, in terms of both economic wealth and social justice, makes the world a poorer place.

This report will look in detail at why, despite much effort and good will, girls still lose out at school and at home, and at how education can become a reality in the lives of the 39 million girls not benefiting from it. How can we keep all girls in school, including the poorest and most marginalised, improve the quality of the education they receive and empower them to take their rightful place as equal citizens?

In terms of gross domestic product, raising healthy children and creating a more equal and just society, the costs of not educating girls are unacceptably high. An earlier Plan report<sup>2</sup> estimated that in 2008 the economic cost to 65 low- and middle-income and transitional countries of failing to educate girls to the same standard as boys is a staggering \$92 billion each year.

As they reach adolescence in particular, girls and young women need to be empowered to achieve their potential; quality learning for life is at the heart of this.

ALF BERG

\* United Nations. 'The Millennium Development Report 2012.' New York: United Nations, 2012.

1 Educate a girl...

"Education is a right, but it is not a reality for too many women and girls. Education sends a message – a message of confidence and hope. It tells that child: you have a future; what you think matters."

United Nations Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education 2012

"Maybe one day when my siblings are a bit older I could go back to school. I would learn and pass all my subjects, and then I could have a better job and a better life. Sometimes, I dream about becoming a teacher or maybe a nurse."

Talent, 14, Zimbabwe

On 31 October 2011, a baby girl\* was born in rural India and was welcomed as the world's seven billionth person.<sup>3,4</sup> Born into a poor community, Nargis will have the right to an education, but she will be exceptionally lucky to receive one, get a decent job, or have the ability to choose whom she marries and how many children she has. She is one among millions of girls in a similar situation.

This little girl joined a world in which almost half the people are under 24 years of age and about 1.7 billion are girls and young women.<sup>5</sup>

The capacity of these young women has become evident over the last year. Young women played a key role in protests and revolutions, taking to the streets to demonstrate to those in power that they have a voice. From Chile to the United



Kingdom, they protested against the cost of education and, across the Middle East, they joined their brothers on the streets to challenge and bring down governments. Among them is Camila Vallejo. At 23, she is leading the populist uprising of youth in Chile, dubbed the 'Chilean Winter', calling for the government to make education more affordable and equitable.<sup>6</sup> Her leadership, both eloquent and peaceful, brought about constitutional change in Chile.

In 2011, Tawakkol Karman of Yemen became the first Arab woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and, at 32, the youngest winner in the prize's history.<sup>7</sup> Karman, a journalist and human rights activist, was also a leader in the protests that brought an end to the 33-year regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012.

And there were everyday heroes as well. Take 16 year-old Genet, who lives in Addis Ababa and is an orphan. Bucking low expectations of girls like her, and with the support of her aunt and uncle, Genet has

Newly born Nargis with her parents.

stayed in school and plans to complete her education, after which, she says, "I will be a doctor." Genet also wants to delay marriage until she is 30 and to have two children – "one boy and one girl". First, though, she stresses the importance of getting a job. She is not unaware of the obstacles: "These days, I see people graduate and not get a job for a long time. So maybe I will not find a job."<sup>8</sup>

It is over 60 years since governments agreed, with a UN Declaration, that both boys and girls have a right to education. In the 1990s the international community recognised that education was not yet a right

enjoyed by poor people in many parts of the world. Eight Millennium Development Goals (see box below) were agreed that set targets to achieve education for all. This led to the achievement of universal parity in primary school enrolment \*.

But there are important questions that still need answering. Who is enrolling in school? Who is actually attending? What are they learning? Is enrolment enough?

One group that has been largely missed is adolescent girls. Those from poor communities, those in rural areas, those marginalised by ethnicity or language, rarely

\* United Nations. 'The Millennium Development Report 2012.' New York: United Nations, 2012.

### THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS HISTORY

2000: New York, United Nations Millennium Declaration – World leaders adopt global strategies in an effort to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 – known as the Millennium Development Goals.

#### AIM

A landmark commitment by world leaders to target eight areas of concern with the aim of freeing humanity from extreme poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy by 2015.

#### STRATEGY

Eight goals, including 21 quantifiable targets that are measured by 60 indicators, were identified to tackle the main causes of extreme poverty.

#### PROGRESS

Some progress has been made in achieving these goals, but there are significant gaps and with 2015 fast approaching overall success for the MDGs looks uncertain.

**Goal 1:**  
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

**Goal 2:**  
Achieve universal primary education

**Goal 3:**  
Promote gender equality and empower women

**Goal 4:**  
Reduce child mortality

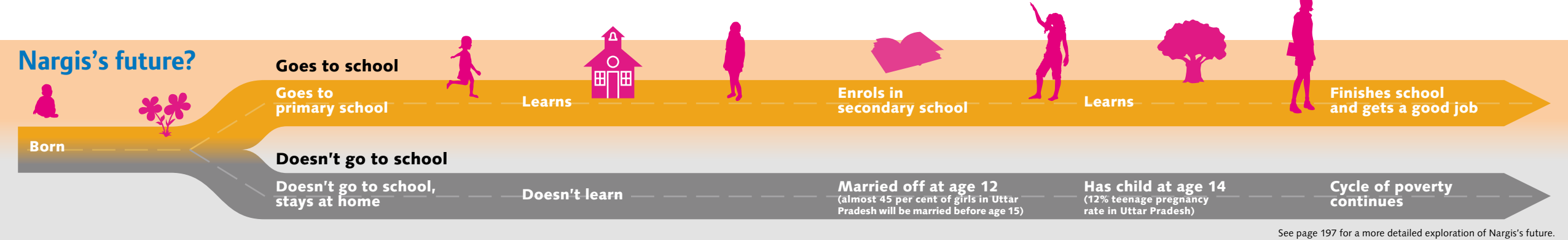
**Goal 5:**  
Improve maternal health

**Goal 6:**  
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

**Goal 7:**  
Ensure environmental sustainability

**Goal 8:**  
Develop a Global Partnership for Development

\* Baby Nargis was born in Mall village in India's Uttar Pradesh state at 7.25am local time on 31 October 2011. She was born to Vinita and her husband Ajay Kumar (a poor farmer) on a Monday morning in a small government-run hospital in Mall village, nearly 50 kilometres (31 miles) from the state capital, Lucknow.



See page 197 for a more detailed exploration of Nargis's future.





JANE HAHN

*Girls doing their domestic chores in Ghana.*

stay in school long enough to learn the skills they need. There are a number of reasons why they drop out. These include: poverty, early pregnancy, violence in schools, domestic responsibilities, or because their education is not prioritised by their families and communities. Even when adolescent girls do stay in school, the quality of education they receive often fails to lead to real learning – the sort that will equip them for the future.

So, while some young women rose up to lead change in 2011 and 2012, eloquently articulating and fighting for their rights, many others still have the doors that a good education can unlock – to freedom, to voice, to participation – firmly shut in their faces.

There is a real chance to change this in 2012. A new global initiative on education, led by the UN Secretary-General, recognises the imperative to protect education budgets during hard times. It acknowledges that, despite much progress in recent years, “the quality of education remains desperately low in many parts of the world”.

Here is an opportunity to acknowledge the specific needs of adolescent girls and to recognise the particular challenges they face. Gender parity in education is already the subject of a wide range of international declarations (see page 129). It is guaranteed in national constitutions and enshrined in the principles of many international organisations. Yet underneath these headline commitments, there is a lack of delivery on a girl’s right to education that is hampering attempts to achieve gender equality targets.

Creating programmes to support adolescent girls – aged 10 to 19 – is complex

and presents a challenge for policy and practice. Policies often fail to address these girls’ needs directly, allowing them to be grouped with adults in some cases and with children in others. Adolescent girls face unique challenges and therefore should be treated as a distinct group.

For example, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) do not have a clear focus on adolescents. In the area of education, MDG 2 is concerned with universal primary education but does not extend to universal access to other levels. While MDG 3 aims to increase the proportion of literate young women and the numbers of women holding seats in national parliaments, it makes no clear commitment to secondary and higher education (without which it is not clear how countries can achieve these aims). MDG 5 targets a reduction in maternal mortality\*, but only recently has it recognised that early pregnancy is a key factor in maternal mortality.<sup>9</sup> A new indicator has been added to measure adolescent fertility with regard to maternal mortality rates, which might help address the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls.

The MDGs, however, remain silent on the specific educational needs of adolescent girls. This is partly due to a lack of understanding and thorough analysis of the issues adolescent girls face in their daily lives and consequently in achieving a quality education.

This report will look at quality from the point of view of adolescent girls – a perspective that sheds light on critical issues for all children’s learning and fulfilment within education.

## THE BARRIERS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

In a recent study of seven African countries, Plan examined the challenges adolescent girls face to get in to, and to stay in, school. The issues are complex and numerous.<sup>10</sup>

1 While primary education is nominally free in all the countries studied, keeping children in school and ensuring they go beyond primary level remains a challenge. All families noted that they still face a number of charges, even at primary level, for their children’s education. In Ghana, 46 per cent of children interviewed felt that the lack of school materials and uniforms was the main difficulty faced in going to school, and a further 14 per cent cited their inability to pay school fees.<sup>11</sup> Fifty-seven per cent of parents cited a lack of financial means as the reason for not enrolling their children in school, despite the existence of free basic education.

2 Teacher-pupil abuse and sexual exploitation is prevalent across all the countries. When asking about early pregnancy, Plan’s researchers in Togo found that 16 per cent of the children interviewed named a teacher as responsible for the pregnancy of a classmate. The figure was 15 per cent in Mali and 11 per cent in Senegal. In Ghana, 75 per cent of children cited teachers as the main perpetrators of violence in school; in Senegal the figure was 80 per cent.

3 Early pregnancy is common and leads to drop-out, forever limiting a girl’s chances of finishing school even if she does return. In Liberia, 61 per cent of children knew of at least one girl who

had fallen pregnant in the last two school years; only five per cent of children said that the girl(s) had returned to school after the birth. In some countries, girls exchanging sex for money to pay for school fees and materials, however negatively viewed, was a common practice. In Ghana, 90 per cent of girls and 50 per cent of boys answered that they would use sex to meet basic needs. Beliefs that the only role girls can have is

as wives and mothers, have a negative impact on girls’ social development and their educational goals. In Ghana, 83 per cent of parents listed the possibility of girls falling pregnant as a disadvantage of schooling them. Female parents were slightly more likely (49 per cent) than male parents (48 per cent) to agree that there are certain disadvantages to schooling girls.

4 The high number of hours girls spend on household chores negatively affects their ability to learn. In Guinea Bissau, Plan’s study found that girls work an average of eight hours a day on household chores compared to an average of three hours for boys. Tiredness and lack of time for schoolwork were listed

as consequences of this burden of chores.

5 High levels of poverty affect both boys’ and girls’ nutrition, and few school-feeding programmes exist to alleviate this. In Mali, one group of children commented that they had been forced to close their school canteen this year due to lack of support from NGOs or the government, and were unable to bring food from home due to bad harvests. This had a significant impact on overall attendance.



*Teenage mother and her son in Ethiopia.*

ELIAS ASMARE

\* Pregnancy and childbirth related complication is a leading cause of death for adolescents aged 15-19.



What the numbers don't tell us

*"My parents are both old and I am the only girl in a family of four. I want to become a medical doctor when I finish school. My problem is that I have very little time to do my school work. All the chores are left for me to do while my brothers do their homework. My form teacher is really worried about my dropping marks. He talked to my parents about it but they ignored him."*

Loveness, 17, Zimbabwe<sup>12</sup>

Young people tend to get aggregated into one group and so the realities faced by girls can easily get hidden. Looking behind the national and global figures, which show a steady increase in enrolment at all levels of education, there is clear evidence that significant numbers of girls continue to be excluded.

Poverty, isolation, ethnicity, disability, gender discrimination and social and political unrest make regular school attendance a remote possibility for many girls. Plan's recent Building Skills for Life research in nine countries around the world showed that girls are more likely than boys never to have been enrolled, or to drop out during or at the end of primary school or after just one year of secondary schooling. Overall, 38 per cent of girls dropped out at the end of primary school; in Rwanda this figure rose to 51 per cent of girls aged 15-19 reporting that they had not completed primary schooling; the numbers of adolescent girls out of school across the nine countries was 26 per cent compared with 18 per cent for boys.<sup>13</sup> The age of highest risk for girls was between 14 and 15, especially if they were falling behind their peers, were still in primary school or were just making the transition to secondary at this age.<sup>14</sup>

Too many girls, whatever they or their parents may wish for, will be locked out of most opportunities by an inadequate or incomplete education. For others, the kind of education they receive functions as the lock, confirming and reinforcing inequality, exclusion and subordination.

When, in 2016, the seven billionth child moves towards her fifth birthday, she has a good chance of attending primary

school. She may go further. But despite all commitments to the contrary, it is still a game of chance, and for girls' education that is not good enough.

THE OLDEST GIRL IN THE CLASS – THE STORY OF FAITH<sup>15</sup>

Nineteen year-old Faith lives in the rural district of Chiredzi, Zimbabwe. She is the fourth out of seven children. At the age of 13 she was forced to drop out of school as her mother felt that she had had enough primary education. Her family could no longer afford to pay her school fees if they were to educate her younger siblings up to the same level.

Faith.



ANNIE MPALUME

After leaving school, Faith went to work as a 'house girl' for a family in a nearby town. She would cook and clean for the family as well as their children. She associates this time with a great deal of sadness as she was separated from her family and her friends. *"It was a horrible feeling to be cooking and cleaning for girls and boys who were a similar age to me. It made me so sad when they left each morning to go to school while I was left at home to do the cooking and cleaning."*

Coming from a poor family, Faith has clearly fought against the odds to be back at school. *"Many of my friends and girls I know from home are married already; some were as young as 12. I don't want to be married yet. I want to stay in school and then, only after I have achieved something for myself, will I think about marriage."*

For her, the advantages of being in education far outweigh any disadvantages. *"I am so happy to be back at school. I don't mind that I had to walk four hours this morning to get here, or that I am in class with girls who are much younger than me. Being in school is what is important."*

Faith would like to stay in school so that she can achieve her dream of becoming a nurse or a teacher. Whether her dream can come true is dependent on more than just being in school, but for Faith it is a step in the right direction.

2 Taking up the challenge

Each of the past 'Because I am a Girl' reports has talked about the importance of education for empowering girls and giving them the tools they need to function in the global economy, to manage the impact of conflict on their lives, to negotiate with the men and boys in their lives, and to live in a rapidly urbanising and digitised world. Education can be the foundation that girls need to survive and thrive.

This report looks behind these expectations and examines what it will take for educators and governments to fulfil the promise of education and meet their obligations to adolescent girls. It examines the challenges faced by girls from many



PLAN

different backgrounds as they struggle to access education and to learn. It looks at the detail of what is taught, both in terms of the curriculum and the attitudes that are passed on.

It looks beyond the numbers of girls in school to the power of learning to transform the lives of young women and the communities they live in. And it examines how, in a world marked by inequality, education can address the needs, rights and opportunities of adolescent girls to enable them to take their place as active and equal citizens.

In this chapter, we give some background to the argument for more and better education for girls. We look first at the history of how the demand for expanded education for girls has been formulated around the world in international frameworks and national Constitutions. As stated earlier, initial concerns were with primary education. This has made realising the rights of older girls to education beyond primary school even more challenging.

We look at the period of adolescence for girls, a time of transition which can have a profound impact on a girl's education and her future prospects. We will look closely at where adolescent girls actually are at this stage of their lives. Unfortunately, in too many cases, they are not where they ought to be – attending secondary school.

Homework in Niger.





### A brief history of the global struggle for girls' education

*"If women be educated for dependence; that is, to act according to the will of another fallible being, and submit, right or wrong, to power, where are we to stop?"*

Mary Wollstonecraft,  
British writer and feminist pioneer

The movement demanding education for all girls and women is more than 200 years old. In 1792, in London, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote the 'Vindication of the Rights of Women' in which she argued that an education that recognised and encouraged women as rational thinkers to act guided by reason was essential to challenge the widely held assumption that women were the equivalent of household possessions. This echoed the calls of the movement for the abolition of slavery, which began around

the same time, supported by the active involvement of women. In 1848, the Seneca Falls Declaration was adopted by a gathering of men and women in the Wesleyan Church at Seneca Falls, New York State, affirming the importance of women working together to participate in elections, public life, and in learning and teaching.

Throughout the nineteenth century women opened schools and campaigned for education as a way to take forward women's political and social rights. These included Raden Ajeng Kartini in Indonesia, Charlotte Maxeke and Olive Schreiner in South Africa, and Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, who in 1882 set up the first Indian women's society, the Arya Mahila Samaj.<sup>16,17,18</sup> All these education activists demanded more than basic literacy and numeracy. They stressed the importance of what Mary Wollstonecraft called 'a well stored mind' – the exercise of

*Girls at school in Niger.*

reason, critique of prevailing inequalities and capacity to act to bring about change.

The aspirations of these relatively small groups in the nineteenth century became incorporated, as the twentieth century advanced, into the demands of larger-scale movements. Education for girls and women formed a part of campaigns for widening voting rights, increased economic development and national self-determination.

Education campaigners, analysts and commentators continued to pose questions about what should be taught to whom, how women could access higher education, and why women were paid less than men. Few political demands were made with respect to the education of adolescent girls specifically.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, an international architecture of declarations, conventions and covenants began to emerge that set out a series of interconnected human rights that were universal and indivisible. In this framework, which many countries then drew on in framing their own Constitutions, the particular educational needs and rights of adolescents were rarely specified.

While some international agreements provide a strong commitment to education for teenage girls and young women, not all do (see chart on page 129). Indeed, since 2000 the trend within these frameworks has been to move away from statements that make a clear aspirational link between young women's education and their rights. Instead, the focus is on targets and indicators as exemplified by the MDGs.

At the national level, although most Constitutions guarantee primary schooling for all, guarantees to further education are much weaker. For the school year ending 2009, out of a total of 204 states, 136 have national Constitutions that provide a legal guarantee of free primary education, 54 do not, and 14 lack data on the topic.<sup>19</sup>

Despite this formal commitment, various charges continue to be levied on poor families. Recent research by Plan in West Africa found that in Liberia, despite the



introduction of free primary education in 2010, over 36 per cent of families were still paying school fees.<sup>20</sup> When it comes to secondary education, few countries extend the guarantee of free or universal access.

During the past 30 years, as more and more children have received primary education, this has increased demand for secondary school opportunities. Recent surveys of the poorest girls in the final year of primary school in Tanzania, Nigeria and Ghana reveal their desires to go to secondary school. Asked what level of education they aspired to, more than 95 per cent of girls interviewed said they wanted to complete secondary school.<sup>21</sup>

Some countries are doing more to meet this demand. They are building more secondary schools, extending community-based primary school to include early secondary years, and providing free schooling to girls or girls-only scholarships\*.<sup>22,23,24</sup>

But in many countries girls still face multiple hurdles to furthering their education.

Failing to address these means the rights enshrined in international frameworks and national constitutions are guaranteed but not enforced.

*Girls at school in 1950s Indonesia.*

\* For example, Tanzania built 1,000 new secondary schools between 2003 and 2006, under the government's Secondary Education Development Programme, raising net secondary enrolment over that period from 6.3 to 13.4 per cent. In addition, Zambia extended the basic provision of free education from primary school to Grades 1-7, including the first years of secondary education into the basic years. They supported this policy by investing in the extension of community schools so more children had access to basic schools in their local communities. Between 1996 and 2009, the number of community schools grew from 200 to 3,000; between 2005 and 2009 student enrolment rose by over 1 million and gender parity improved.



3 Growing up

*“Adolescence is a particularly vulnerable period for girls in developing countries. During adolescence, the world expands for boys but contracts for girls. Boys gain autonomy, mobility, job prospects; girls are systematically deprived of these opportunities. They have restricted mobility and are susceptible to early or forced marriage and early pregnancy.”*

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, former managing director of the World Bank and current finance minister, Nigerian Government<sup>25</sup>

There are 1.2 billion adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 in the world today.<sup>26</sup> Almost 75 per cent of them are in Asia and Africa, comprising large proportions of the populations of those regions.<sup>27</sup>

These young people spend more years in school today than ever before. That said, globally only 74 per cent of girls between the ages of 11 and 15 are in school – compared to 83 per cent of boys.<sup>28</sup> There are large variations – these averages do not speak to the reality of rural girls, poorer girls, or girls in conflict-affected regions.

BECAUSE I AM A MOKEN GIRL

Although Asian countries are experiencing rapid economic growth, there are still an estimated 1.7 billion people living on less than \$2 a day across the region, and amongst them are many indigenous communities. Indigenous children typically experience discrimination and exclusion that is associated with higher mortality rates, poorer healthcare, lower school



enrolment and educational achievement and a denial of their basic rights. Both girls and boys face barriers to claiming their rights, but in most cases girls face additional forms of discrimination due to their gender and age.

In Thailand, Plan is working with Moken people – more popularly known as ‘Sea Gypsies’. Since the tsunami and the forced settlement of Moken communities on government land, more Moken children are attending mixed primary and secondary schools.

Green is 14 years old and is part of an indigenous Moken community living along Thailand’s southern coast. *“I wanted to tell those who were cruel to me that I was normal, that I’m not dirty, but I didn’t have the courage,”* she says. *“I have two friends who support me, but other people call me ‘dirty sea gypsy’.”*

Fourteen year-old Ta has a similar story. *“The other children bully me. They sing songs to make fun of me because I’m a Moken girl. I just keep quiet. But I want to do something.”* Green interrupts to say Ta sometimes cries because of the bullying. When asked if she has told the teacher about it, Ta shrugs her shoulders: *“It’s been going on for four years. The teacher is Thai. She doesn’t understand.”*

Even their local language is avoided. Green comments: *“Speaking in Moken will cause my friends to look down on me. And they already discriminate against us. I don’t fight my friends over this. I know in my heart that I have dignity being a Moken.”*

In response to the pressures Moken

Green (left) and Ta at home.

Green and Ta showing the pictures from their after-school camp.



girls face in school, Plan and its local partner FED have established an after-school intercultural camp for girls to practise local traditional dances and teach Moken language to other children.

The camp allows Moken girls from different communities to meet, network and exchange experiences. Green explains: *“The camp has taught us that there are different cultures [in Thailand] and we should be proud. We also learn that we can have local crafts, we can weave baskets; we don’t need to buy them.”*

The girls believe reviving Moken identity can help shift the prospects of the entire community and even their own futures. *“I would like to become a chef and open my own restaurant. A restaurant that serves traditional Moken food!”* adds Green.

Out of school

According to UNESCO, 39 million girls aged 11 to 15 are not in lower secondary school.<sup>29</sup> So where are the adolescent girls? One in seven is married by the age of 15.<sup>30</sup> Up to half of all girls in developing countries are mothers before they turn 18.<sup>31</sup> If present trends continue, more than 100 million girls will probably be married as children in the next decade.<sup>32</sup>

Formal legal restrictions – such as laws on minimum age for marriage or working – offer scant protection for adolescent girls. In 25 countries there is no specified age for compulsory education and in 44 countries girls can be married younger than boys.<sup>33</sup> In 17 countries the legal working age is lower than the age of compulsory education, negating any legal protection to education.<sup>34</sup>

While 18 is the minimum age of marriage in most countries, there is usually a caveat giving parents the right to grant consent for younger girls to marry. In South Asia, 48 per cent of girls are married before 18. In Africa the figure is 42 per cent and in Latin America and the Caribbean it is 29 per cent, with early marriage rates being higher in rural and poorer communities.<sup>35</sup>

Adolescent girls are no longer children; nor are they yet adults. They are moving towards more independence and the exercise of greater responsibility. But they are still young enough to need support and guidance on that path. The challenge is how to give that guidance in a way that promotes dignity and advances girls’ rights and opportunities. In some cultures the change from child to adult, from girl to woman, is abrupt and the idea of adolescence, as a necessary period of transition, barely exists.

Married at 15 in Ethiopia.



## FROM CHILD TO MARRIED WOMAN OVERNIGHT...<sup>36</sup>

Adolescence is a life-cycle period whereby children are learning to think abstractly and better able to connect values to actions and actions to consequences. It is a period of physical, emotional, psychological and cognitive development during which experimentation and risk-taking are both normal and a fundamental part of developing decision-making skills. However, these experiences are denied to girls in rural Pakistan who change, almost overnight, from being 'children' with extremely limited access to information relating to sexual reproductive health to being married women with all the responsibilities that entails.

Girls tend to marry at a very young age: often immediately following the first menstrual cycle – some time between the ages of 10 and 14 – which is thought to denote the onset of adulthood. For boys



marriage also comes early, during mid-adolescence, around 15 or 16.

With marriage, the transition from child to adult is instantaneous. For girls it will mean an end to going to school and the beginning of childbearing. The religious and cultural context does not allow for a gradual transition into adulthood involving gaining some understanding of sexual and reproductive health issues before turning theory into practice.

In many cases, education helps girls in the transition to adulthood. It helps promote the awareness, independence and understanding of participation necessary for a citizen. It provides the information and confidence needed to exercise reproductive rights. It fosters the skills and expertise necessary to enter the world of work and it develops talents for cultural engagement.

But for many other girls, education is an obstacle to the transition to adulthood. Education works to instil values that confirm a girl must remain humble in her relationships with boys, men and older women. This form of education does not challenge an existing political, economic or cultural order. It works to keep girls 'safe' within the existing shape of things, protecting them until they can become wives, mothers or workers.

Often the education girls actually receive is a mixture of the two types described above. Their education limits some opportunities while offering up others.

## WHY LEARNING FOR LIFE IS SO IMPORTANT FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Adolescent girls stand at the doorway to adulthood. If they stay in school and obtain skills, research shows that they will earn more income in the future, marry later, and have fewer, and healthier, children. In the longer term, secondary education protects girls against HIV and AIDS, sexual harassment and human trafficking. In short, secondary education, in combination with financial assets and life skills, is essential for adolescent empowerment, development and protection.

*Young mother in Pakistan.*

## 4 Can we sustain the social revolution of expanding education provision?

The expected numbers of years of schooling a child will get has increased relatively steadily in each region since 1970. Studies show that, globally, girls can now expect to complete over 10 years of education in their lifetimes and boys at least 11 years, with large differences between regions. For example, a girl in North America can expect a year more education than a boy in the same region, while in Sub-Saharan Africa girls can expect one year less than a boy.<sup>37</sup>

In other regions, large national-level gains mask sharp internal differences, especially at secondary level and higher. In China, which has seen some of the largest secondary-school enrolment gains in the world, only three to five per cent of rural students go to college or university, compared with 75 per cent of urban students.<sup>38</sup> In Latin America, where countries have made huge gains in access for all students, with girls overtaking boys in enrolment at all levels, there are still

significant divisions between rural and urban children. The gap between urban and rural enrolment of children at secondary level exceeds 17 per cent in nine countries and 35 per cent in three.<sup>39</sup>

The current recession may present a threat to expanding provision beyond primary school. Predictions of sharp contractions in economic growth abound.<sup>40</sup> Simultaneously, in some parts of the world, economic growth is evident, but without a similar expansion of decent work.<sup>41</sup>

When resources are stretched and choices need to be made, pro-poor and inclusive development often loses out as powerful players present it as a trade-off with growth.<sup>42</sup> Even with respect to expanding primary schooling, a relatively uncontroversial policy, a number of studies show how difficult it is for civil servants, teachers and non-governmental activists to gain support for the expansion of gender-equal provision to the very poor.<sup>43</sup> In difficult economic times, the political mood tends to favour short-term over long-term gains.

One study estimates that achieving gender parity in primary education through universal



*A classroom in China.*





Sharing a textbook in India.

enrolment would require an increase of slightly more than three per cent a year in public spending on primary education in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, but as much as 30 per cent a year in Sub-Saharan Africa. And it notes that achieving similar outcomes in secondary education would require significant additional funding.<sup>44</sup>

A World Bank paper investigating the costs of achieving the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG 3) – to promote gender equality and empower women – found that governments cannot hope to achieve any of the MDGs without paying adequate attention to the specific interventions, actions and investment needed to reach under-served women in their populations. The report found that investing in MDG 3 is crucial for achieving all the other Millennium Goals, as more than 90 per cent of the investments to achieve gender equality are, in fact, implemented through other MDG targets.<sup>45</sup>

In 1992 the World Bank calculated the health-related costs of childbirth, child mortality and maternal mortality that could be avoided through girls' education. Using Pakistan as an example, they found that for one year of expenditure on the education of

1,000 girls – an estimated cost of \$30,000 over the next 15 years – Pakistan would save \$48,000 by avoiding 60 child deaths, \$33,000 by avoiding 500 pregnancies, and \$7,500 by avoiding three maternal deaths. The savings are therefore almost three times the cost of educating 1,000 girls.<sup>46</sup> It is a crude measurement which nevertheless had the effect of encouraging investment in girls' education.

After all, in 2004, the amount needed was less than the amount the USA and Europe spent on ice cream (\$31 billion) and not much more than on cosmetics (\$18 billion.)<sup>47</sup> Most significantly, it is only a 70th of the \$1.6 trillion the world spent on arms in 2010.<sup>48</sup> It is not just money that is the issue: it is political will and foresight.

The targets for the MDGs are supposed to be met by 2015. It is widely expected that, despite considerable gains, the education and gender equality targets will not be met.<sup>49</sup> There is already much discussion within international, national, academic and non-governmental bodies about the post-2015 development agenda. Part of the discussion relates to whether a single set of shared goals – shifting from access to learning – is the best way forward, or if particular regional goals would be more appropriate.<sup>50</sup>

## AFTER 2015 – A MILLENNIUM LEARNING GOAL FOR ALL?

In 2006, three Harvard-based economists proposed a new Millennium Learning Goal (MLG) to replace the two current Millennium Development Goals for education.<sup>51</sup> They proposed standardised achievement tests for children in each age cohort as the main measure of education in each country. An MLG would turn the international standards and measures in education on their head. No longer would countries measure how many children are in school, but rather they would test how many children are achieving the desired level of learning in each age group.

The global community does need to ensure that children are coming out of school with literacy, numeracy and critical thinking skills. However, literacy for the sake of literacy is not enough. The fact that a child can read does not mean she will automatically be able to find work as an adult or make decisions that will lead to social change in her community. Testing is a quick way to gauge the acquisition of knowledge or skills but not a way to gauge whether that skill/knowledge can be used to analyse, synthesise, evaluate and create ideas/change. The issue is not with testing or evaluations themselves, but with how these tests are structured. If a child is able to read a few sentences, she is categorised as literate and we deem that learning has been achieved. This is a false assumption. If tests (or other evaluation methods) also evaluated comprehension, analysis, application and synthesis of what was being read, then we could have a better measurement of learning being achieved.

Testing 'learning' could skew investment away from interventions that tackle the wider environment and experience of girls within education, and focus instead on 'teaching to the test' learning.<sup>52</sup> It has been shown in many circumstances that testing as the sole or even main measure of quality education can have a negative impact on the wider learning environment, especially for girls who are struggling.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Plan UK's original research from a baseline study

in nine countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America shows that gate-keeping exams are one of the barriers that prevents girls, more than boys, from transitioning to higher grades.

In 2011, the Brookings Institute's 'Global Learning Compact' also stressed the importance of learning over enrolment.<sup>54</sup> It acknowledges that the learning crisis is worse for girls and for marginalised children, especially for those living in fragile and conflict-prone states. Brookings calls for a wider range of engagement in education quality, including teaching leadership skills and forging partnerships across services and disciplines to support learning.

A girls' school in Pakistan.





5 Not just the means to an end...

*"If a girl gets a secondary education, she will be more educated and will not accept boys, and so there might be a problem in society. Girls will be out of control... doing any kind of job."*

Fisherman, Mehar Parai village, Pakistan

*"Education is not just an arrangement for training to develop skills (important as that is), it is also a recognition of the nature of the world, with its diversity and richness, and an appreciation of the importance of freedom and reasoning."*

Amartya Sen<sup>55</sup>

For more than 200 years, a strong moral argument has been made for education for girls, grounded in human rights and equality. Any argument in support of more and better education for all girls needs to recognise, therefore, the intrinsic importance of education for girls' empowerment, not just its value as a training ground for the world's future workers and mothers.<sup>56</sup>

The empowerment argument places its emphasis on how education should support the dignity and well-being of each individual girl. This places great store by improving education so it can work better as a key to securing rights for everybody. It is a view of education closely associated with human dignity, not simply as a means to a wider end. The fisherman quoted above might be horrified at the idea of girls being "out of control... doing any kind of job" – in other words upsetting the balance of power in society – but this could be seen as one of the prime purposes of educating girls and young women.

The second argument sees the education of girls not primarily for themselves, but for the benefits they confer on others through their reduced fertility, support for their children's education, increased income-earning potential, or participation in governance. This 'instrumental' argument does not take a stand on whether education should be a lock or a key in the life of a girl. From this perspective, as long as education unlocks some economic and social benefits for most, but not for all, it is still valuable and meeting its objectives.

Although contrasts are often drawn between instrumental and intrinsic values in the approach to the education of girls and women, in practice the two often sit side by side. This report will bring together both sides of the argument, linking aspects of pragmatic policy choices with an outlook that draws on human rights frameworks and declarations.

THE RIGHTS FRAMEWORK<sup>57</sup>

- **Rights to education:** Access and participation.
- **Rights within education:** Gender-aware educational environments, processes and outcomes.
- **Rights through education:** Supports gender equality leading to wider social justice.

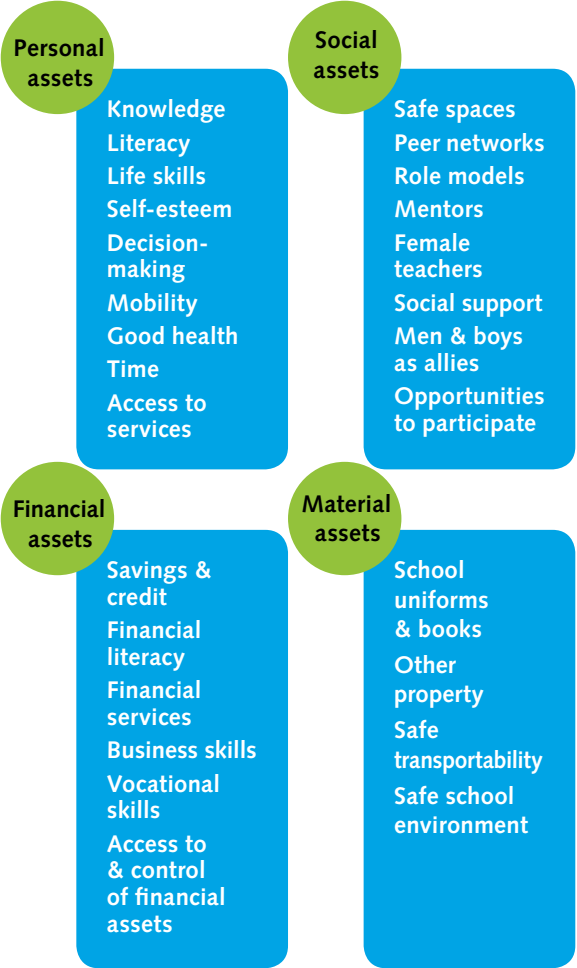
It is also important to recognise that, in seeking to exercise their rights to, within and through education, girls navigate within a wider web of gender relations in the communities, families and societies in which they live.<sup>58</sup> So education does not operate in a vacuum and, even if children's education rights can be secured, it does not necessarily follow that wider social change will result.

In organising this report to look at both the promise of girls' education and the challenges girls encounter, we have therefore drawn on this framework to analyse girls' rights to and within education. This allows us to examine what is going on in and around education and to see how these processes impact upon gender equality and inequality, both in and out of school.

Girls' rights are crucial, but it is equally critical that they are equipped to exercise them. This approach allows us to look at girls' empowerment – that is, girls taking action and taking control of their choices. In this way, we are able to look at how girls operate in the world as a result of their education – and particularly if their education gives them the capability to overcome obstacles on their path to living the lives they choose.

CRITICAL ASSETS AND SKILLS: SAFEGUARDING HER FUTURE<sup>59</sup>

The assets that can facilitate adolescent girls' empowerment and rights, through acquiring a broad set of capabilities needed to make decisions about their lives and participate fully in their societies:



Using the rights framework, Chapter 2 will look at meaningful access for all girls, particularly those who are currently falling behind. Chapter 3 examines girls' experience of education, including how the processes of learning and teaching can meet their needs. Building on the capabilities approach, Chapter 4 explores how education helps girls build their ability to secure improved health, have respectful relationships, find decent work, and participate in decision-making and politics.

In each chapter, the analysis, while concerned with the experiences of girls and

with education itself, will also look at the wider web of gender relations within which schools and girls operate; at the impact of the outside world; and the associated processes that contribute to girls' equality.

The true promise of equality

Discrimination affects the lives of girls and women from infancy to adulthood. It contributes to high infant and childhood mortality, to low educational achievement, and to failures to protect children from harm. It also affects the economic survival of families and the participation of children and young people in family and community decisions. Many violations of children's rights have their roots in gender-based inequality, exclusion and injustice. This report will argue that education should play both a protective and a transformative role in building a society that respects the rights of all its members. In focusing on the experiences of adolescent girls and the particular barriers they face in accessing a good quality education, we are advocating not just for their rights as individuals but for their right to be active and creative members of the communities they live in. The girls we have met and talked to in the course of our research have demonstrated their capabilities, enthusiasm and determination. They know the value of education, and in the stories of Faith, Talent, Sur and Harika we can see them fighting for the choices they want to make. In supporting girls like these we are also supporting something broader – the true promise of equality.

Students in Vietnam.



# BECAUSE I AM A GIRL: ONLINE SURVEY ON GIRLS' EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

Before preparing this report on girls' education, the 'Because I am a Girl' team conducted an online survey to provide an indication of how education and development experts view the challenges and responses to girls' education.

The survey allowed us to trace some of the consistencies across regions which proved to us there are issues that transcend culture and location. For example, nearly half saw the issue of poverty as the main barrier that prevents girls from going to school, while a further 24 per cent cited the undervaluing of girls.

By asking them to choose only one barrier, respondents felt the survey did not adequately capture the interwoven nature of the barriers to girls' education; how poverty and culture interact and are mutually reinforcing. We have reflected this unease in the many comments quoted here.

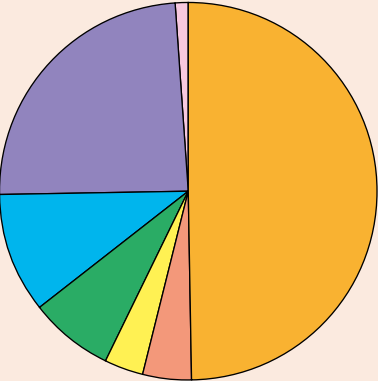
## The survey results

Background information:

- The total number of respondents was 264.
- Three quarters were female; one quarter male.
- More than a third of respondents (39 per cent) were working in Africa, followed by Europe/North America (26 per cent), and Asia (21 per cent). Only three per cent were from Latin America, two per cent from the Middle East and the same from Oceania.
- Altogether, our respondents had an accumulated 4,540 years of experience in education and development.

## BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION

Question 1: *What do you think is the main barrier that prevents girls from going to school?*



- Economic deprivation (household-level poverty)
- Burden of chores
- Distance of school
- Quality of school
- Negative parental attitudes towards school
- Not valuing girls
- Ongoing conflict or civil unrest

Nearly half of the respondents (49 per cent) cited **economic deprivation** – household-level poverty – as the main barrier that prevents girls from going to school; this was followed by the undervaluing of girls (24 per cent). The fewest respondents (under one per cent) selected ongoing conflict or civil unrest as a main barrier preventing girls from going to school.

It should be noted that most respondents qualified their answer with "all of the above", indicating that there was not just one main barrier; that multiple factors come into play.

**Quazi Afroz Jahanara, University of Dhaka:**

"In Bangladesh, besides negative attitudes, schools are not gender responsive. People are not valuing girls; economic deprivation, gender discrimination and 'eve-teasing' are the main barriers that prevent girls from going to school."

**Ijeoma Ebere-Uneze, National Universities**

**Commission, Abuja, Nigeria:** "Barriers to girls' education cannot be the same everywhere because the circumstances in any place are as unique as that particular place. For instance, in Nigeria negative parental attitude could be the case in the North East and North West, while poverty could be the case in the South East, and South West."

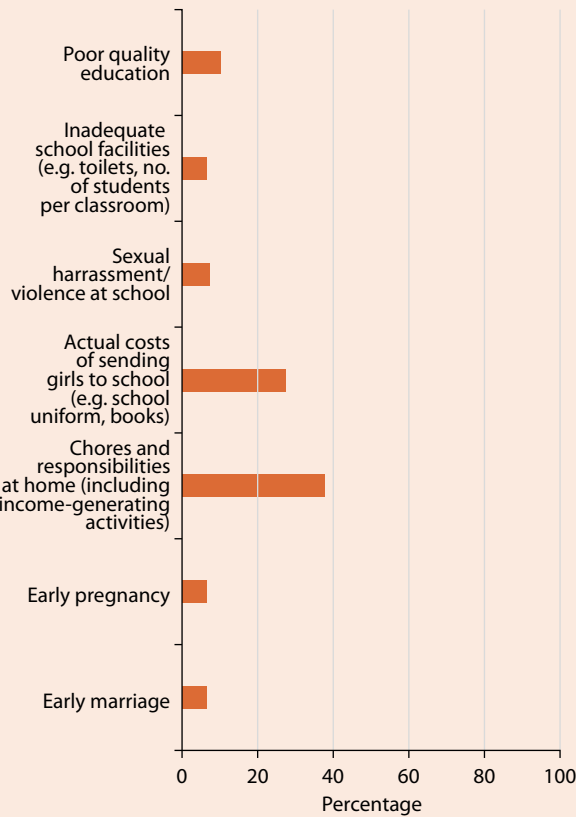
**Albert Motivans, UNESCO Institute for Statistics:**

"It depends on the context and how these different strands (culture/values/tradition/roles, economic disadvantage, flexibility of educational provision) interact, but generally I would feel that the worst cases are related to culture/ roles of girls/women. Poverty keeps boys out of school too, but when combined with traditional views on the role of girls, it can create greater disadvantage."

**Dr Leemamol Mathew, Institute of Rural**

**Management Anand (IRMA), India:** "One of my recent fieldworks in the remote villages of Gujarat came out with some of the reasons, like distance of school, economic deprivation, sexual abuse, and the attitude of the parents towards marrying off girl children at a very young age."

**Question 2: What do you think are the main issues affecting adolescent girls' school attendance and retention?**



Collecting firewood in Niger.



More than a third of respondents (35 per cent) felt that chores and responsibilities at home – including income-generating activities – were the main issue affecting adolescent girls' school attendance and retention, with 27 per cent of respondents selecting the actual costs of sending girls to school – e.g. school uniform, books, transportation, food – as the main issue.

Again, most respondents qualified their answer with "all of the above", indicating that they felt there was no single main reason but a multitude of context-specific factors that impact adolescent girls' school attendance and retention.

**Ron Watt, CARE Cambodia:** "Our research reveals that all of the above are significant issues facing indigenous girls accessing secondary education."

**Hélène Rama-Niang, Aide et Action International:**

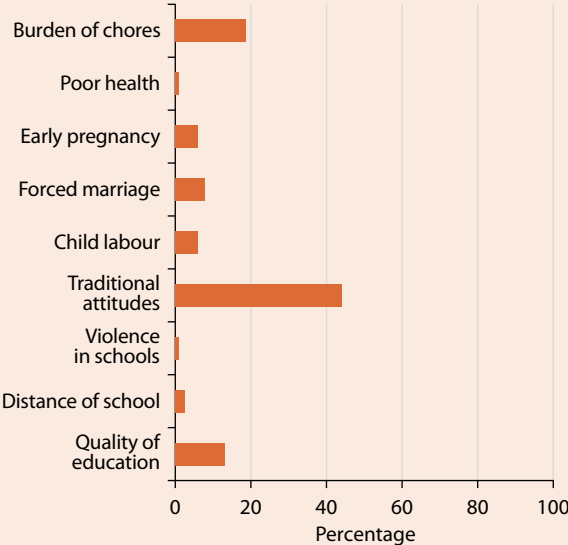
"Inadequate policies, because women's and girls' participation in all development processes in any country depends on real democratisation of school; above all, girls' attendance and retention in regard to the favourable policies – material, technical and financial support – which exist."

**Nancy Kendall, University of Wisconsin-Madison:**

"All of these are issues, though I think that the last three are the most important. I would rephrase them as the 'sexualisation of adolescent girl students'."



Question 3: What do you think is the main barrier that prevents girls from staying in school for at least nine years?



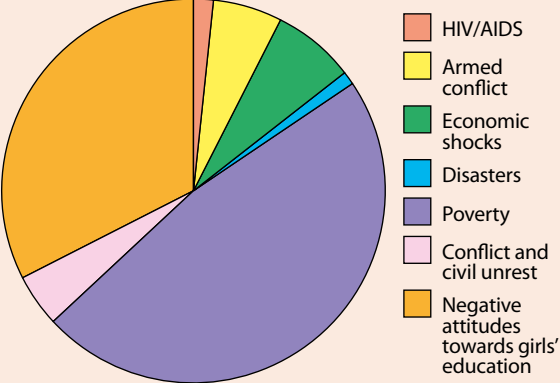
Some 44 per cent of respondents felt that traditional attitudes were a main barrier that prevents girls from staying in school for at least nine years; 18 per cent felt the burden of chores was the main barrier.

**Samantha French, WaterAid:** “In a study in Burkina Faso we found it was traditional attitudes/lack of valuing girls, combined with poverty.”

**Luz Maceira Ochoa, Espacio Feminista:** “Lots of people in Mexico don’t stay at school for that period. Almost 33 per cent of the Mexican population hasn’t achieved the basic education. There are not state facilities to do it.”



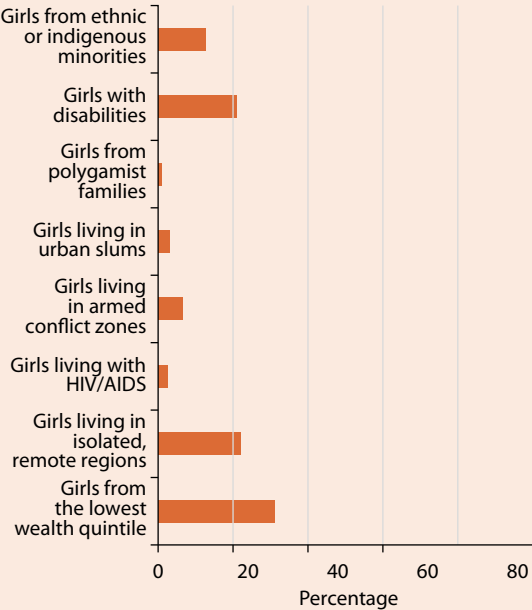
Question 4: In your experience, which of the following is the main international issue that you believe causes girls to drop out of school?



Nearly half of the respondents (47.5 per cent) felt poverty was the main issue that causes girls to drop out of school, followed by 32 per cent who felt that negative attitudes towards girls' education was a serious issue affecting girls' drop-out rates.

GIRLS' EDUCATION – GENERAL

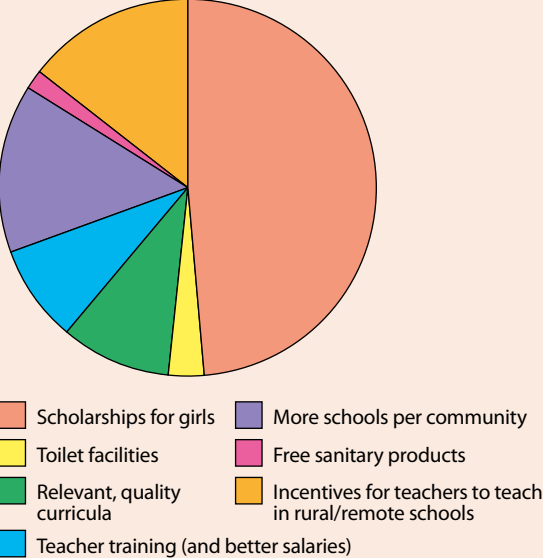
Question 5: In your opinion, which group of girls is more likely to be excluded from school?



A third of respondents (31 per cent) felt that girls from the lowest wealth quintile were most likely to be excluded from school, followed by girls living in isolated remote regions (21 per cent), and girls living with disabilities (20 per cent).

GIRLS' EDUCATION – SOLUTIONS

Question 6: What is the best intervention, in your opinion, for keeping girls in school?



Nearly half of respondents (48 per cent) felt that scholarships for girls were the most important intervention for keeping girls in school. Following this, respondents awarded equal importance to incentives for teachers to teach in rural communities (14 per cent) and more schools for communities. The fewest respondents (under two per cent) felt that free sanitary products was an intervention that worked in keeping girls in school.

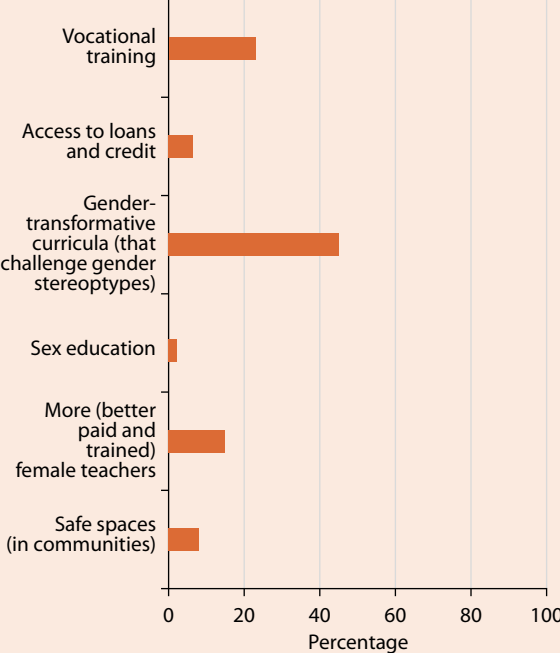
**Prof Lynn Davies, Centre for International Education and Research, University of Birmingham:** “Scholarships work well in areas of poverty; elsewhere I would say child-friendly schools which combine a lot of the above.”

**Kamba, Rooftops Canada Foundation:** “Creating political stability where there is conflict, and advocating for cultural changes.”

**Bridget McElroy, IFESH (Africa):** “There is a great need for gender-responsive pedagogical training for YOUNG, new, untrained teachers. Additionally, a great need to decrease the student-teacher ratio in the classroom.”

**Wezi Moyo, Action Aid International, Malawi:** “Address violence in schools that leads to unhealthy interest in girls' bodies as sexual objects.”

Question 7: What is the best intervention, in your opinion, for ensuring girls develop the skills they need to succeed in life?



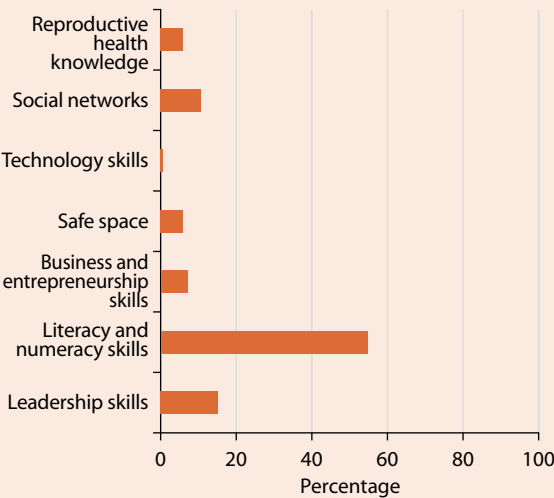
Many of the respondents felt that gender-transformative curricula that challenge gender stereotypes is the best way of ensuring girls develop the skills they need to succeed in life.

**Lesley Brewer, University of Nottingham:** “Sensitising of political leaders to gender issues and the importance of educating girls for life. This can lead to all of the above.”

**SY Agathe, Plan Burkino Faso:** “Introduce in primary and secondary education training modules on topics such as ‘building self-confidence’; ‘human rights: equality between men and women’; ‘education values’; ‘leadership skills’.”

**Dr Leemamol Mathew, IRMA, Anand, India:** “Since many women are cheated for not being literate, I argue that along with other vocational training or skill-based training, schools must make sure that they learn to read and write before they leave school.”

**Question 8: What do you think is the greatest benefit that school provides to girls?**



More than half of respondents (54 per cent) selected literacy and numeracy skills as the most important benefit schooling provides for girls. This was followed by leadership skills (15 per cent) and social networks (10 per cent), while only 0.6 per cent felt that the greatest benefit of schooling for girls is technology skills.

**Ogochukwu Ekwenchi, Lecturer Africa:** “With a qualification and a job, a girl is financially sorted for life, married or not.”

**Lois Cochrane, The School Club, Zambia:** “It has to be a combination of many of the above. For example, young women need to have an understanding of reproductive health, have literacy and numeracy skills, alongside the confidence to start their own business if this is what they wish to do (as so many economic opportunities in developing countries develop from within the community).”

**Wezi Moyo, Action Aid International, Malawi:** “An educated woman is sure to make independent decisions, is less vulnerable to violence against women and HIV/AIDS.”

**Question 9: What, in your opinion, is the country that has made the most progress in increasing girls' enrolment in secondary school, and why?**

Ten per cent of the respondents chose Bangladesh as the country that has made the most progress, followed closely by Rwanda (seven per cent) and Kenya (five per cent). Respondents mentioned Mauritius, which has reached gender parity at university level, and Afghanistan, which showed promise in early 2002 and 2003 but that gradually fizzled out.

**Bangladesh:** Respondents cited the strong social protection programmes put in place by the government, financial incentives such as stipends, free tuition and social mobilisation as reasons for selecting Bangladesh as the country that has made the most progress in increasing girls' enrolment. However, Nitya Rao, from the University of East Anglia, suggests that: “the quality of education in Bangladesh is not very good, and education does not necessarily play a transformative role.”

**Rwanda:** Respondents noted the inspirational recovery from the genocide, the political system, and the policies and programmes developed through collaborative partnerships with organisations such as FAWA and UNICEF.

**Kenya:** Respondents cited awareness-raising campaigns, free primary education policy, and the presence of a country advocate for girls as the reasons why they felt Kenya was the most improved country in terms of school enrolment.



AFM SHAMSUZZAMAN

Primary classroom in Bangladesh.



JANE HAHN

Girls at school in Ghana.

**SUMMARY**

The results of this short survey paint a mixed picture of the state of girls' education across the globe. Multiple barriers, including culture, economic deprivation, conflict and lack of political will, prompted many of the respondents to note that there is little to celebrate even though progress has been made.

*“There must exist the will to make a policy work by all the countries of the world. Unless this happens, I'm afraid a declaration of victory now in the war against girls' low school attendance will indeed be premature.”*

Ogochukwu Ekwenchi, Lecturer, Africa

Experts pointed out that some topics, such as violence, continue to be overlooked and require dedicated legislation. “I work in Namibia, where girls must not go to school if they become pregnant. Furthermore, the high rate of violence against women and girls is oppressive and

prohibitive. Girls in my classrooms say that when men beat them, it means the men love them,” said Dr Tara Elyssa, retired lecturer and administrator.

Others joined this call for increasing the focus on violence against girls: “In spite of all the factors that work against the education of the girl child, violence remains the most common, and much should be done by institutions and states to curb this phenomenon; be it at home, school or in society at large. Best of all, the quest for girl-child education should be made in compliance with girls themselves in all countries, with the ability to network for experience-sharing and learning,” said Ngende Nathalia Dibando of Plan International.

However, despite these difficulties, one thing was unanimously agreed upon by all survey participants – education is absolutely essential for achieving gender equality. “Access to education is a worthwhile venture that opens horizons, much more so for women who could impart and impact on their own families and the wider society,” concluded Mary Getui of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and National Aids Control Council, Africa.





# Enrolment is not enough: girls' access to education

# 2

- Masking inequalities: the poorest and most isolated girls are not enrolled in school
- Measuring success: enrolment figures are increasing, but what about attendance?
- What did we learn in school? Primary research in four countries
- Why adolescent girls drop out of school
- The continuing constraints of gender: a girl's place is in the home

*"The benefits that she is going to get from school are not visible right now... After she gets all the necessary education, she will probably be employed, which will help me through my problems."*

Mother of 15 year-old Biritu, rural Ethiopia<sup>1</sup>

One in four adolescent girls is no longer in lower secondary school; many drop out from primary school, others during the transition from primary to secondary.<sup>2</sup> Many hardly attend school at all. Recent research by Plan found that in a study of nine countries nearly eight per cent of girls had never been enrolled in school and that enrolment is in itself not a meaningful measure of school attendance.<sup>3</sup> We cannot really know how many adolescent girls attend school regularly and we understand even less about what might help get them into school and keep them there.

This chapter will explore the reality behind the global enrolment statistics and the progress towards gender parity in education. During adolescence, girls' continued engagement with the formal education system, or with any schooling at all, can be erratic. Teenage girls have demands on their time which increase as they get older. Their domestic and reproductive roles may take priority over going to school.

Scholarships, conditional cash transfers, community schools and female teachers are all cited as initiatives that might go some

way to making sure that adolescent girls have meaningful access to education. But, in fact, the evidence is limited – we just cannot be sure what would work, where and why.

This is in spite of the fact that over the past 10 years many countries have made strides in providing access to education for all children, and for girls in particular. Some 91 countries are on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal targets on access to, and gender parity in, primary education by 2015.<sup>4</sup> Today, young people spend more of their adolescence in schooling than ever before. Adolescent girls in 2009 got a mean of six years of education in their lifetimes – up from fewer than four years in 1990.<sup>5</sup> Global trends in population growth, improved health and greater urbanisation have all contributed to this trend, but the achievements are mainly due to significant increases in investment and commitment to access to education around the world.<sup>6</sup>

It is right that these achievements are celebrated – as they are sure to be in 2015 when heads of state gather at the United Nations to report on progress against the Millennium Development Goals – but this is

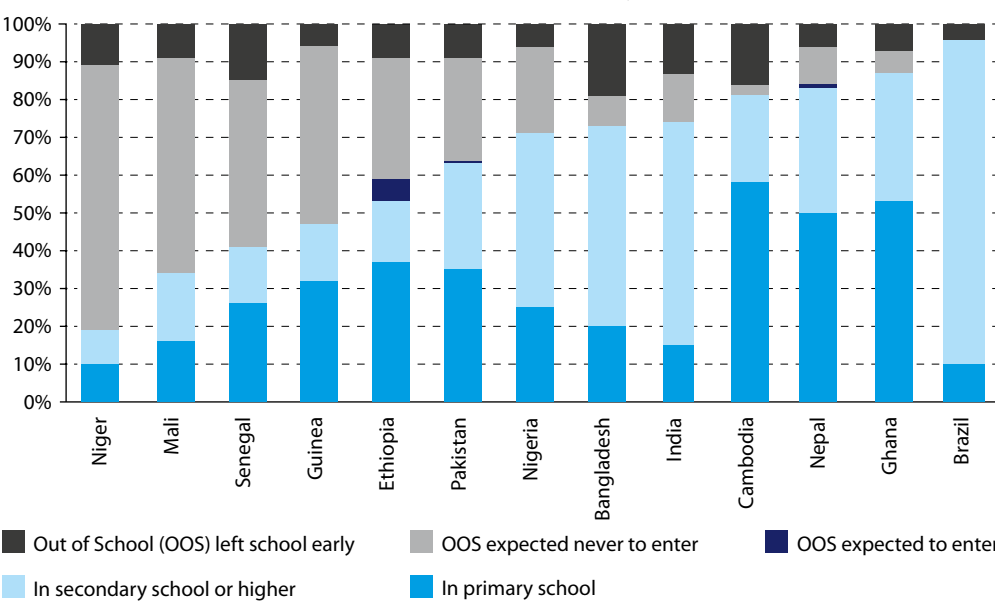
not the whole story.

The large increase in the numbers of young people enrolled in secondary school globally is dominated by increases in two countries: China and India. Between 1970 and 2009, secondary-school enrolment in China rose from 52 to 100 million and in India it rose from 21 to 102 million.<sup>7</sup> With these numbers, China and India account for almost half the global increase in secondary-school enrolment in this generation – from 196 million in 1970 to 531 million students in 2009 – masking the ways in which other countries have made little or no progress.<sup>8</sup>

While the pace of increase in girls' enrolment in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia has been significant – and faster than boys' – the girls who are seeing the greatest increase tend to be urban and rich.<sup>9</sup> Even in countries on track to meet global targets for enrolment and gender parity, girls from the poorest, hardest to reach, or most discriminated against communities are still left behind.<sup>10</sup>

As the chart below shows, there are huge differences between countries as to whether girls are in school, and if they are, at which level.<sup>11</sup>

**Percentage of lower secondary school-age girls who are in and out of school, for selected countries, most recent year available**



# 1 A reality check

*“Life here was tough! Girls’ education was not a priority for most people. Most people married off their young girls to escape from high levels of poverty. Water, health and food were the most pressing needs of the communities.”*

Ayesha, 14, South Sudan

As we saw in Chapter 1, adolescent girls’ lives are dynamic, affected by their level of maturity, by where they live, by the season, by changes in their health, the welfare and the income of the rest of their family, and by custom and harmful practices.<sup>12</sup> Although education is potentially offering them new opportunities, the persistence of poverty and recurring stresses such as illness or environmental shocks means that families are forced into a series of trade-offs. They must balance the need for survival in the present with any potential future gains that might come from keeping their children in school.<sup>13</sup>

In terms of government funding and parental attitudes and expectations there has been progress: we know from Plan’s ‘Real Choices, Real Lives’ cohort study that many parents are committed to educating their

girls as well as their boys.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the realities of daily life can overwhelm both their personal commitment and the effectiveness of national provision and legislation.

In this chapter we explore, first, what global and national figures conceal, by focusing on the girls who are not accounted for by international tracking methods – those marginalised by location, ethnicity and extreme poverty. We will also look at how success is being measured and how these measures, which only track enrolment, help to hide the real experiences of many adolescent girls. Finally, we look at why certain girls don’t enrol in, or drop out of, school, and at what is being done to address these issues.

For many boys, adolescence is a time of greater freedom and more independence. For girls it can be the opposite and education, actually going to school, can be key to enabling them to keep their place in, and contribute to, the world outside home.

*“I would rather be a boy. They can go anywhere without fear – their parents don’t worry so much... To be a boy is better. There is less pain in his life.”*

Sur, 13, Thailand

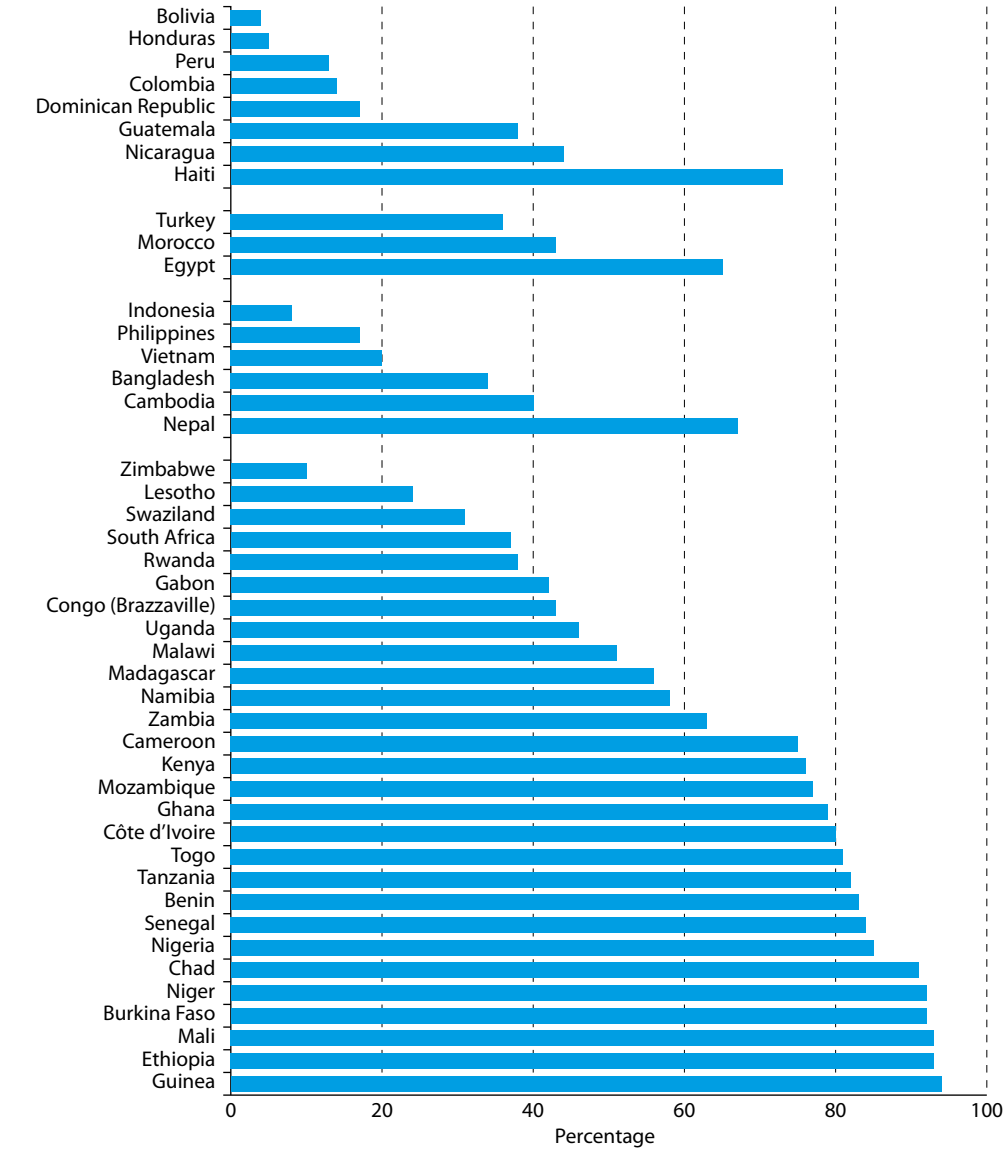


Sur and her younger sister doing the washing.



Girls aged 10-14 who never attended school as a percentage of all out-of-school girls aged 10-14

Out-of-school girls (ages 10-14) are largely unschooled in the formal educational system



2 Masking inequalities

*"In many poor settings parents under-invest in their children's schooling even when there are no school fees and schooling returns are high. This is because basic survival requires their children's participation in the work required to sustain the family."*

Cynthia B Lloyd, Education Expert<sup>15</sup>

When we unpack the national statistics to look at how different aspects of family life and the wider society affect the education of girls, a very different story of progress in education emerges. Deeply entrenched social inequalities exist within many countries, and girls are the ones worst affected. In 2009, 48 million of the young people who were not in secondary school lived in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa: that

is 68 per cent of all the children in the world who are missing out on a secondary education. These are also the two regions with some of the largest gender gaps in enrolment in secondary education.<sup>16,17</sup> Within the countries in these regions, and elsewhere, we see three factors common to girls who have the least chance of going to school and staying there. They are poor, they live in rural areas, and they come from ethnic groups that are discriminated against or excluded. And in some cases all three. Many also live in a conflict-affected country or region. Globally, the poorest children are more likely to be out of school or behind in school than the richest children. In the poorest 20 per cent of households in the world, only 64 per cent of all school-aged children enrol in school, compared to 90 per cent of children in the richest 20 per cent of homes.<sup>18</sup> When adding a gender dynamic to this statistic, a bleak picture emerges. Girls in the poorest households are most likely to be excluded from school altogether.<sup>19</sup> When poor parents make a decision about which child is more likely to gain from education, which is a long-term investment, a girl's immediate usefulness as a caretaker, her worth as a bride, or her contribution through domestic or other labour can be deemed more valuable than an uncertain and unproven return from her education in the future.<sup>20</sup>

*"In Malawi, especially in rural areas, girls meet a lot of challenges and because I am a girl I would like to fight for my rights and girls' rights too. We are also human beings who need to be respected."*

Elizabeth, secondary-school student from Malawi<sup>21</sup>

Poor rural girls in almost every country have a lower rate of enrolment than their richer urban counterparts. One study of 40 countries found that they had attendance rates of less than 50 per cent in every country but three.<sup>22</sup> Jordan, Armenia and Egypt were the only countries in the study in which rural poor girls achieved over 50 per cent secondary-school attendance. Indeed, in 24 out of 40 countries, poor rural girls attended school less than 10 per cent of the time.<sup>23</sup>



OLLIVIER GIRARD

Family income is therefore a critical factor in determining whether a girl will go to or stay in school. Running the household in Benin.

Where a girl lives is also key. Girls living in rural areas tend to enrol in, go to and stay in school at much lower rates than their urban counterparts. In Pakistan, a rural girl from one of the poorest homes is 16 times more likely to be out of school than a rich urban boy.<sup>24</sup> Why rural girls enrol in and go to school less than richer urban girls is due to a number of factors related to rural life. For example, in the Peruvian Andes, research has shown that rural poverty makes unequal demands on girls' time, causing persistent low educational participation. This is deteriorating as water and firewood become increasingly scarce and girls must spend more of their time searching for these essential resources.<sup>25</sup> Where poverty and gender intersect with geographical isolation and being a member of a minority ethnic group, the disadvantages are magnified, and inequalities are brought into even sharper focus. In Nigeria, for example, girls from a poor rural household will, on average, get fewer than three years of education; while in urban areas, girls in the same wealth bracket will get more than six years. If the girl is also from an ethnic minority, she will receive less than one year of education; compared to an average of almost 10 if she were from one of the richest rural households or any other ethnic group in the country.<sup>26</sup>





KAREN ROBINSON/PANOS PICTURES

*"Girls have to help their parents with the house and with the farming. Girls have a duty to do as they are told. Boys do not have the same obligation to help... This sometimes means the boys go to school for longer than girls."*

Community leader,  
Houay How village, Laos<sup>27</sup>

Plan International research shows that in isolated Lahu, Khmu and Hmong minority communities in Laos, girls face a number of barriers to secondary-school participation and their participation rates are much lower than the national average.<sup>28</sup> In some of the communities which formed part of the research, none of the girls had completed secondary school. Following traditional practice, girls in these communities are encouraged to marry between 14 and 16, and married girls are not encouraged to go to school. Further, a dowry is paid to the girl's parents and the girl will go to live with her husband's family. So, educating a girl is not seen as contributing to the family's future. Finally, girls' domestic labour is more highly valued than their education.<sup>29</sup> Roma girls in Eastern Europe also face forms of discrimination in education due to their minority status:

- In the Slovak Republic, only nine per cent of Roma girls, compared with 54 per cent of Slovak girls, attend secondary school.<sup>30</sup>
- In Romania, 39 per cent of Roma girls aged over 10 are without any education,

compared with six per cent of the rest of the population, and only one Roma girl to 60 Romanians attends university.

- In Kosovo, only 56 per cent of Roma women aged 15 to 24 are literate, as opposed to 98 per cent for the rest of the population. In addition, only 25 per cent of Roma children attend secondary education and only 1.4 per cent finish high school.

This analysis clearly shows that the issue is not just whether the same number of girls as boys enrol in school, but, crucially, what happens to particular groups of girls at key stages in their education. While richer girls and urban girls are able to take advantage of the expansion in education, their counterparts in poorer households, in rural areas, and in certain ethnic groups are being excluded.

*Engaged to be married at age 10 in Romania.*

*Carrying water in Laos.*



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### 3 Measuring success

Looking at the differences in enrolment rates within countries, along lines of wealth, rural-urban divides, and at marginalised groups, gives a clearer picture of what is happening to adolescent girls' rights to education. But even that does not go far enough.

Although policymakers and academics have asked for more nuanced measurements of access, in reality most countries still just track enrolment. But enrolment is an inherently flawed measure of access. It is captured on one day – sometimes the first day – of the school year and can only really show whether children turned up to school on that day.<sup>31</sup> Using this measure, educators are left hoping that it will mean children will keep coming back every day throughout the whole year.

A number of other measures (see box below) have been developed to try to capture meaningful access to education. This list expands tracking access beyond the first day and also tracks teacher attendance and 'learning' achievements.

**The CREATE expanded definition of Access to Education<sup>32</sup>**

Worthwhile access to education will only have an impact on development when:

- 1 All children enrol at the age of six
- 2 All children attend at least 80 per cent of the time and teachers are present to teach at least as frequently
- 3 No child falls more than two years behind in school, and thus repetition is rare and carefully managed
- 4 No child fails to achieve learning within two years of her particular grade
- 5 Any differences in key inputs – such as pupil-teacher ratios, class sizes and access to learning materials – show more equal or even pro-poor investment.



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Although these suggested measures contribute to a shift in thinking around tracking access and attendance rates, they leave out other important measures, such as gender dynamics in the classroom and rates of gender-based violence, which are vital to girls' education.

*Shouldering a heavy burden in Ethiopia.*

**Present and accounted for – after enrolment**

Attendance is a critical missing link in our understanding of access. By looking at the ways in which attendance varies throughout the school year, factors such as pastoral livelihoods and seasonal labour patterns begin to emerge. For example, in some parts of Ethiopia, indigenous settlements are scattered and mobility is key to economic livelihood. In other cases, early marriage of girls between 13 and 15 years of age further contributes to girls' attendance patterns and early drop-out.<sup>33</sup> If attendance throughout the year is not tracked, this issue will not be made visible to policymakers, and early marriage will go unchecked.

Other factors that can contribute to truncated attendance or early drop-out are child labour and household chores. A social assessment for the Education Sector in Ethiopia found that: "Child labour is a major driver of late arrival at school, absenteeism and drop-out from school at all levels, and drop-out amongst girls is highest. Girls engage in several aspects of work in the household – cooking, fetching water and firewood, childcare – as well as going to market. Participation in handcrafts and cottage industry also contributes to absence from school."<sup>34</sup>



Looking at the reasons behind girls' inconsistent attendance and early drop-out gives us a much more realistic picture of how much work there is still to do in ensuring that the rights of adolescent girls to education, particularly when they are from the poorest rural families, are substantively supported and promoted.

One of the ways in which development organisations are tracking attendance rates for girls is through innovative technologies which allow for the immediate recording and mapping of girls' schooling patterns.

**TRACKING GIRLS' ATTENDANCE<sup>35</sup>**

A recent technological development in mobile applications is allowing girls' school attendance to be digitally monitored. Camfed is equipping its volunteers in Ghana with an 'end-to-end digitalised data collection and analysis system' designed to give communities the tools and the skills to track resources, monitor education quality and demand accountability from government and schools through the use of live data. Using EpiSurveyor phone software, volunteers are able to go into schools and gather data from parents, teachers and pupils about the resources they are receiving – such as uniforms, footwear and books – as well as information on performance and attendance. Data is fed back in real time to a Salesforce database, accessible by regional managers, who can analyse the data and examine trends. Following a successful pilot of the technology in Zambia, Ghana was chosen for the initial roll-out, because of good network coverage in rural areas and because Camfed Ghana was already using SMS to communicate with schools and volunteers in this region.

Camfed Ghana selected members of each of the 14 district education committees earlier this year, as well as volunteers from Camfed's young women's network (Cama), to train in the use of the phone technology. Each trained volunteer visits the Camfed partner schools in their districts and collects information every term. "The girls feel more comfortable talking to the Cama members, as they have something in common," said Charles



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Atia, Camfed's head of operations. "It is also exciting and empowering for the young women to use this software." The software is allowing girls' school attendance and learning outcomes to be captured and monitored instantly, thus ensuring early drop-out or attrition can immediately be detected.

*Concentrating hard in Cambodia.*

**Too old and too late**

Being too old for your class is another factor inhibiting adolescent girls' commitment to and progress in education. When girls don't start school at the right age and stage of life, they are even less likely ever to graduate.<sup>36</sup>

Many girls enrol late or have to repeat years and Plan's research has shown that if girls fall too far behind in school at the critical ages of 13 and 14 they risk dropping out and never returning. If they do continue to secondary education, they do not stay for very long. The level of drop-out was particularly acute in Cambodia and Mali, where around a quarter of girls enrolled in the first grade of lower secondary school did not progress into the second grade.<sup>37</sup>

In Malawi and Mozambique, around 60 per cent of pupils reported that they had repeated a grade.<sup>38</sup> Research evidence suggests that grade repetition does not improve exam results or learning, but has been linked instead with low achievement and stripping away motivation for children who are forced to repeat grades.<sup>39</sup>

**Letters to an out-of-school friend<sup>40</sup>**

Friend please comes back to school I am in school I am very happy to study and playing with friends and in the free time we can help our parents work. When you come back and try to study hard we will achieve our objectives. Our dream will come true. I think that I want to be a teacher and study hard to achieve the goal. Please come back to school my friends. Pisei, girl, 13, Cambodia	I am very much happy as I can get much of knowledge from our teachers. Please do not stop studying and come back as our school now is much develop. School is the pool of knowledge if you come back school it is like to saving for your future. I hope you will come back school. Sopheak, girl, 12, Cambodia	Friend please come back school as in school we are very happy and can study together and play together. We really want you come back school. We always come to school together and it is very exciting. When we are at school we also can help our parents' work when we go back home. Friend please come back school, you used to tell me you want to be a teacher? How can you be if you do not come back school? I hope you will come back soon. Sron, girl, 14, Cambodia
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**Making the transition**

One of the biggest stumbling blocks for adolescent girls is the transition from primary to secondary school and completion at lower and higher secondary levels. For example, a UNESCO report found large disparities in transitioning from primary to secondary school in Tanzania: for every 100 rich urban boys who complete primary school, only 53 poor rural girls do.<sup>41</sup> The reasons vary, but Plan's research in neighbouring Kenya suggests that parents' low expectations and

little support for girls' education coupled with high stakes examinations, where girls do poorly, are key factors inhibiting girls' transition from primary to secondary school.<sup>42</sup> In this research across nine countries, in all cases except for El Salvador, fewer girls than boys passed their transitional exams. Lower pass rates in gate-keeping examinations may be one of the reasons why fewer girls make the move from one cycle of education to the next, and why the gender gap widens going up the education system.



ANNIE MPALUME

*From primary to secondary in Zimbabwe.*

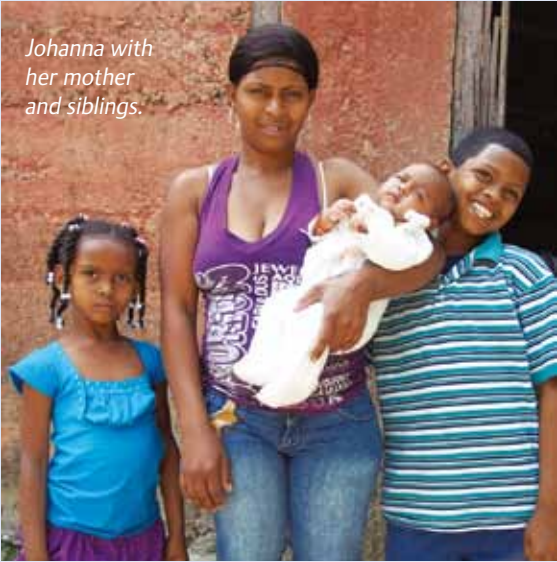


WHAT DID WE LEARN IN SCHOOL?

*"We have some good teachers and we learn all the time. The bad thing about school is they give us very little food here. I like to study, but not to be hungry."*  
Martha, 16, Uganda

*"As far as poverty is concerned there are many things they cannot do for financial reasons. They come to school without breakfast; sometimes they don't even have the five pesos to buy it – this is something which makes them depressed, and then you have a child who cannot develop well."*  
Arelis, teacher, Dominican Republic

Over the past six years, Plan's 'Real Choices, Real Lives' cohort study has followed 142 girls and their families, who live in nine developing countries around the world. This year many of the cohort girls have started attending primary school and their parents have expressed high aspirations for their future. In fact, many parents expect their daughter to study to at least secondary-school level, to get a good job and lead a life free from poverty and hardship – opportunities which, in many cases, they did not have themselves. Without secondary schools which deliver quality education, these high aspirations are unlikely to be met. To find out what kind of education these girls can expect in six years' time, we conducted school observation research<sup>43</sup> in seven schools across four countries – Uganda, Brazil, Dominican Republic and Cambodia – in a number of



primary and secondary schools in the areas closest to the cohort families.

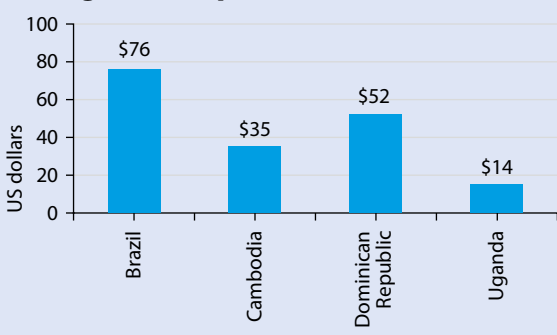
This research was conducted in each of the seven schools over a few days, during one week. As part of the research, we collected administrative data on attendance, repetition and levels of teacher qualifications. The researchers also observed two lessons in each school. We then conducted in-depth interviews with the classroom teacher (of the observed lessons) as well as the headteacher of the school. We asked them a series of questions including: how they became teachers, where they sent their own children to school, and how they felt about teaching boys compared with girls. Finally, we also interviewed students from all seven schools.

One of the main findings related to the impact of poverty in these schools, especially in relation to the extra fees which were taken from students for printing exam papers on the day of research in two Brazilian schools. Researchers noted that these requests for financial contributions were affecting the lesson: "The group was very agitated, because of the 10 cents contribution (equivalent to one US cent) they had to give for the copies of the Portuguese test the following week. According to the student who was collecting the money, only the girls had brought the contribution."

In all four countries, families reported spending substantial parts of their income on education-related expenses.

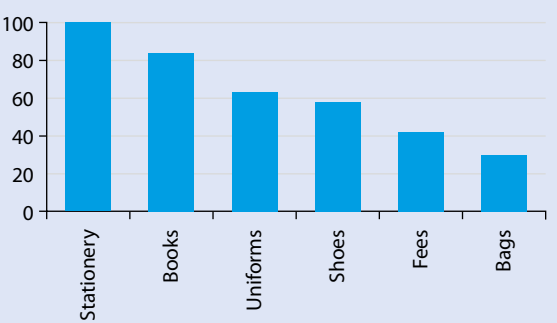
In Brazil, Cambodia and Uganda, all of the cohort families reported hidden costs associated with educating their children, including having to buy uniforms, books and stationery. Although the average income varies widely, the associated costs of food and education make up between 40 and 50 per cent of an average family's weekly expenditure.

Average income per week (US\$)



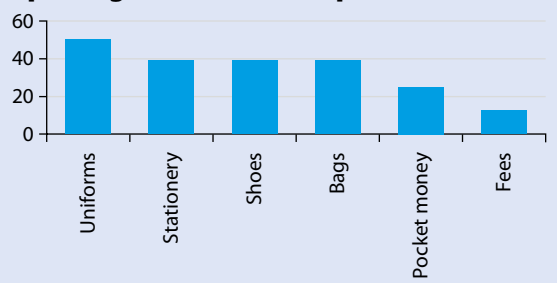
The families in Brazil spend 41 per cent of their weekly income on food, leaving 59 per cent for rent, health, incidentals and education costs.

Brazil: percentage of families reporting education costs per item



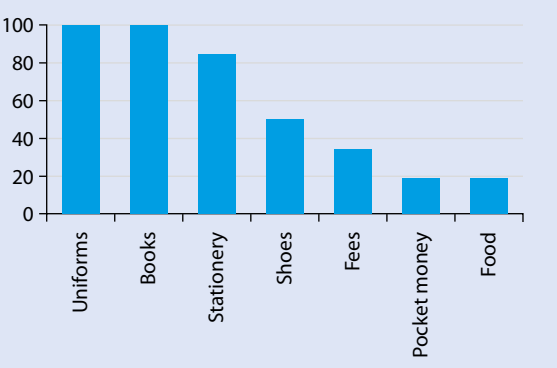
Families in Cambodia spend 40 per cent of their weekly earnings on food, leaving 60 per cent for rent, health, incidentals and education.

Cambodia: percentage of families reporting education costs per item



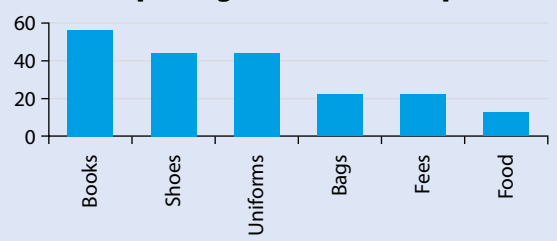
Families in Uganda earn on average \$14 a week and they spend 57 per cent of that on food and 14 per cent on rent, leaving 29 per cent for incidentals including education and health. As the graph below shows, all of the families in Uganda reported spending money on books and uniforms.

Uganda: percentage of families reporting education costs per item



Only 12 per cent of families in the Dominican Republic reported no costs. On average, cohort families in the Dominican Republic spent 50 per cent of their weekly earnings on food, leaving only half their combined income for rent, health, incidentals and education. Johanna's family explained that poverty meant they were unable to buy supplies for their children's schooling.

Dominican Republic: percentage of families reporting education costs per item



Johanna's mother said: "I couldn't buy uniforms, the situation wasn't good; they went wearing the same ones as last year." Rudilania's family, on the other hand, reported that supplies were provided by the school. Rudilania's father explained that uniforms and books were "ordered [...] from the school... The teacher gives them to them."



## 4 Initiatives and alternatives

*"Girls reap enormous benefits from post-primary education including skills that translate into employment and empowerment. In addition, there is a correlation between education beyond primary school and having healthier families and lower fertility rates."*

UNICEF 2010<sup>44</sup>

A number of initiatives have recognised the issue of transition between primary and secondary, particularly for poor and rural girls. Efforts to address it have included offering girls and boys accelerated or non-formal routes through primary education. ABE in Ethiopia, COBET in Tanzania and BRAC in Bangladesh are examples of this.<sup>45</sup>

### A SECOND CHANCE FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

Alternative and complementary routes through basic education – which prioritise getting girls back on track with their peers – have had great success in Tanzania and Bangladesh, countries that have both made huge progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Tanzania made a commitment to getting all children into primary school when it gained its independence. Transition from primary to secondary emerged as a problem many years later and the ministry of education and UNICEF launched Complementary Basic Education for Tanzania (COBET) in 2001.<sup>46</sup> The programme gives a second chance to children, especially married adolescent girls, through participatory, child-centred learning and community participation in planning, monitoring and evaluating the programme. It also encourages integration with health, nutrition, water and sanitation and HIV/AIDS education, and develops greater flexibility and relevance to the needs of girls.

By 2006, about 556,000 out-of-school students – around eight per cent of the primary school-age population – had been enrolled in COBET centres. In 2001, almost 60 per cent of the children who entered Grade 1 had dropped out by



NIELS BUSCH

Schoolgirls in Kenya.

Grade 3; by 2006, drop-out rates had fallen to 17 per cent.<sup>47</sup>

In Bangladesh, the issue of girls not in, or dropping out of, primary school is endemic, especially in remote and rural areas and among ethnic minorities. So while Bangladesh is an 'Education for All' success story with large increases in enrolment since 1990, 1.3 million children remain out of school, drop-out is high, and attendance is low.<sup>48</sup>

In this context, BRAC has since 1985 been running second-chance centres for rural children, especially girls, who have low access to primary school. Today, BRAC works in all 64 Districts of Bangladesh. It reaches 0.05 million children a year and 4.95 million (65.53 per cent female) children have graduated from a BRAC school since the programme began.<sup>49</sup> 94.14 per cent of BRAC pupils transfer to secondary school after completing a BRAC primary school, and fewer than five per cent drop out. Additionally, 99.86 per cent of BRAC students pass the government's Grade 5 examination. BRAC has been successfully teaching the same skills as the government schools – with better results – to a harder-to-reach population, as 65 per cent of the children BRAC reaches are rural girls from poor households.<sup>50</sup>

Other countries have made basic education free, have physically enlarged local primary schools to include nine years of basic education closer to girls' homes, and have offered scholarships for poor girls and other vulnerable children.<sup>51, 52, 53</sup>

## 5 Why adolescents drop out

*"[I would like to] study well... to move forward in future... there must be an aim for life... sometimes I feel like the difficulties [in the home] are because of me going to college. I feel like dropping out of college... if the conditions in the household are difficult, it is difficult to study."*

Triveni, orphan living with her grandmother, Andhra Pradesh, India<sup>54</sup>

With each year that girls progress through school, the ways in which their families rely on them shift, and at adolescence girls begin to disappear from the classroom.

Research by Plan in six countries in West Africa and one country in East Africa indicates that the barriers to adolescent girls attending secondary school can include:<sup>55</sup>

- cost associated with education;
- poor health and nutrition of girls;
- high demands of domestic chores and care work at home;
- lack of parental support;
- abuse and exploitation in school by teachers;
- early marriage and pregnancy;
- limiting expectations about what it is appropriate for girls to do.<sup>56</sup>

In this section, we look at some of these barriers to access from the perspective of adolescent girls, to shed further light on why some girls are not going to or staying in school, and some of the successful initiatives reversing this trend.

### Too costly

*"Boys and girls are equal, and parents shouldn't discriminate against girls in terms of their school fees."*

Justice, 16, Zimbabwe

One of the main reasons adolescent girls are not attending school is cost. The focus of international development goals on primary education and universal access has meant that enormous political capital and resources have been devoted to making primary education free and accessible to all. Despite this, various – often hidden – costs continue to apply. This investment at primary level has also meant that the same level of resources has not been spent on secondary-level schooling which, in

most countries, is not free from fees.

In Cambodia, parents and pupils cite 'fees' as the most common reason why children are not in school, even though there are no official charges.<sup>57</sup> In a survey covering 50 slums in Delhi, financial constraints were cited as the main reason for school-age children being out of school or dropping out, even though education is nominally free.<sup>58</sup>

*"If I had limited resources I would send my son and not my daughter; sons are for outside and they stay with us when we are old."*

Father, Afghanistan<sup>59</sup>

Additionally, there are often significant hidden costs, such as paid tuition and extra lessons that are required for children to pass exams.<sup>60</sup> Even at primary level, while official fees may not apply, these other costs alone can be prohibitive. In Thailand, for instance, the poorest families will spend almost 50 per cent of their income on a child's education every year.<sup>61</sup> When taking into consideration the low value parents may place on girls' education, the odds are stacked against a girl from a very poor household attending school.

The hard decisions poor families face as a result come into focus as girls reach adolescence. The cost of sending girls to school rises with age. Girls' household labour and productive labour are critical for the poorest households to make ends meet. Parents may rely on daughters for childcare or to look after ailing family members so that they can go out to work.<sup>62</sup> Studies have shown that girls' education suffers more when parents do not have enough money to pay for all their children to attend.<sup>63</sup> In addition, with secondary education costs often three to five times higher than primary, poverty plays a prominent role in the low transition rates for girls and their withdrawal from education.<sup>64</sup>

### SUR'S DAY

Sur is 13 and is a refugee from Burma living in Thailand. She wants to write and



VANESSA WHYTE/MJ DELANEY

Sur at work.

illustrate children's books and, recently, she entered a fairytale competition and won.

But her life is far from a fairytale. Her daily routine is tough: she is up at 5am and cooks lunch. She spends the day at school, but when she gets home in the afternoon she cooks again and cleans; then it is bedtime. Over the weekends, she works in the fields with her parents all day. *"I don't like working; the sun is strong and I get very tired."* She knows her parents need the money she earns but for her, *"the work is too hard for my age. I want to study, not work."*

Her dream is to go to college but she does not think she will be able to stay at school past Grade 12, when she will be 15, "because we have no money".

### Too far from home

*"High schools are not located in the near locality. Boys and girls have to travel for a long distance to attend the school. Due to the lack of transport facility and poverty it is hard for them, especially girls, to travel for that distance in such an unsafe environment. If schools are established nearby then it might help the girls to get an education."*

Father, Muzafargarh district, Pakistan<sup>65</sup>

Distance is a significant barrier to many girls' school attendance. The time it takes to get to school, dangers on the road, and the risks and costs of boarding, all compound to make the daily decision about whether or not to go



to school more difficult for adolescent girls and their parents.<sup>66</sup>

In rural areas, there is often a local primary school, but there are fewer secondary schools and they are usually much further away. The distance girls need to travel to get to secondary school requires additional costs for travel or boarding, the dangers of long unprotected roads, and longer periods away from home, taking away from time to do chores, income-generating activities or homework.

In Pakistan, a half-kilometre increase in the distance to school will decrease girls' enrolment by 20 per cent.<sup>67</sup> In addition, a recent Population Council study in Pakistan suggested that a primary school within one kilometre raises predicted school attendance to 73 per cent for five to nine year-olds and to 65 per cent if a middle school or higher is nearby for 10 to 14 year-olds. If the primary school is more than four kilometres away, the probability of attendance falls to three per cent and in the case of middle school to 54 per cent.<sup>68</sup> As girls start to reach puberty and families become more concerned about their safety and protecting their virginity and sexual maturity, the issue of distance becomes even more pertinent.

Some positive work has been done to address this issue. Camfed, Plan International and others have established community-run boarding facilities for girls near secondary schools, which they demonstrate have an impact not only on girls' attendance and enrolment in secondary school, but also on girls' performance at school.<sup>69</sup>

*Cycling to school in Laos.*

*On her way to school in Pakistan.*

## RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Adolescent girls are denied access to education for a number of reasons which legislation and policy can tackle. For instance, Argentina enacted a Law for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents in 2005, which paid special attention to the education needs of adolescents from marginalised urban and rural areas, indigenous children, and children from migrant families, particularly illegal migrants.<sup>70</sup>

A landmark case in Hong Kong saw the Supreme Court hold that selection practices for secondary schools which ranked students by sex were discriminatory as they prevented some of the highest-achieving girls from getting accepted by the best schools. The court upheld the position that this was a violation of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance and the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It also emphasised that Article 10 of CEDAW creates an obligation for governments to eliminate gender stereotyping and stressed that unsubstantiated arguments that boys and girls develop differently did not justify discrimination against girls.<sup>71</sup>

The Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recently praised the government of Togo for offering to lower school fees for girls. But Togo's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the UN Human Rights Council identified that a ministry of education circular still prohibits pregnant girls from attending school.<sup>72,73</sup>

Every year, thousands of girls are forced to leave education because they get married under the age of 18, become pregnant or are compelled to perform domestic labour duties. In countries including Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia, girls may be expelled from school if they become pregnant outside of marriage. This expulsion is based on cultural or religious grounds and re-entry into education is subsequently much more difficult.

Forcing pregnant girls out of school contravenes the basic principle set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to protect the

'best interest' of the child or adolescent as well as the recognised right to have access to secondary education on the basis of 'capacity' rather than family status or any other factor\*.<sup>74,75</sup>

Furthermore, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child explicitly recognises the right of pregnant girls to an education\*\*.<sup>76</sup>

Countries such as Kenya, Zambia, Botswana and Malawi have therefore explicitly recognised the right of girls to re-enter education after childbirth.<sup>77</sup> Tanzania changed its laws in 2010 to allow young mothers to return to school and released guidelines on how to reintegrate adolescent mothers back into education, setting out extensive programmes to raise awareness of adolescents' rights.<sup>78,79</sup>

However, some families seeking to protect girls from early pregnancy may resort to new measures that actually put them at risk. For example, in Cameroon, a country with a high 33 per cent rate of teenage pregnancy, it recently emerged that the practice of 'breast ironing' was being used by families wishing to hide their adolescent girls' sexual development.<sup>80</sup> The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognised this new practice in its recent 2011 session and noted there is a 'legal vacuum' regarding the practice.<sup>81</sup> Cameroon committed to passing a draft bill on violence against women.<sup>82</sup>

Early marriage can also adversely affect an adolescent girl's right to education. In Tanzania the law still allows for adolescent girls to be married at 14 years of age. While Tanzania reached universal primary education five years ahead of the 2015 Millennium Development Goal target, marriage is one of the main reasons for female drop-out and exclusion from secondary education.<sup>83</sup> This is both an indication of the poor quality of education offered at primary level and of the importance of secondary education in preventing early marriage and pregnancy. Following the enactment of the Law of the Child Act (2009), civil society groups have highlighted universal secondary education as a solution to child marriage.<sup>84</sup>

\* Also see International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994, Principle 10: "Everyone has the right to education, which shall be directed to the full development of human resources, and human dignity and potential, with particular attention to women and the girl child... The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his or her education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with the parents."

\*\* Article 11 (6) states: "6. States Parties to the present Charter shall have all appropriate measures to ensure that children who become pregnant before completing their education shall have an opportunity to continue with their education on the basis of their individual ability."



Health and nutrition

*"The morning porridge I get at school is normally my first meal of the day because we rarely have enough food to eat at home. In the afternoon, I get porridge with pulses and this encourages me to come to school every day."*

Lerato, 11, Bokong, Lesotho<sup>85</sup>

*"Had I not come back to school, I would have ended up as a beggar. The biscuits gave me a reason to continue my studies and follow my dreams."*

Rehena, 13, Bagerhat district, Bangladesh<sup>86</sup>

Another key reason why girls do not attend school regularly is their health. In the cohort of six year-old girls that Plan has been following since birth, health has been a consistent issue. In the countries with the lowest health indicators in the study – Togo, Benin and Uganda – the girls are not only facing a daily challenge of poor nutrition, but they are also battling a constant onslaught of illness and disease. In one particular family from Cambodia, lack of food has been a struggle for both mother and daughters (see Reaksa's story, page 51).

Discrimination against girls within families can also contribute to their malnutrition. And as girls approach adolescence, their bodies change and menstruation begins, malnutrition can lead to anaemia (iron deficiency). Rates of anaemia for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are 55 per cent on average in India (with some regions reaching closer to 70 per cent), 68 per cent in Mali and almost 50 per cent in Tanzania, showing persistent poor nutrition of girls.<sup>87,88</sup> Anaemia can lead to increased fatigue, poor concentration and lower cognitive ability. Health thus affects girls' ability to get to school and achieve once they are there. Also, food-insecure parents are more likely to send their daughters to school knowing they will receive at least one solid meal during the day without cutting into the family budget. When take-home rations are provided in addition to in-school feeding, poor families have an incentive to send their daughters to school and to maintain their school attendance.<sup>89</sup>



**SCHOOL FEEDING AND TAKE-HOME RATIONS PROJECT, WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, GHANA**

In Ghana, the World Food Programme (WFP) runs a school feeding programme, combining school meals with take-home rations, which are conditional on girls' attendance rates. The programme has had a huge impact on girls' enrolment, which surged by 46 per cent in one year alone; on girls' attendance rates, which need to be 85 per cent for girls to qualify for take-home rations; and on girls' retention, which stood at 99 per cent.<sup>90</sup>

The success of the school feeding programme in Ghana is expressed not just by the statistics but by Rashidatu, a class six pupil in Our Lady of Peace Primary School in Bimbilla, Ghana. She told the WFP that in the past several students would collapse out of weakness during morning school assembly. However, since the start of the school feeding programme, she says these incidents have almost entirely stopped. Other measures, such as school vegetable gardens, have also proven useful in ensuring girls and boys have one nutritious meal a day at school.

Lunch in Ghana.

REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES

**A TURN FOR THE BETTER FOR REAKSA**<sup>91</sup>

Six year-old Reaksa is the eldest daughter of Teur and Teh, farm labourers from the Siem Reap province of Cambodia. Reaksa's mother, Teur, was orphaned during the Khmer Rouge genocide and as a result received no formal education. Reaksa, Teur's first child, was born at home. Her birth weight recorded at 2.7 kilograms, suggesting that Teur was malnourished during the pregnancy. Indeed, over the years, Reaksa's parents have explained that, like many other families in rural Cambodia, they have been unable to feed their family well throughout the year. The family's main income comes from their mother, Teur, who travels 15 kilometres from home each day to work as a farm labourer.

Since we first met Reaksa and her family, she has suffered from persistent chest infections and occasional convulsions, compounded by a succession of serious illnesses. In 2009, Reaksa was taken to Siem Reap Children's Hospital, 50 kilometres from



Reaksa and her mother.

her home, where she was diagnosed with multiple infections – meningitis, dengue fever and acute respiratory infection. Then, she nearly died in 2010 due to a bad reaction to medication. Reaksa's younger sister, Sophea, who is four, also suffers from poor health and is unable to walk properly. Teur estimates that Sophea is unwell for three weeks of each month.

Although medical treatment in Cambodia is free for the poorest families, the fact that the nearest hospital is located almost 50 kilometres away from Reaksa's home means that the family has large transportation costs – of around \$5 per trip – to bear. In 2009, Teur ended up owing her employer \$50 as she had requested a salary advance in order to visit Reaksa in hospital. Teur confirmed that "the most difficult part of raising children is to find money to feed them and to help them when they are sick".

When researchers visited the family this year, Teur explained that the family's situation is much improved. Her current job, where she is paid 50 kilograms of rice per month, has helped ensure that the family has been better fed. Despite the challenges they face, Teur is fiercely determined that her daughters go to school. Reaksa told us that she wants to be a teacher. However, until this year, Reaksa's poor health had prevented her from regularly attending pre-school. Teur now tells us that Reaksa has been much better over the past year; she is enrolled and attending pre-school regularly. She expects Reaksa to start primary school in September and explains: "I am proud of my children because they all are very smart."



Reaksa.



## The burden of care and housework

*"Sending an older girl to school is a wasted opportunity. What is a girl for if she cannot help her mother?"*

Grandmother, Mali

*"I really want to study. I studied up to class five, but because of circumstances, my family now keeps me at home. I do household chores and farm work. My two elder brothers studied up to class eight... but my older sister, who is 20, hasn't studied at all. Nobody in my family supports my studies. If I got free notebooks, maybe I could study. If others also did housework, then I would have time to study."*

Munni, 13, Uttar Pradesh, India

Girls' enrolment and regular attendance in school is affected not only by their own health, but also by the health of their families. In most countries across the world, the burden of care is feminised, falling on the shoulders of girls and women.

In 15 South and East African countries, for example, students were absent from school for 1.5 days per month on average. Over 55 per cent of these pupils said they were absent because they were ill or had to visit a doctor. But a further 15 per cent reported they were absent because they needed to take care of a sick family member.<sup>92</sup> UNAIDS highlighted that 90 per cent of care for people living with AIDS, for example, takes place in the home.<sup>93</sup> Research has shown that this kind of care work is much more likely to be done by adolescent girls, with severe impacts on their education.<sup>94</sup>

Care work does not have to be for ill or HIV-positive relatives, as Talent's story shows. Research in South Africa, for example, found that almost a quarter of all children interviewed under age 15 were orphans, and had either lost their mother or both parents, leaving them responsible for their households.<sup>95</sup>

Research on fertility and schooling in Ghana has also shown that each additional younger sibling significantly increases the probability that an elder girl will drop out of school, particularly if younger siblings are younger than six years old.<sup>96</sup>



ANNIE MPALUME

### HEAD OF THE FAMILY, AGED 14<sup>97</sup>

Talent, from Zimbabwe, looks after her younger siblings:

*"I am the head of my family: both my mother and my father left one day back when I was only eight years old without saying goodbye. I don't know where they went, but they left me to take care of my brothers and sisters, and I haven't heard anything from them since they left. So it's up to me and my brothers and sisters to feed ourselves."*

*"Every day in the high season I wake up very early before the sun comes up to go and try and get work in other people's fields so that I can find enough money for me and my brothers and sisters to eat. It is very hard work. I stay there in the fields working hard until about 4pm. In the low season, I struggle to find work. I also do most of the cooking and housework, but sometimes my little brother will help, although he is only seven years old."*

*"I don't go to school anymore – I haven't been since 2009. There is not enough money to pay for my school fees. Maybe one day when my siblings are a bit older I could go back to school. I would learn and pass all my subjects, and then I could have a better job and a better life. Sometimes, I dream about becoming a teacher or maybe a nurse."*

Talent.

In Pakistan, higher numbers of younger siblings increased adolescent girls' workload within the home.<sup>98</sup> In these instances, early childhood care and development, or kindergarten, programmes can be hugely beneficial in freeing up a girl's time and ensuring her younger siblings are taken care of while she is in school.

Also, in many countries the work that boys and girls do is different – boys tend to do work like herding livestock, while girls do domestic chores.<sup>99</sup> It is the time burden of domestic work that is a particular issue – Plan's 'Building Skills for Life' study found that girls who go to school spend 65 per cent of their time at home on domestic chores.<sup>100</sup> This figure was even higher – 74 per cent – for out-of-school girls in the same countries.<sup>101</sup> And when the need for girls' help around the home intersects with preferences for educating sons, girls are much more likely than boys never to reach secondary school, or to drop out.

Poverty is also a significant factor. Survey data in Egypt found a very strong relationship between household-level poverty, girls having to do long hours of domestic work and reduced attendance at school.<sup>102</sup>



ALF BERG



ALF BERG

## Violence against girls

*"We don't have an indicator on how many girls are raped in schools. We're not tracking that. So what is not measured does not get done... What we have found is that [the] indicators drive what becomes important... And that's where the money goes to."*

Female South African official, 2009<sup>103</sup>

*"My mathematics teacher asked me to fall in love with him, but I found it difficult for me to do that. This became a problem between us. Any small mistake or bad thing I did I am almost always punished. This was one of the reasons I hate school and dropped out."*

Adolescent girl, Sierra Leone<sup>104</sup>

Globally, violence against girls in schools remains rife, particularly sexual violence perpetrated by fellow students and teachers. Exact numbers are hard to find, but the World Health Organisation estimated that in 2002 alone some 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence.<sup>105</sup> Studies show that girls are most likely to be abused on their journey to or from school, in or near toilets, empty classrooms, computer rooms, libraries or dormitories or near the perimeter of school grounds.<sup>106</sup>

Violence in schools is in part driven by deeply entrenched cultural beliefs and attitudes towards children.<sup>107</sup> An internal survey carried out in 2007 across all the countries in which Plan operates found that

Heading the household in Rwanda.



the main school violence issues affecting the children are corporal punishment, sexual violence and bullying.<sup>108</sup> This evidence led Plan to create Learn Without Fear, a campaign to end violence against children in schools, with a particular focus on the main issues identified above.

Learn Without Fear has found so many teachers are responsible for coercing girls into sexual acts in return for good grades that children have developed their own expressions to describe the phenomenon. For example, in Gabon, Cameroon and across the West Africa region generally, they use ‘moyennes sexuellement transmissibles’, meaning sexually transmitted grades, playing on the French acronym MST (‘maladies sexuellement transmissibles’ or sexually transmitted infections), and in Mali, ‘la menace du bic rouge’, the threat of the red ball point pen – bad grades if girls do not agree to the sexual advances of their teachers.<sup>109</sup>

#### “THE WHOLE VILLAGE WAS TALKING ABOUT IT”

*“I did well in school, but I had to leave because of one of my teachers – he asked me to marry him and I refused his proposal. As he didn’t appreciate this, he told me off all the time in front of my classmates which I couldn’t stand. I spoke to my mother who wanted to influence my decision but I made my choice and I didn’t intend to go back on it. As my mother knew I would stand by my decision, she ended up accepting that I would leave school. The whole village was talking about it and this led to the teacher moving schools. It’s true that the teacher is not there anymore but I’d already dropped out. My father hasn’t been happy since I left and he’s been on at me saying that I need to decide either to get married or study. At that time I was going out with a guy from the village, but one of my cousins who I didn’t like was trying to go out with me. And when I left school one week later, my father gave me in marriage to my cousin without warning. I decided to run away but I didn’t have any money and my boyfriend advised me to stay as they would blame him if I went. I decided to stay and follow this advice but I knew I wouldn’t last*

*long in the marriage. I lost my virginity to my boyfriend even before I got married. After getting married I moved in with my husband but I argued with my husband every day as I refused to sleep with him and he hit me. All the neighbours know he’s always hitting me. The day before yesterday the neighbours told my mother and she came to get me straight away. Since then I’ve been staying at my parents’ and I want to get divorced and marry my boyfriend as it’s him who I love. This would never have happened if it wasn’t for my teacher.”*

17 year-old girl, Senegal

#### Parental support and aspirations

There are complex reasons behind parents’ lack of support for their daughters’ education, as the issues of cost, health and safety explored so far in this chapter and issues of quality, explored in the next chapter, show.

Parents’ expectations and aspirations for girls change as they get older, and demands on their domestic work, worries about their health and protection and pressures to marry begin to mount. Plan’s Building Skills for Life multi-country study found that parents’ low expectations had a significant effect on girls’ achievements.<sup>110</sup> While most adolescents – girls and boys – agreed that adults think school is important, only half of the adolescents felt they were given encouragement to take school seriously. Girls in Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Mali had a less positive attitude towards school and their teachers due to the negative attitudes their families and communities hold regarding schooling.

Parental and community support of education is generally high across all countries. However, it was found that adults encourage boys to do well in education more than girls. In Rwanda significantly more boys (50 per cent) than girls (21 per cent) were encouraged to go to school. This correlated with findings in a number of countries including Pakistan, Mali, El Salvador and Malawi where parents didn’t believe education would have a positive effect on girls’ chances of transitioning into gainful employment.



Village life in Sierra Leone.

So it is no surprise that adolescent girls struggle to learn; it is a vicious cycle with failure reinforcing negative stereotypes and breeding low attainment.

*“When I was young, about seven or eight years old, my mother said I could not go to school because I had to go with her to the rice fields. One day I got a notebook and went to the school anyway. My mother came and dragged me from the classroom and took me back to the fields. Then one night when I was 14 a man came into my bed. I asked him who he was and he said he was going to be my husband. My mother had agreed I would marry him.”*

Girl, 17, Bokeo, Laos<sup>111</sup>

A number of policies and projects have encouraged parents to get more involved in school-based management and decision-making in order to alleviate their fears about the care and protection of their daughters in school. UNICEF targets parents’ involvement directly in its Child Friendly Schools. This is a whole-school programme operating at all levels of the school community, with a key plank to encourage parents, and especially mothers, to get involved in schools. While the programme has worked primarily at

the basic level, it is extending to secondary education, and it reports a positive impact on girls’ attendance and enrolment.<sup>112</sup>

Camfed also works to build parents’ involvement in schools through community level committees and mothers’ support groups. Camfed reports that women are now more likely to encourage their daughters to stay in school and to seek to address the barriers to girls’ education through the community and school.<sup>113</sup>

#### WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS TO ENCOURAGE PARENTS

In northern Nigeria, UNICEF is running the Girls’ Education Programme, which is working closely with traditional and religious leaders to speak directly with fathers and mothers about the importance of sending and keeping their daughters in school. In this predominately Muslim area, the leaders talk to their communities about how they will not have female teachers and doctors to work with the women in the community if they do not encourage their daughters to get educated and train as teachers or doctors. This message has powerful resonance with these communities and has had a positive impact on girls’ enrolment and attendance.<sup>114</sup>





### Teenage pregnancy, child marriage and forced marriage

*"I was so sad when my friend Limya, who was studying seventh grade, was suddenly married. She cried a lot. Though her parents promised her that she could continue her studies after marriage, it did not happen. There are many girls in my area who drop out of school due to early marriage."*

Noha, 16, Sudan<sup>115</sup>

*"I want to say many girls drop out of school because they are confused by men. You cannot remain in class when you are pregnant, because the teachers will not allow it and other girls will not support you as a friend."*

Gloria, 20, South Sudan

There is no more abrupt end to a childhood than marriage or becoming a mother. For adolescent girls, marriage and motherhood are often connected, but not always. But whichever comes first – pregnancy or marriage – girls who face either usually also face an end to their education.

As we have mentioned earlier, one in seven girls in the world is married before 18 and one in four is a mother before 18.<sup>116</sup> Delaying marriage and pregnancy has a number of benefits for girls. A girl aged 16 or under is four times more likely to face the risk of maternal mortality than a woman over the age of 20.<sup>117</sup> Early marriage is also associated with increased risk of intimate partner violence and social isolation.<sup>118</sup> In addition, the younger a girl is when she gets married, the more likely she is to enter into a polygamous union or marry a man much older than she is, which is correlated with increased domestic violence.<sup>119</sup>

So while the two issues, pregnancy and child marriage, should be treated separately in terms of the experiences and backgrounds of the girls at risk, in terms of how they affect a girl's life and her education they can be very similar.

#### "I HAVE A STRONG FEAR"<sup>120</sup>

Naomi lives in a rural area in Ethiopia. She is 10 years old. Naomi would like to become a teacher and be able to support her parents financially. She

*Out-of-school teenage mother in Niger.*

does not want to marry until later as she feels that "education is better for me". She worries about the state of her health:

*"Sometimes the illness [malaria] is strong and I am absent from school on these days. This disappoints me. I have a strong fear that the illness may continue deteriorating rather than improving and this may hamper my education and other aspects of my life."*

Naomi also fears that her parents may force her to get married. But her mother wants her daughter to have opportunities that were denied to her due to her own early marriage:

"Education is the most important thing to change her life; it is the best alternative for girls at present. This is my wish but I do not know her father's intention... He has a strong interest to marry them [their daughters] to somebody; and to get the bride wealth from the family of the husband. If one of my daughters will be taken tomorrow, the next day the families of the husband will bring a huge amount of money – 1,000 birr (\$56.80) at the beginning, and five cattle and additional money will come at the next time. Sometimes the girls may be taken while they play with their friends or go to the house of neighbours to pass on a message."

However, Naomi's mother feels that her brothers (Naomi's uncles) will help her persuade her husband not to marry off Naomi until she has completed her education. She also explains that Naomi's brothers, particularly the elder one, advised her to be strong in her education and persuaded her to continue when she considered dropping out in order to work to support the household.

For the coming year Naomi will go to school locally, but after that her mother believes that it would be better for her to continue in town. This brings additional fears of her daughter being raped or being exposed to illness. But she also feels reassured that Naomi "will not face any problem because her brothers, her uncles and her grandmother are there".

Some governments have tackled these issues by trying to remove barriers to young mothers and married girls attending school. This includes offering alternative routes through education, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, and through specific policies protecting girls' right to education regardless of whether they are married or have children.

In Malawi, only 31 per cent of girls complete primary school and just 11 per cent graduate from secondary school, with drop-out rates for girls far exceeding those for boys.<sup>121,122</sup> Teenage mothers face even tougher odds.<sup>123</sup> Although there is an official policy to allow young mothers back to school in Malawi, it requires following prohibitively difficult and bureaucratic procedures.<sup>124</sup>

In Zambia in 1997 the government adopted a new policy to help pregnant girls and young mothers to stay in school. Supported by the Federation of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) – which trained teachers, raised awareness and examined practice in schools – the policy has had a positive impact on girls staying in school longer and reduced drop-out as a result of pregnancy.<sup>125</sup>

### SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MOTHERS – FAWE, ZAMBIA

*"I am 18 years old, and in Grade 12. My parents are both dead. I live with my uncle and aunt. My aunt's nephew also lived with us, and one day he came into the room and raped me. When I didn't have my period for two months, I knew I was pregnant... The following day I did not have the courage to get up and go to school. In fact, I realised that school was over for me. My aunt went to school and told the head that I was pregnant and could not continue with my education. The head asked to see me. When I went to see her she told me that I could go back to the same school after weaning my baby... In January 2004, I re-entered school. My uncle has taken me back into his home. I am lucky to get a second chance in life. I admit I used to be playful before. I am very serious now. The school has been wonderful. The teachers and all my fellow students treat me normally. If anyone has said something nasty about me, I haven't heard about it."*

Young woman, 18, Zambia



## "MY MOTHER ENCOURAGES ME" – SOUTH SUDAN

Seven per cent of girls in South Sudan are married off before the age of 15 and another 45 per cent are married off between the age of 16 and 18.<sup>126</sup> Plan's 'Right to Choose' project in South Sudan works to increase access to education for girls and young women, by reducing early marriage as well as supporting married or pregnant girls to continue with their education.

The project aims to change the mindset of pupils by sharing messages about the negative impacts of some cultural beliefs and practices. The project operates girls' clubs in non-formal settings using a variety of activities such as radio and group discussions to talk about issues such as health, particularly sexual and reproductive health, and education.

Gloria is the mother of two boys and she participates in the project: *"I like school. I like studying and learning. I am planning to return when my baby is old enough. He is only seven months old but when he is a year old I will go back to study. Education is very important for girls; that is why I want to go back to school. My mother likes me to continue studying. She gives me encouragement to finish my education. I would like all my children to study. Girls and boys have to study. I am a mother of two boys now and when I give birth to a baby girl she will have the same rights as boys."*<sup>127</sup>



Early marriage is closely linked with harmful practices and beliefs with respect to the roles of girls and women in society. Changing these attitudes requires close coordination with traditional and religious leaders as well as work across multiple sectors, including health and labour policymakers, as we will see in discussing gender roles.

Gloria at the girls' club.

## TOWARDS A SOLUTION – AN 'ACCESS INDEX'

To assess meaningful access, so that policymakers can get a real picture of whether or not girls' right to education is being realised, governments and educators need to measure attendance together with enrolment, transition and completion. Building on the research of Keith Lewin, Professor of Education at the University of Sussex, an 'access index' that captures all these measures will reveal the consistency and the depth of the commitment made to girls' education. This will show what is happening during the school year, not just at the beginning and the end.<sup>128</sup>

To give the most accurate picture of adolescent girls' access to education, data needs to be disaggregated by poverty level, location and ethnicity within countries. Recent research has advocated for equity-adjusted measures so that countries with high income inequality, where poor girls have far worse enrolment or transition rates than richer girls, are penalised in any national level statistics.<sup>129</sup>

Gloria and her children.



Current measures make no allowances for wealth, which allows the increases in rich girls going to school to mask the staggering numbers of very poor girls who are not.

## 6 The continuing constraints of gender

*"What emerges from the data is that girls are identified with their sexual and domestic roles, whereas boys are seen as providers and household heads. In our research, a girl as future wife and mother carries little value. She is a demeaned person not seen as worthy of rights. This demeaned identity remains a key barrier to girls accessing their right to education once they reach adolescence."*

Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay, Social Development and Gender Equity Team, Royal Tropical Institute

This bleak summary is based on the findings of a nine-country study carried out for Plan which sought to unpick the reasons behind girls' increased drop-out rates at puberty.<sup>130</sup> The study found that in many countries an adolescent girl's place continues to be very much in the home, and this has ramifications for her access to education. "Boys' education is more important than girls'," one man in Cambodia commented. "The boy will be head of the family in the future."

Even within the confines of a future domestic life, girls like Harika (below) can see the merits of getting as much education as she can. She knows that her family will insist on marriage for her but she is still fighting to stay in school; her pragmatism is enabling her to get what she wants within the confines of the life she knows. Who knows how far the next generation will travel?

Learning the domestic life in India.



## AN EDUCATED HUSBAND<sup>131</sup>

Harika lives in rural Andhra Pradesh and is from an economically and socially disadvantaged community. She explains how she wanted to study, “but my parents said ‘no’ in the beginning. Later, when I insisted, they agreed to send me for further studies.” She elaborates: *“If they send me for further studies I need to continue, and if any marriage proposals come in between, I will have to discontinue. For that reason, my mother had said ‘no’. My father said that I should study and whatever happens in the future, we shall see.”*

Harika’s brother has been supportive of her education: *“He is the one who convinced my parents to send me to college.”*

Harika views education as a route to a better life: *“If you study well, you will get an educated husband.”* This would enable her to escape from farming: *“If you get a husband who is in agriculture, you will have to go to the fields and work; and if you get an educated husband, you can be happy [...] We see our parents working and we feel that we should not be like that... they work in the fields and work hard every day.”*

Girls are often seen as the custodians of family honour. Parents and even brothers feel that girls’ behaviour, life choices and attitudes reflect upon the family’s honour and on how well the family is perpetuating and protecting their culture.

*“They say that it is a matter of their honour and they – girls – have no right to make their own decision. The ‘wadhera’ (landlord) of this village has great influence on girls’ education.”*

Headteacher, Muzafargarh District, Pakistan<sup>132</sup>

Traditional and religious leaders can, but do not always, perpetuate this view of girls. One religious leader in Pakistan says: “In our village, girls have no right to make suggestions regarding the most important decisions of their lives, although there is no such limitation or restriction in Islam. If the parents had been given religious education,

they might not deprive their children of education.”<sup>133</sup>

Families and communities often feel that with formal education they will ‘lose’ their girls, that they will become modern or Westernised. Further, girls’ mobility can be restricted by some religious communities and sex-segregated schooling may be mandatory. Wherever they come from, these gendered expectations and constraints can affect girls’ ability to access education as well as their own desire to go.

In highly traditional societies, such as in the north of Nigeria, few girls will be found in the formal education system, but large numbers of girls are enrolled in Islamic Schools.<sup>134</sup> These schools are for girls only, are community-run and teach a limited Qur’anic curriculum. Islamic schools pose a significant challenge to the mainstream education system, by providing an alternative education for girls that is seen as safe and acceptable, but which is also teaching girls to be subservient to men.<sup>135</sup> The current policy of the government is to work to integrate mainstream subjects into the curriculum of these schools, thereby extending basic subjects to girls while retaining the safe and acceptable nature of the schools.<sup>136</sup>

## REMOTE LITERACY

Development in Literacy (DIL) works in some of the hardest-to-reach areas of Pakistan to provide safe, community-based schools for girls. It delivers a high quality education, with a focus on teacher training and using the latest technology in schools. At the same time, the organisation works closely with local community leaders and parents to ensure that the schools are seen to be acceptable for girls in the communities. As a result of its work, Development in Literacy was able to establish the first secondary school for girls in Upper Dir, a very conservative tribal district of Pakistan on the border of Afghanistan.<sup>137</sup>

## Conclusion

While access to education has improved globally, there are significant numbers of girls who, as they reach adolescence, have little or no part in this progress. In this chapter, we have offered a brief view of which girls are getting lost in the national statistics – the very poor, the geographically isolated and girls whose families see them only in terms of their domestic roles.

As we have seen, there are many reasons why girls are likely to drop out of school during adolescence, particularly around the ages of 14 and 15.<sup>138</sup> In many countries, the transition between primary and secondary school sees girls’ enrolment drop sharply, and

it is to these transitions that better attention needs to be paid.<sup>139</sup>

Without looking at the social, economic and psychological environments in which girls grow up; without looking at the context of their lives or their parents’ and communities’ views of them, we are unlikely to realise girls’ right to education. Both girls and the societies they live in will benefit if more girls go to school, but enrolment alone doesn’t show whether girls are actually attending school. Securing girls’ rights to access a full course of secondary education remains a significant challenge, and without tackling the issues we have explored in this chapter, it will not be met in this generation or the next.

Teenage girls in India.





# CASH FOR STUDYING

*Cynthia B Lloyd looks at the implications of conditional cash transfers and scholarships in support of girls' education*

Conditional cash transfers (CCT) began in Latin America in the late 1990s as comprehensive anti-poverty programmes combining social assistance with incentives for human capital formation. In many poor settings, parents under-invest in their children's schooling even when there are no school fees and schooling returns are high. This is because basic survival requires their children's participation in the work required to sustain the family. The original cash transfer programmes – Progres/Oportunidades in Mexico and Bolsa Escola in Brazil, for example – were designed to provide a safety net for poor people, while at the same time encouraging them to make greater health and educational investments in their children. The education and health goals of the programme were secondary to the anti-poverty goals and helped increase the political support for the programmes.<sup>i</sup> Poor parents – typically mothers – living in catchment areas with high poverty rates – were provided with cash conditional on particular behaviours, such as their children's school attendance and/or health clinic visits. In recent years, the programmes have spread beyond Latin America and have been adapted to policy priorities beyond poverty reduction, including the direct promotion of girls' education.<sup>140</sup>

Both cash transfers and scholarships reduce the cost of schooling but do so in different ways.<sup>ii</sup> The former provide incentives to parents, while scholarships provide incentives to children. Incentives to parents in the form of cash benefits are unlikely to affect their children's intrinsic motivations towards education in the early years.<sup>141</sup> By the time children reach adolescence, however, there is the possibility that a scholarship could be empowering for girls, further reinforcing its educational benefits. In the case of benefits, there are no restrictions on how the cash is spent, as long as the attendance or performance requirements of the programme are fulfilled. Scholarships, on the other hand, are restricted to educational expenditures, and sometimes even to enrolment in a particular school or set of schools. Scholarships are more typical at the post-primary level, where

school fees are still common. Scholarship funds are provided either directly to participating schools to cover designated students' fees, or to eligible children in the form of stipends tied to the payment of school fees. The Girls Scholarship Fund in Bangladesh, which began in 1994, is the best-known example.

New programme models have emerged in recent years that combine incentives to both parents and children, as well as both cash and in-kind payments, blurring the traditional distinctions between conditional cash transfers and scholarship programmes.

A decade ago, the early success of the programmes in Latin America in boosting enrolment and attendance drew international attention. They came to be seen as a promising model not only to address Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1, that targets poverty reduction, but also MDG 2 and MDG 3, which relate to the achievement of universal primary completion and gender equity in education.

Now that data has become available on learning outcomes, there is growing recognition of a crisis of educational quality.<sup>142</sup> As a result, international attention is shifting from targets relating to educational enrolment and attendance to targets addressing key dimensions of learning, forcing a reassessment of earlier educational strategies. In addition, the rapid integration of disadvantaged children into already overstretched classrooms is challenging the international goal of providing education of adequate quality for all.

## Conditional cash transfers with an educational component

Cash transfer programmes with an educational component have varied substantially in scope, from national anti-poverty initiatives such as Progres/Oportunidades in Mexico to regional or pilot programmes with an exclusive focus on education, such as Pakistan's Punjab education sector reform project.<sup>143</sup> In most cases, conditions for participation have been defined in terms of some minimum level of monthly attendance; rarely do conditions include



requirements related to test performance or skill acquisition.

While none of the early anti-poverty programmes were explicitly designed to address gender gaps, more recent examples, such as those in Pakistan and Malawi, have been restricted to girls only. Those with an education component have all shown significant increases in enrolment and longer-term gains in grade attainment, particularly where enrolment rates were low before the programme began, with the largest gains taking place in transitional grades.<sup>144,145</sup>

Clear targeting goals and effective mechanisms to establish eligibility and monitor compliance are all critical elements. Programmes often use a combination of geographic and household targeting to make sure that benefits get exclusively to those in need. The earliest programmes set a high standard for monitoring and evaluation, most notably Progres in Mexico that started on a pilot basis as a randomised trial before being scaled up to national coverage.<sup>146</sup>

Those designed as a safety net for the poor provide cash transfers of the same value to parents

for the enrolment of boys and girls. The only exception has been Progres/Oportunidades in Mexico, where mothers got higher cash transfers for their girls than their boys for enrolment at secondary and high-school level because of a slight gender gap at these levels at the time the programme began. Not all studies assessing the impact of these programmes on enrolment have looked at gender differences in outcomes. Behrman, Parker and Todd (2011), in a recent review of gender effects, find that in most cases where gender differences have been measured, the effects on enrolment have been the same for both boys and girls. The exceptions have all shown slightly greater improvements for boys than girls.

Several studies have addressed the issue of whether conditionality improves programme effectiveness with respect to educational outcomes.<sup>147</sup> The answer is an unequivocal 'yes'. In the case of Mexico's Progres, children whose attendance was monitored had significantly greater attendance, particularly children transitioning from primary school to lower secondary school.<sup>148</sup> More recently, a randomised pilot study in Malawi

i In the same way that welfare for the poor in the US was made more politically palatable in the US through a reform instituted during the Clinton administration that incentivised transitions from welfare to work.

ii Scholarships are alternatively called 'stipends'. The terms 'scholarship' and 'stipend' are used interchangeably.

iii These conclusions were drawn from a comparison of the enrolment of children whose parents inadvertently did not receive the form to monitor attendance to the enrolment of children whose attendance was monitored.

compared the effects of an unconditional cash transfer (UCT) for school girls aged 13 to 22 with a cash transfer (CCT) conditional on 80 per cent monthly school attendance and found that conditioning the transfer reduced drop-out rates substantially and also had a modest but significant positive impact on English learning comprehension.<sup>149</sup>

Recent research studies assessing the impact of conditional cash transfer programmes designed exclusively for girls in Pakistan and Malawi provide some further details about implementation in two very different settings.

In Pakistan, roughly half of Punjab's districts with the lowest literacy rates were chosen in late 2003 for a conditional cash transfer programme to support girls enrolled in government schools.<sup>iv</sup>

Each girl in Grades 6 to 8 who maintained an average class attendance rate of 80 per cent received a monthly stipend valued at Rs 200 (\$2.20).<sup>v, 150, 151</sup> In 2006, the stipend was extended to girls enrolled in high school Grades 9 to 10.<sup>152</sup> One of the longer-term objectives was to increase the supply of female teachers and health service providers in poor areas where female education has been historically low and, therefore, where girls' schools are hard to staff.

A rigorous research study assessing the impact of the Pakistani programme over its first four years found increases in the number of girls enrolled, due to a decline in drop-out rates, ranging from 11 to 32 per cent, depending on the cohort.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, younger cohorts of girls who were exposed to the programme later were found to be more likely to continue to high school. Eligibility was not means-tested, so all female students could get cash support. This increased the expense of the programme because girls who would have attended school anyway were also beneficiaries.

Other analyses of the programme explored some of its unintended consequences – some negative and some positive:<sup>154</sup>

- 1 First, it encouraged boys' enrolment as well, probably because parents were reluctant to send

- girls to school without also sending boys.<sup>155</sup>
- 2 Second, mothers of eligible daughters increased their time spent on housework by about two hours a day to compensate for their daughter's absence from home.<sup>156</sup>
- 3 Third, there was a rise in the student-teacher ratio in participating districts due to the enrolment increases, with potentially negative implications for school quality.<sup>157</sup>
- 4 Finally, urban schools contributed disproportionately to the overall enrolment gains for the programme.

It is likely that the impacts would have varied across each district according to girls' middle school availability. This is because not all rural girls have access to a middle school nearby.<sup>158</sup> These studies illustrate some of the many potential issues to consider when measuring programme impact; few studies in other countries have gone beyond looking at enrolment impacts.

The most extensive evaluation to date of a pilot cash transfer programme in support of girls' education is in Malawi, where a randomised trial has tested the impact of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) against unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) against no transfers in 176 enumeration areas of Zomba district in Southern Malawi. Unmarried girls aged 13 to 22, regardless of grade attended, were the target group<sup>vi</sup>. The programme paid school fees for any eligible girls attending secondary school, because there are still school fees for secondary school in Malawi while primary schools are free.

The evaluation measured the effects on enrolment, attendance and test scores for in-school female adolescents – representing 87 per cent of the target population – over two years<sup>vii, 159</sup>. Separate transfers were provided to girls and their parents and the amounts were varied and randomised in order to test the gains from higher awards as well as the trade-offs between parents and girls as recipients.<sup>160</sup> The results show increased enrolment and improved daily attendance for those in school, as well as modest increases in test scores. The conditional transfers were found to be more cost

effective in increasing female enrolment than the unconditional ones, even with relatively modest cash transfers.

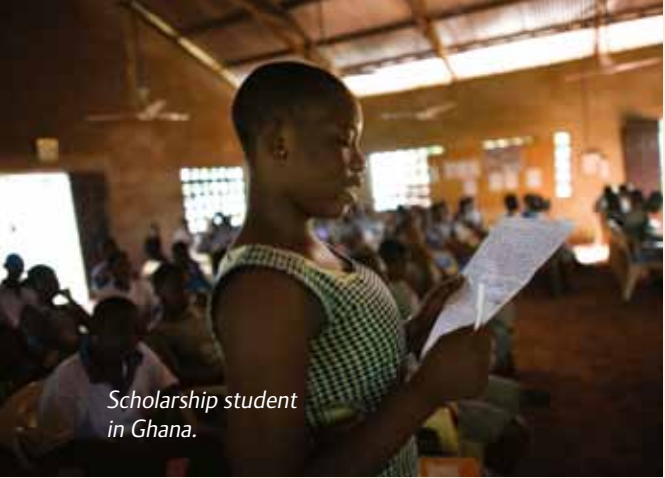
In a setting of extreme poverty, relatively small amounts were sufficient to induce a meaningful change in behaviour. There were similar improvements in enrolment regardless of who received the payment – the girl or her parent. It would be interesting to know what happened after the pilot was terminated – did the girls who had benefited drop out, or did they continue in school? Even if they subsequently dropped out, they would have received more education than otherwise and will hopefully have a brighter future thanks to the programme.

### Girls' scholarship programmes

Girls' scholarships are a common feature of educational programmes designed to support adolescent girls in poor countries. Lloyd and Young (2009) found that, out of the 322 initiatives documented in their programme compendium, 43 per cent provided scholarships or stipends. However, few, if any, had been evaluated in terms of their impact on either enrolment or learning, much less their cost effectiveness.

The largest and best known of these programmes is the girls' secondary school scholarship scheme in Bangladesh. Girls' enrolment rates in secondary school increased substantially in response.<sup>161</sup> As a result, gender parity has been achieved in secondary-school enrolment in Bangladesh.<sup>162</sup> This would not

JANE HAHN



*Scholarship student in Ghana.*

have been possible without a rapid expansion of secondary-school places, partially achieved through the feminisation of Islamic schools. In 1994, female students attending recognised 'madrasas' became eligible to receive a stipend under the government's scholarship programme, thus expanding girls' access to secondary schools at the same time that secondary-school attendance was being made more affordable for girls. Questions have been raised about targeting mechanisms, as many of the benefits of the programme actually accrued to girls from better-off families.<sup>163</sup> Further questions have been raised about educational quality given that little is known about how madrasas compare with other types of school in terms of learning outcomes or gender differences.

Since 2004, the Ambassadors Girls' Scholarship Program funded by USAID has provided nearly 500,000 scholarships to girls in 41 African countries.<sup>164</sup> Implementation, which was the responsibility of local NGOs, varied from country to country. A review in several participating countries – including Sierra Leone and Djibouti – raised some questions about the implementation of the eligibility criteria for the programme as well as about its sustainability at the end of the project period<sup>viii, 165</sup>. In settings where poverty is pervasive, the funds rarely cover all the 'eligible' girls, sometimes creating conflicts between scholarship recipients and others, particularly within the same school. Furthermore, it is not known what percentage of the scholarship recipients would have attended school in any case, or what has happened in beneficiary communities since the programme has been terminated.

Several research studies, assessing the impact of girls' scholarship programmes in very different settings in Cambodia and Kenya, provide examples of recent experiences with scholarships designed for very different objectives. In the case of Cambodia, the goal was to increase grade attainment among girls, whereas in Kenya the goal was to improve learning outcomes.

In 2004, the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction set up a scholarship programme for girls in lower secondary schools in Cambodia. Approximately 93 – or 15 per cent – of lower secondary schools participated in the programme, with 45 girls eligible for scholarships in each school.<sup>ix</sup> Girls seeking scholarship support needed to apply during their sixth

iv All government schools in Pakistan are single-sex with only female teachers teaching in girls' schools and male teachers teaching in boys' schools. Low-fee private schools have become increasingly common in Pakistan but girls enrolled in private schools were not eligible for the programme.

v In most settings, girls' attendance rates are similar to boys and sometimes better. Even though female students spend roughly one more hour a day working outside of school than boys, the school day in Pakistan is relatively short (4.5 to 5 hours) and children are able to handle their domestic responsibilities while attending school. This figure is slightly more than the per-student out-of-pocket cost of middle school in the government system..

vi In Malawi, many female students aged 13-22 are still attending a primary school that has eight grades or standards.

vii Initial cash offers to girls and their parents were only made for the 2008 school year due to funding uncertainties and were subsequently extended to the 2009 school year but not beyond.

viii Eligibility criteria included girls (1) orphaned or in a single-parent home, (2) handicapped or disabled, (3) economically disadvantaged and (4) merit according to past school performance.

ix While it is known as a scholarship programme, it does not subsidise the fee paid by parents to the school but instead provides cash to the parents conditioned on good attendance (less than 10 days absent a year) and passing grades.



grade year for entry into one of the eligible lower secondary schools. Each school's local management committee was tasked with identifying the neediest girls. Filmer and Schady (2008) estimated that the enrolment and attendance rates among scholarship recipients were approximately 30 percentage points higher than they would have been in the absence of the programme, and larger impacts were found among the poorest girls. These effects are large, suggesting that the scope for improvements in enrolment and attendance are greatest in places such as Cambodia, where girls have suffered the greatest disadvantage. The impact on learning outcomes has not been assessed and it is not known whether or not the programme is still in existence.

A very different approach to girls' scholarships was piloted in two poor rural districts in Kenya, where a local NGO awarded scholarships to the highest-scoring 15 per cent of girls enrolled in Grade 6 in a randomly selected set of schools. The best-performing girls attending schools taking part received scholarship awards for Grades 7 and 8 – the last two grades of primary school in Kenya<sup>x</sup>.<sup>166</sup> The girls' school fees were covered directly by the programme and a grant was also provided to parents for school-related expenses. The programme, which ran for two years and was then ended, showed improvements in test scores not just for the scholarship recipients but also for other girls and even boys attending the schools.<sup>xi</sup> These positive side-effects are likely to be due to improvements in teacher attendance and positive peer effects among students. In a five-year follow-up after the pilot ended, it was found that girls attending programme schools showed some evidence of greater empowerment compared with girls attending non-programme schools as measured by the percentage having entered into arranged marriage and the percentage who found domestic violence acceptable<sup>xii</sup>.<sup>167</sup>

Many international NGOs have scholarships for girls and each programme has different criteria for eligibility, including ranges of grades or ages supported by the programme, conditions for receipt and approach to implementation.<sup>168</sup> None of these programmes has yet to complete a rigorous impact

evaluation that would allow a determination of its effects on enrolment, attainment or learning, and its cost effectiveness as measured by dollars spent relative to additional person-years of educational exposure or relative to tests score gains per beneficiary.

ROOM TO READ

In 2011 Room to Read reported having over 13,500 girls enrolled in their Girls' Education programme in eight countries, primarily in Asia. Currently, the organisation is transitioning to a school-based model for providing educational support to girls<sup>xiii</sup>. This enhanced model has emerged from a period of self-evaluation and reflects a new strategic vision with the goal of increasing girls' chances of completing secondary school with the skills necessary for negotiating key life decisions and successful transitions to adulthood. Along with development of this more holistic model, Room to Read has committed to conducting an external, multi-year evaluation in order to continue to improve its girls' educational programming.

The first step in implementing the new model is identifying communities with both economic needs and persistent gender inequalities in education that also show potential for success in terms of community engagement and institutional functionality. In selected communities, Room to Read plans to work with government schools, typically at the lower secondary level, to provide a package of educational enhancements including, among others, life skills, mentoring, academic support and gender-responsive teacher training. For a small number of the neediest girls in each school, who will be selected through a transparent community-based process, they will also provide 'material support'<sup>xiv</sup>.

Communities that are benefiting are asked to make a 'challenge grant' to signal their co-investment and commitment to the goals of the programme and the material support component for the individual girls is kept to a minimum in order to promote within-school equity and sustainability.<sup>xv</sup>

Implications of past experience for future programme design

A range of insights about conditional cash transfers and scholarships for girls can be drawn from the literature reviewed, much of which has relied on evidence from pilot programmes that have only lasted a few years. These include that:

- 1 Conditionality enhances impact.
- 2 Impact is greatest if focused on girls at points of transition in the education system.
- 3 Gains are greatest in the poorest settings and among the poorest girls.
- 4 School accessibility can constrain impact.
- 5 Enrolment and attendance gains do not necessarily translate into improvements in learning outcomes.

However, issues of cost effectiveness and sustainability remain elusive. In most cases, conditional cash transfers and scholarships are externally funded. None of the programmes described above have been sustained without donor assistance.

In particular, I have not found any studies that have measured cost effectiveness of either scholarships or conditional cash transfers except the Malawi study. In Malawi, it was found that, for the same cost, a conditional transfer could achieve a greater enrolment gain than an unconditional one.

The measurement of cost effectiveness requires not only a measure of impact but also a complete accounting of costs. If greater grade attainment were the goal, a measure of cost effectiveness would require that we know how many additional person-years of schooling were uniquely attributable to a particular programme per dollar spent. This is not at all the same as the number of girls receiving scholarships or cash transfers, given that some may have attended or continued in school anyway.

In many of the settings in Asia and Africa, where girls still suffer educational disadvantages, school systems are dysfunctional. High rates of teacher absenteeism, teacher shortages, lack of adequate training, poor infrastructure and lack of adequate supplies are reflected in poor learning outcomes.<sup>169</sup>

Such systems face even greater strain in communities where conditional cash transfers and/or scholarships programmes have been successful in increasing enrolment and attendance, particularly in disadvantaged districts where schools are severely under-resourced. Even uneducated parents can sense when their children are not learning, and will be increasingly less responsive to incentives if they perceive that educational quality is declining.

Looking ahead

These developments raise questions about how best to support girls' education in the future. Given resource constraints on the part of governments and donors, it makes sense to concentrate resources where they are most needed – and that is among the poorest and most marginalised communities. Conditional cash transfers and/or scholarships will be insufficient to address girls' most critical needs, particularly for the poorest among them, without complementary inputs to strengthen school quality. This is

because the poorest girls attend the poorest schools and come from families with the least capacity, in terms of time and education, to support and reinforce their learning. This might suggest a school-based approach, such as the one that Room to Read is currently pioneering, in which marginalised schools are identified for support with supplementary but limited resources also provided to the neediest girls. Sustainability will require time; indeed, the time for a next generation of girls to be educated and empowered to take up positions of influence and leadership in their communities.



SAIKAT MOJUMDER/DRINK/ROOM TO READ

x Scores were based on district-wide Ministry of Education exams across five subjects.

xi On the other hand, merit scholarship recipients tended to come from families whose parents had significantly more years of schooling.

xii e.g. Room to Read, CAMFED, DIL, FAWA, World Vision.

xiii At the same time, they are committed to continuing to support their first cohort of girls through the completion of secondary school.

xiv Material support includes coverage of both direct and indirect costs of schooling. Direct costs include school and exam fees, textbooks, school supplies and uniforms. Indirect costs include transportation (e.g. bus fare or bicycles) and boarding.

xv With thanks to Emily Leys, Director of the Girls' Schooling Program at Room to Read, for information about their programme.





# Learning? How girls experience education 3

- What is learning and what is a school?
- Teachers and teacher training
- Talking to Teachers, primary research in four countries
- Curricula in schools
- Learning outside school
- Non-state schools and girls
- The hidden gender agenda

*"Without education I would be nowhere... education gave me confidence and made me a more responsible person."*

Penelope, Samfya District, Zambia<sup>1</sup>

In Chapter 1 we introduced Nargis, a girl born in rural India last year and greeted as the world's seven billionth baby. By 2024, if she survives the potential hazards of her early childhood, she will be an adolescent on the brink of her adult life. Despite coming from a poor family, she will have had a reasonable chance of having attended a primary school. But will she be able to make the transition to secondary school, confident that she will learn what she needs to equip her for life?

Will international declarations and

investments over the next 12 years prove powerful and focused enough to put quality and equity at the heart of education so that resources reach those – like Nargis – who need them most?

For girls in particular, school can be a hostile place where they compete unsuccessfully with boys for resources and attention, where they face violence, and where the quality of the education is not going to provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life. At adolescence many girls, and their parents, will give up. They are not learning anything, they can see no future and they are needed at home. The deprivations girls have already faced in their lives, and the discrimination they confront at every turn, make learning very hard. How then can we make sure that education provides what girls need? Getting them into school, and even keeping them there for a few years, is a start but no guarantee that they will learn – and this is the challenge that lies ahead.

What boys and girls learn in school is a critical part of their education and will influence them for the rest of their lives, but up to now it has not been the focus of global targets and commitments. This might be about to change, as there is growing pressure from many quarters for the concept of 'learning' to become the central tenet in educational targets.<sup>2</sup> So it is that much more important to examine first what girls need in order to learn.





## 1 What is learning?

Learning is not just about numeracy, literacy or even life skills. What girls learn about themselves – as girls and as members of the communities and societies in which they live – is also critical. The values that the school passes on to students, both boys and girls, are as important as the official curriculum.

Are girls taught that they are not as clever as boys? Are they told that girls don't do maths and science? Do they learn that women should be subservient to men because all the pictures in the textbooks depict them this way, or because it's always girls whom the teacher asks to clean the classrooms or fetch tea? Or are they learning how to make decisions and choices and to understand the world, so that when they leave school they will have the power to lead lives they value?

These questions show some of the different ways in which education can either further girls' empowerment on their path to becoming women, or block certain routes with discrimination and prejudice. Education alone is not a cure for all of society's ills, but a good education can give girls the skills and competencies they need to choose their own career path; have healthy positive relationships with their partners, families and friends; and enable them to make positive decisions about their bodies and their health.

As such, a quality education – what you learn and what it is like in school for you – is the key to unlocking opportunities in adulthood.

Why gender equality in school matters:<sup>3</sup>

- Gender equality is central to achieving rights of not only access but participation, recognition and valuing of all children;

- Gender equality is integral to improving the quality of basic education;
- Gender equality and quality education is based on democracy in the classroom and democratic learning;
- Gender equality means acknowledging inequalities of race, class and gender – not trying to ignore them.

Girls have the right to a safe environment, in which they can learn without fear or abuse. They have the right to equal access to adequate learning resources and to a teacher who has the skills and the attitude needed to teach them properly. They have a right to be treated fairly and to be engaged fully in their learning.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will explore these rights within education. This includes what girls are taught, how it is taught, and by whom. It looks at the resources a girl needs to learn, and at her actual classroom experience.

### A GLOBAL COMPACT ON LEARNING

The recent Brookings Institute's report found that, despite the global advances in access to primary education, millions of children are still leaving school without the most basic skills. The emphasis on enrolment rates, including gender parity in enrolment, has meant that the issue of what children actually learn whilst at school has been overlooked. There is widespread agreement that there needs to be a shift in focus towards education quality to ensure that children leave school with the necessary skills and knowledge to live a healthy, happy and productive life.

The report outlines three key interventions towards improving education outcomes: the importance of better early-childhood education, an increased emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills for young children, and ensuring the successful transition to post-primary education. The report also highlights that more targeted research is required to assess why girls consistently perform worse than boys in schools in many developing countries, and to foster innovative approaches to tackling such disparities.

*At school in Nicaragua.*

## RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

The Committee on the Rights of the Child identified in its General Comment Number Three that children should be provided with adequate 'life skills' education, including on matters of sexuality: "State parties must ensure that children have the ability to acquire the knowledge and skills to protect themselves and others as they begin to express their sexuality."<sup>5</sup>

Information about reproductive healthcare is crucial to adolescent girls' development. As part of its 2007 National Plan for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, Ecuador has been implementing a series of education programmes designed to raise awareness of reproductive healthcare specifically amongst adolescents. The programmes take a rights-based approach, focusing on entitlement to a system of healthcare provision which does not discriminate due to age or gender.<sup>6</sup> In an unprecedented step for Latin American countries, Colombia enacted a new law in 2010 providing free contraception and sexual health education in order to enable young women to make more informed decisions and pursue studies for longer.<sup>7</sup>

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, UNFPA has focused on educating adolescents and the wider local communities about the reproductive health needs of adolescent girls, involving media outreach and the introduction of the subject in school curricula.<sup>8</sup>

Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides that all children have the right to access information aimed at the promotion of their mental and physical health.<sup>9</sup> CRC also outlines the right to education which helps adolescents to develop their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest in Article 29.<sup>10</sup>

The context and delivery of education is crucial. This has been recognised by the Yemen Ministry for Education which in 2008 hired over 1,000 new female teachers in order to attract girls to school, create a more gender-balanced learning environment and teach them in a gender-sensitive manner.<sup>11</sup>

The content of textbooks plays an important role in nurturing an atmosphere of equality in which both

girls and boys can learn. In 2007 the Committee on the Rights of the Child raised concerns about gender bias and enforcing stereotypes in school textbooks in the Maldives. The Committee was 'disappointed' that such stereotypical attitudes were being enforced by local and religious leaders, and that in some cases religious secondary schools were preventing girls from attending.<sup>12</sup>

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides that all states parties eliminate any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and all forms of education, including revising text books and school programmes (Article 10(c)).<sup>13</sup>

The quality of education can also be determined by its relevance. In Morocco, there are reports that attendance at secondary education dropped when the primary language of instruction was changed from French to Arabic. Reports suggest this was because French was seen as more valuable in the pursuit of jobs offering a substantial premium in earnings. The case has also been made in India, where growing job opportunities have seen lower-caste young women switching from Marathi to English language schools.<sup>14</sup> In 2005 the World Bank criticised national school curricula in Haiti, Chad, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Malawi, Kenya and Uganda

which had not been changed or updated since colonial times.<sup>15</sup>

In 2011 the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education raised concern about Senegal's quality of education. It has been compromised, he said, by a dearth of manuals and learning material, and above all, by the lack of well-trained, qualified teachers.<sup>16</sup>

Education should also contain information addressing the unique economic difficulties faced by adolescent girls, and preparing them for post-education. The Dakar Framework for Action therefore calls for the provision of information on exploitative labour, lack of employment issues and discriminatory job markets.<sup>17</sup>



JENNY MATTHEWS/PANOS PICTURES





NAZIA PARVEZ

## 2 What is a school?

*"A school is a group of people who fight for education, from the janitor to the headteacher."*

Isánea, headteacher, Brazil

Looking at rights within school, including formal primary and secondary schools and the other educational institutions where adolescent girls are learning, requires a definition of school as both a place and a concept. In part, school is a physical space, filled with the 'right' number of textbooks, teachers, toilets and so on. This physical space can be seen as a kind of factory, with inputs, such as time in class and enrolment rates; and outputs, such as examination results. The image of a factory leads us to think that schools should be efficient at the input-output process, particularly by ensuring that the economy functions well by producing students with the right skills for a life of work.

But a school could more appropriately be seen in terms of the ways that the physical

space in which children learn, and the resources in it, interact with and are used by pupils. Crucially for adolescent girls, looking at the school in terms of the relationships within it allows for reflection on the gender dynamics of classrooms and schools.

This view also allows educators to think of the process of education as passing on knowledge and an understanding of gender identities, in ways that go beyond what the official curriculum teaches. This view makes it possible to look at the context within which the school operates and how this influences the school environment, and how the context of the children's own lives affects their ability to function within this space. This view, therefore, gives us the scope to look at the experience of education as it is lived by girls from many different family and community backgrounds.

For example, within education, girls have a right to resources that are distributed equitably and used fairly. This is not just about having enough resources, but also about how the resources are used. So rather than just counting the numbers

*Girls' secondary school in Sierra Leone.*

of desks and pupils, schools need to ask themselves: even if we supply a seat for every child, would girls still be made to sit in the back where they cannot hear or see? The relationship between a desk and a girl's ability to learn is more complicated than the factory model of schooling would suggest. Research has shown that a gender-equitable environment, with a combination of resources and positive interactions, affects girls significantly more than boys, in a variety of ways.<sup>18</sup> And the issues are more pronounced as girls enter the complex period of adolescence.

### FEATURES OF A GENDER-EQUITABLE SCHOOL<sup>19</sup>

- Changes to curriculum and to classroom organisation which allow for increased participation of girls and young women;
- Encouragement of questioning the curriculum and what counts as school knowledge;
- Breaking down of hierarchies and power-networks that exclude girls and women, between teachers and students, and amongst students;
- Greater understanding of the conditions which lead to bullying, racism and sexism, and homophobic behaviour, and more successful forms of intervention;
- Greater valuing of students' experience and knowledge, and closer involvement



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of students in planning and evaluating their educational work;

- Increased critical consciousness among students and ability to challenge narrow-minded conceptions, prejudices and stereotypes;
- Stronger sense of agency whereby students (and their teachers and parents) envision an expanded and divergent future.

## 3 Do the numbers really add up?

At the most superficial – but most easily assessed – level, we can count the number of desks, textbooks and toilets. We can check the balance of male and female students, male and female teachers, and male and female senior officials in the education system. We can note the differences in male and female students' examination scores, in the subjects that they take and in the jobs and further studies that they go on to. This kind of tally – with two easily comparable columns – can be useful, but at most it gives us only an initial indication of what girls' experiences in education are and how they might need to be improved.

The numbers may tell school officials that a classroom has only half the number of desks as pupils, but only a deeper analysis will tell them how this is affecting pupil achievement. The numbers tell policymakers that in particular countries, such as Botswana or Mauritius, girls are outperforming boys in English and maths, while in countries such as Malawi or Tanzania, boys are outperforming girls, but the numbers do not tell them why these differences in achievement exist.<sup>20</sup>

None of this is to say that resources do not matter; of course children learn better with books and other learning materials. We know that individual ownership of exercise books, notebooks, pencils and pens are all associated with improved pupil achievement.<sup>21</sup> Going beyond the availability of textbooks and other learning material, however, is the question of the teacher's ability to make sure that pupils have equal access to what is there and to be sensitive to the gender dynamics in the classroom.

*20-year-old Urmila joins the class in Nepal.*



# TOILETS FOR GIRLS

By Elaine Unterhalter, Institute of Education, University of London



UNICEF and the World Bank have both stressed that providing girls-only toilets or additional toilets at school can increase girls' attendance by cutting down the number of days missed due to menstruation.<sup>22</sup> These programmes are making an important link between the provision of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in schools, and the learning gains these can produce.

Few academic studies, though, have looked at the impact of toilets on girls' enrolment, attendance and learning outcomes. Although a number of UNICEF-supported WASH initiatives in India, Nepal, Zambia, Malawi and Kenya have been evaluated, looking at intervention schools and control schools with regard to attendance and learning outcomes, problems with research design mean that the specific impact of separate girls' toilets cannot be isolated.<sup>23</sup> What this tells us is not that WASH initiatives are unimportant, but rather that we do not in fact know what its effects are.

Furthermore, the amount of attention given to this single intervention, girls' toilets, suggests that if we can only get the plumbing right, we do not need to work on the much more difficult and complex attitudes relating to whether girls feel safe and confident enough to use the toilets, or how to address poverty in associated communities, where

there are not sufficient and safe sanitation facilities.

What the research around girls' toilets does highlight is a number of other concerns, such as incidences of harassment and sexual violence in school toilets and girls' perceptions of lack of security and privacy.<sup>24,25</sup> These findings shed light on a wider culture of gender inequalities in and around school. Research in Kenya highlights considerable hostility to poor girls who receive sanitary towels, suggesting problems with interventions that are provided in schools without appropriate training for school officials. In the absence of this training, a corrosive discourse of 'blaming the poor' both for their conditions and for what are seen as their misuse of resources emerges.<sup>26</sup>

The provision of toilets is important. Toilets are clearly vital in making the lives of children in schools more comfortable, and they do enable girls to go to school without some measure of shame, pain, or health risks. However, it is a myth that simply digging toilets will promote girls' schooling.

Policymakers need to address the gender inequalities associated with sexual harassment and long-term ill health, why girls may feel too ashamed to use toilets at school, and the derogatory assumptions of teachers or education officials about poor girls – and not just call in the plumbers.

## 4 Time is a resource, too

Time spent in school learning is a critical resource. 'Opportunity to learn' (OTL) is a concept that examines the factors that give a girl the time to pursue her education. Without enough 'time on task', no child can learn.<sup>27</sup>

Male-dominated and sexist school environments can also place adolescent girls in positions that undermine their 'time on task'. For example, within many schools, girls are still asked to fetch water, sweep classrooms and perform other chores rarely asked of boys.<sup>28</sup> In the classroom, teachers often do not encourage girls to participate and can actively discriminate against and belittle girls.<sup>29</sup> In and around schools, men, boys and male teachers may harass and abuse girls.<sup>30</sup> The male-dominated school environment then erodes girls' confidence and ability to participate, and creates an atmosphere that is dismissive of girls as learners.

Q. "Boys are better mathematicians! Do you agree? Why? Why not?"

A. "To some extent I agree with this. And probably the reason for it is that Allah has made man superior to a woman. It is natural that from childhood they [boys] ask questions: 'why?', 'what?', 'how?'. And, comparatively, girls, from the beginning you explain to them and they accept it. They have curiosity but, from the start, that element of curiosity is bounded so that it stops. This is the reason that our experience tells us that boys learn better."

Teacher, Pakistan<sup>31</sup>

### More complex but also fundamental:

- Family involvement in learning and school
- Mother's education level & literacy
- High expectations & aspirations

### Fundamentals:

- Teachers attend and engage with the girls
- Female teachers and other female students are present
  - Materials are equally available to all students
- Equal time-on-task in classroom and form homework
  - Equal student attendance
- Safety and security in and on the way to school
- Non-discriminatory policies in school and classroom

Interventions that might improve a girl's opportunity to learn<sup>34</sup>



In response to these issues, the question of whether girls learn better on their own has been repeatedly raised. UNESCO dedicated an advocacy brief to the topic, looking at both the arguments in favour and against promoting single-sex education. In their reflections they note that: "Separate facilities for girls are only safer than co-educational schools if the local community and education system invest consistently in ensuring security. In southern Africa, girls' schools and girls' dormitories have been the target of male predators. Some have been referred to as 'Candy Shops'.<sup>32</sup> A 2004 global report by the Canadian Centre for Knowledge Mobilization which sought to uncover whether girls do better in single-sex schools and what, if any, effect single-sex schooling has on 'achievement', found that: "There are psychological and social benefits for girls in single-sex classes; when given the choice, girls generally prefer single-sex classes whereas boys typically prefer co-educational classes; single-sex classes assist in breaking down sex-role stereotypes and 'genderisation' of subject areas, whereas co-educational settings reinforce them."<sup>33</sup>

Doing homework at a boarding house in Laos.



## GIRL-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS<sup>35</sup>

Plan's BRIGHT project – Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed – in Burkina Faso has achieved high levels of school enrolment and graduation rates for girls by creating supportive learning environments in 132 communities across 10 provinces.<sup>36</sup>

Working closely with communities and local government, the BRIGHT project ensures schools have child-friendly classrooms equipped with appropriate furniture and textbooks, a borehole to provide safe water, separate male and female latrine blocks for sanitation, and housing units for teachers.

The children also receive a midday meal and there is a take-home ration for girls who achieve an attendance rate of 90 per cent or more.

Some of the schools also have an on-site child-care centre that allows mothers to leave their youngest children under safe supervision and let their older daughters go to school while they work in the fields.

In addition, Plan has recently developed a 'School Equality Scorecard' which allows schools to check quickly and easily whether they are meeting the criteria required to promote gender equality and girls' rights in the classroom.



## 5 Teachers count

*"She used to teach us well and from that time we were inspired by her. We were carried away by her. Generally, we go by her, we listen to her and we are indebted to her. She would always say, 'Look, children, you study well, work hard and aim for bigger things in life but don't become one like me.' But I wanted to be like her, like madam."*

Preethi, 15, Andhra Pradesh<sup>37</sup>

While few developing countries have achieved the ideal 1:40 ratio of teachers to pupils in secondary schools,<sup>38</sup> for girls it has been found that the presence of a female teacher is more important than that of a male teacher.<sup>39</sup>

Hiring and deploying enough female teachers, especially to rural areas, therefore remains a challenge that education systems in most regions need to tackle. Although the subject of female teachers is more complicated than sheer numbers, it is nevertheless an important indicator of school quality. The teacher-pupil ratios, as well as the regular attendance of teachers, are both factors that affect student learning.<sup>40</sup>

Although more girls than boys choose to study education at college or university, this



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has not yet translated into a higher number of female teachers in the areas where they are most needed.<sup>41</sup>

Teacher absence is a major reason children in schools do not learn. In a study of primary-school teacher absenteeism in six developing countries – Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru and Uganda – an average of 19 per cent of teachers were absent on any given day. Despite this, in a sample of 3,000 government-run schools in India, only one teacher was reported to have been fired because of repeated absence.<sup>42</sup>

In government primary schools in Pakistan, only female teachers teach in girls' schools and only male teachers teach in boys' schools.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the fact that female teachers are absent almost twice as often as male teachers could have a significant impact on girls' learning. Pakistan also has one of the largest and most persistent gender gaps in enrolment and attainment at every level of education.<sup>44</sup> Teacher absence clearly contributes significantly to this issue.

*"At school, I have problems with how our teachers' salaries are not paid on time. Whenever their salaries are delayed, they stay away from classes; sometimes for months or weeks, until they are paid. As a result of this, I have to remain at home until the teachers are paid and ready to come back to teach us."*

Josephine, 22, Liberia<sup>45</sup>

It is too easy though to look at these numbers and blame the teachers who do not attend school. The statistics tell us nothing about why teachers are absent or about how we can improve attendance. Unsurprisingly, teacher and student absence rates are much higher in rural areas or areas with larger numbers of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>46</sup> School directors interviewed in five countries in West Africa (Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), for example, reported that the four most popular reasons given for teachers' absence were: health; family-related issues (such as births or deaths in the family, as well as family illness); strikes; and time to receive salaries, as in some regions teachers have to travel a long way to collect their salaries.<sup>47</sup>

Research by Cynthia Lloyd found that for female teachers, the further away from the school they lived, the more likely they were to be absent.<sup>48</sup> These findings indicate that the importance of a female teacher for girls to learn, as has been shown, is complicated by the fact that these female teachers themselves are caught up in their own gendered roles and by the challenges of being working women and mothers.<sup>49</sup>

A key way to address some of the problems is teacher training, which not only focuses on subject knowledge and teaching methodologies but also builds teachers' self-esteem and status. The research in the five West African countries cited above highlights an association between teacher training and self-estimated curriculum completion, pointing both to increased subject knowledge and increased teacher confidence.<sup>50</sup>

Teaching English in South Sudan.

Teacher training in Togo.



SIGRID SPINNOX



REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES

# TALKING TO TEACHERS

Plan's 'Real Choices, Real Lives' cohort study is tracking 142 girls across nine countries since their birth. They are already attending primary school and their experiences of school are beginning to shape their lives. To try to anticipate what their future education will look like, Plan undertook observational research over a period of one week across four countries: Uganda, the Dominican Republic, Brazil and Cambodia. As part of the research, we collected administrative data on attendance, repetition and levels of teacher qualifications. The researchers also observed two lessons in each school. We then conducted in-depth interviews with the classroom teacher (of the observed lessons) as well as the headteacher of the school. These schools all service very poor communities, many of them in remote areas, and the daily grind of teachers in these primary and secondary schools exposes the extent to which they often struggle with the same issues as their poor students.

It was clear from the interviews that the communities in which they worked were very important to the teachers, as was the need to involve parents in children's education.

*"The school is an educational institution and it needs to provide a pleasant space for an appropriate education, as well as providing a partnership with the community and the families, involving interactive projects and activities."*  
Maria, headteacher, Brazil

None of the teachers interviewed felt that they were paid enough, except for Miguelina in the Dominican Republic who was working both during the day and in the evening, in public and private schools.



Teaching in Cambodia.

ALF BERG

*"Education is better now – people have more opportunities to develop in school, to get a degree, to attend continuous formation training; however, there is still a lot to be changed. The teachers aren't valued, and to have a dignified salary; teachers need to work in several schools, teaching many groups, and this causes physical and mental stress. After a long time in the profession, many teachers (including some of my workmates) are giving up the career as a teacher, because of the poor working conditions and low salaries."*

Ronald, teacher, Brazil

For many of the teachers, pay was not just about being able to support themselves, but was intricately bound up with the extent to which the profession was valued.

*"Teachers must be more valued. I see that the education professionals are the least valued and least acknowledged professional class. I think we should receive a dignified salary."*  
Kelma, teacher, Brazil

Another key concern for many was the issue of training.

*"We teachers are the cornerstone. We have to be well trained. More so when you're dealing with big kids, in high school, who can recognise weakness. But if you know what you're doing and you take control, they say: 'No, this one knows.'"*  
Miguelina, teacher, Dominican Republic

Students identified unqualified or untrained teachers as those more likely to use corporal punishment and less likely to be able to support them through their examinations. Teachers explained that training is essential for giving them confidence, familiarising them with the curriculum, and a key way to improve their classroom practice. When we looked at the levels to which teachers were trained, as well as the numbers of men and women in high-status jobs, gendered pictures emerged. In Uganda, there were 30 female teachers and 20 male teachers at the school, but all of the senior teachers and the headteachers were male. While all of the male teachers were trained, just three of the 30 female teachers had training or any education to a level beyond secondary school. Only two female teachers



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Playtime in the Dominican Republic.

had a diploma, and only one female teacher had a degree, compared to 16 male teachers with diplomas, and four with degrees.

*"Training sessions are always necessary so the teachers can get more information and do a better job. I believe that because IT is very popular now, we need more training time on this theme."*  
Ronald, teacher, Brazil

Teacher absence was evident in most of the schools which we observed, which had clear implications for the students' learning. In one school in Brazil, our researchers noted that: "On that day, the teacher was responsible for two groups as another teacher was absent. The lesson was affected because the teacher in charge had to leave the classroom a few times to monitor the other group, which was carrying on activities he had set in the other teacher's absence."

In one of the observed lessons in Uganda, a teacher was only present for 40 of the 80 minutes. This was because he was sent to the capital to deliver some forms.

Many of the teachers had worked extremely hard to get to where they are today. For the female teachers we interviewed, getting on in teaching had been a complex balancing act between finance, family and career. Many had interrupted their own education to have children or marry, and were still in the process of studying, or they expressed the hope that they would go back to further education in the future.

*"I spent three years doing teacher-training and travelled every day. I had to stop attending training for a while, because I had a miscarriage. I had a problem during the thesis because I was pregnant with my daughter and my son's arm had been operated on. Those were the little conflicts. But, thank God, I overcame them and never stopped, never gave up."*  
Miguelina, teacher, Dominican Republic

For our cohort girls, the biggest source of hope is the passionate commitment expressed by every teacher and headteacher we interviewed to their job and to education.

*"In my time, I was seen as 'revolutionary' because I used to fight for my rights. If I arrived in the classroom and found some problem, I would demand action from the directors and teachers. I've always had the vocation [to be a teacher], ever since I was a child. It's a profession that helps people to become someone in life. It helps society as a whole."*  
Maria, headteacher, Brazil

*"The school is offering me a postgraduate degree in school management, but I want to be in the classroom, because that's where I do my best work. The best thing about being a teacher is the relationship with my students. When they come up to thank you – these are the things that fill you with pride."*  
Miguelina, teacher, Dominican Republic



# A CONVENIENT MYTH

By Elaine Unterhalter, Institute of Education, University of London



In 1991, some of the earliest comparative research on girls out of school suggested the employment of women teachers was associated with increasing rates of girls' enrolment.<sup>51</sup> A decade later, received orthodoxy was that employing more women teachers in countries with large gender gaps would encourage parents to send girls to school.<sup>52</sup> Despite this, worldwide, the number of female teachers decreases at secondary level and the status of teaching at this level increases. The less teaching is seen as childcare and the more it is seen as a profession, with academic rigour, the fewer women are employed in it.<sup>53</sup> Recently, a number of studies have suggested that the employment of para-teachers or classroom assistants can bring a minimum level of schooling to more poor children at low cost.<sup>54</sup> As women comprise a large proportion of para-teachers, and given that a large number of girls from the poorest families attend school under these

conditions, one can assume that employing women para-teachers does make schooling more accessible to the poorest girls. Indeed, this was the model developed by the BRAC schools in Bangladesh, which set up schools close to where children lived, employed women teachers, and through a rigorous learning programme ensured children could re-enter the formal system at an equivalent level to their peers.<sup>55</sup> Before this research on female teachers and para-teachers can be translated into education policy though, the trade-offs it implies need to be closely examined. For example, it would be risky to conclude that the policy implication of the work of BRAC or similar studies of para-teachers in Northern Indian states is that low pay for women employees is a way to make schooling available to large numbers of girls.<sup>56</sup> Positive learning outcomes in all these studies are also associated with good work conditions for the women employed, opportunities for training, job security and promotion. Indeed, other studies demonstrate that better-trained teachers, regardless of gender, can create an atmosphere in which girls are willing to voice their concerns about the obstacles they face in their schooling.<sup>57</sup> As such, the implication of these studies is not that employing more women at low cost is the best way to achieve affordable education for all targets. Therefore, it is a convenient myth that on its own the employment of more women – often just as para-teachers – will result in more girls attending and learning. While there do appear to be associations between expanding education for girls and widening employment opportunities for women in teaching and other social sectors, this must include improving teachers' status, training and employment conditions. In this way their employment can contribute to a greater understanding of gender equality and concern with women's rights and gender equality. Thus education policy will need to find a way to address all these related areas, by joining up with labour policy and practice, for example. The solution is not to force down the opportunities and pay of women, in order to roll out minimal schooling for poor children at low cost. The trade-off cannot be between more access for girls and better jobs and working conditions for women.



**THE BEAUTY OF AN EARLY START** Pre-school has been touted as a way to prepare girls and boys to learn throughout their education. Its benefits extend to every part of a child's education – including her ability to learn and her parents' engagement in her education. A Save the Children Study in Nepal found that the children who enrolled in its early childhood development (ECD) centres did better than their peers in enrolment, retention and, most importantly, in their learning and transition from grade to grade.<sup>58</sup> The study found that in Dalit communities (traditionally the most discriminated against in the caste system) the impact of early childhood development centres was most significant. Dalit children who attended were twice as likely as other children to move on from Grade 1 to Grade 2, and five times less likely to drop out. This is supported by findings from other countries that have shown that the most disadvantaged children are the most likely to see dramatic benefits from ECD programmes.

Grade 1 Pass Rates	ECD children	non-ECD children
Boys passing	79%	58%
Girls passing	83%	64%
Grade 2 Pass Rates		
Boys passing	96%	70%
Girls passing	91%	66%

## 6 Curricula in schools

*"[I think that] educated men and these men who are not educated are different. Because if you told the one who is educated things he will think and say that 'this is wrong or this is right'. But for the man who is not educated, it is so difficult to change."* Maasai girl, 16, Tanzania

There are a number of important features of a curriculum that empowers girls. It needs to be gender aware; it needs to be relevant to the lives and needs of girls; and it needs to build children's ability to analyse the world around them. Too often, textbooks portray women in passive or caring roles and men in active roles and paid work outside the home.<sup>59</sup> But textbooks can be used to raise girls' aspirations, to engage with their self-esteem and sense of themselves, and to begin to expand their horizons through their own imagination. Sometimes gender equality practices at school are out of step with ideas children learn at home and the responsibilities they have within a household – many of which are marked by strong gender divisions. Communities which feel their culture is under attack in schools would refuse to support the education of girls because it appears to undermine valued cultural practices. As issues concerning gender and sexuality involve families' hopes and fears for daughters and sons, it is important not to ignore their opposition and to find ways to make sure parents' views are heard. Parents' involvement in schools and consulting the community at large is critical to find ways to address gender, race, class and other







Primary school students of all ages in India.

sensitive issues in broad and integrated pedagogies.<sup>60</sup> Where traditional leaders and elders have been consulted, there has been considerable success in changing attitudes about formal schooling for girls, especially by forging links with the older women who initiate young girls at puberty.

As well as being gender sensitive, a curriculum needs to be relevant.<sup>61</sup> An important definition of a relevant and valuable curriculum is one that provides practical, market-relevant, technical and vocational skills. Educators, policymakers and governments are taking note with great concern of the skills gap within and between countries.<sup>62</sup> To overcome disadvantage, education systems must understand what skills are valued and deliver them as part of a quality education that adequately prepares adolescent girls for a productive and economically active adulthood. In Chapter 4, we will look at the impact of education on girls' choices after school. It is equally important to think about the differences between and amongst girls when designing relevant curricula so that all girls can acquire valuable skills and capabilities.<sup>63</sup>

If parents do not think that education is relevant to their children's opportunities and life choices, they are more likely to pull out girls than boys.<sup>64</sup> Parents are the main gatekeepers, keeping girls in or out of school.<sup>65</sup> The more relevant and valuable

they perceive their daughter's education to be, the more likely they are to help her stay in school and support her to learn.

#### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN GIRLS' EDUCATION<sup>66</sup>

The nine countries taking part in Plan's 'Building Skills for Life' research reported that beside the lack of resources and poverty of the household, a key barrier for girls in completing lower secondary education is a lack of interest and support from parents and community members. Increasingly, local organisations like school management committees are encouraging parents to take an interest in the education of their children. In Mali, they are involved in girls' education issues such as raising funds, advising girls to attend school and advocating against early marriage and sexual violence.

In Sierra Leone, a group called 'Teko Concerned Group for Development' exerts pressure on parents and school authorities on matters that have to do with schooling. This group was founded by a 17 year-old girl. Researchers found that she plays a pivotal role in the lives of some of her peers. She advises them about the dangers of early and unprotected sex and believes that teenage pregnancy should be tackled if most girls are to complete secondary school.

## "BOOKS SHOW US WHAT HAPPENS IN SOCIETY"

By Charley Nussey, Institute of Education, University of London

Gender stereotypes within curricula texts are often mentioned as one of the key ways in which gender inequality can become internalised by students. But texts can also offer students the opportunity to imagine alternatives and can help to raise aspirations and determination for change.

*"Literature tells society what is right or wrong; in this way the society knows what it's [the] responsibility to do."*

Girl, 14, Tanzanian secondary school

While the Tanzanian education system is based historically on the old British 'O' and 'A' levels, the texts now on the curriculum are written by African authors, studied in English and Kiswahili literature lessons. Ranging from fiction which explores highly political themes, such as the government destroying livelihoods in slums in Kenya; tensions between traditional customs and modern education; and the difficulties faced by families in poverty; to a simple story about the difficulties which a female bus driver "in a man's world" faces but ultimately overcomes, the novels and plays on the curriculum engage with issues which are highly relevant to the lives of the students who study them.<sup>67,68,69,70</sup>

*"Literature has a role of promoting good social relationship in the society, [for] example, literature taught us about class, tribalism. We consider literature as the serious subject within our life."*

Boy, 19, Tanzanian secondary school

In research conducted in a rural Maasai secondary school in Monduli district, it was two texts in particular which sparked discussions about the roles and status of men and women in society.<sup>71</sup> These texts both had female adolescent protagonists, and echoed or directly mirrored situations which the students had experienced in their own lives. The texts offered a distanced way to examine highly personal issues.

*"Actually, this book helped us because it creates the picture... it shows the things which happen... which we had in our society."*

Boy, 16, Tanzanian secondary school

'Passed Like a Shadow', written by Bernard Mapalala in 2006, explores the story of a family impacted by HIV/AIDS. First affected is the father, who transmits the virus to his wife; the youngest son then becomes HIV-positive through unprotected sex with a sex worker. The daughter in the family, Abooki, also fears that she has become infected with HIV after she is raped. It is only Abooki, however, who goes to a clinic. She tests negative, and survives. She learns from women around her that relationships should be based on trust and mutual respect, and the book ends with her hopes for the future. The health messages around the many different ways in which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted reinforced lessons which the students had already had in biology or civics, but also opened further space to discuss gendered power relations. Ultimately, it was the message around positive relationships which the female students focused upon.

*"Abooki's relationship with her boyfriend is very good. It teaches us to love [for] real love, and not for aims of getting something from him or her."*

Girl, 17, Tanzanian secondary school

'Unanswered Cries', written by Osman Conteh in 2002, won the MacMillan Prize for African Literature. It explores the power of a 14 year-old girl, Olabisi, to make decisions about her own life. When Olabisi returns to her mother's village from her father's home in the city, her mother tries to convince and then force her to be circumcised. Olabisi runs back to the city, and takes the issue to court, arguing for her own freedom of choice. As a 16 year-old female student wrote in an essay about the text, in order to "build a future... educated and informed children should have rights to choose". This emphasis on the right to choose was a personal one for her, since she had herself run away from an early and forced marriage.

Texts which offer opportunities for discussion of issues critically relevant to adolescent girls' and boys' lives allow them to explore their own situations safely. A key way to ensure that the value of such texts is maximised is to ensure that teachers are trained in pedagogical methodologies which take full advantage of these discussions.<sup>72</sup>



7 Learning outside school

In some cases, school is not the right place for a girl to learn. For a number of reasons, often linked to having had time out of school or being over-age, girls will find that there is no formal education available that suits them.

HOLE IN THE WALL<sup>73</sup>

In 1999, Dr Sugata Mitra developed a theory that groups of children with little or no computer literacy, given access to shared, accessible computers in public areas, will teach themselves to use the technology on their own. The first experiment placed a computer within a hole in the wall in a New Delhi slum in 1999.

Working in self-organised groups and helping each other, the children typically navigated within minutes and began to browse in about an hour. Within three months they achieved

basic computer literacy, and by nine months they achieved the proficiency level equivalent to the skills of most modern office workers. They also picked up a considerable amount of the English language from common multimedia software.

An evaluation of this experiment found that girls tended to use these computers only if they were placed in safe public areas where they could be with other girls, but not find themselves alone with boys. It was also found that while the girls learned as quickly as the boys, their activity patterns tended to be different. Girls aged over 15 seldom came to the computers, possibly because of parental control. However, in those areas where older girls were able to use the computer, girls tended to use email and chat forums more. Girls also tended to use the computer to complete their school work.

In Kalikuppam, a Tamil-speaking

Learning at the 'Hole in the Wall'.



HIWEL



OLLIVIER GIRARD

village in south India, researchers placed a freely accessible computer which only had information on molecular biology in English.<sup>74</sup>

After 75 days the children were able to identify words such as 'neurons' and 'bacteria'; and children were able to classify the good and bad effects of bacteria, had started using English terms in their day-to-day language and were attempting to read English.

A 14 year-old girl called 'Amita' was arguably the most important factor in the children's learning, as she took on the role of 'teacher' in the unsupervised experiment. At the start of the process, the boys had suggested that she would not be able to understand the subject and that they would 'work it out' for her. She then spent a lot of time and effort countering this attitude towards her and, over time, transformed herself into a teacher of the subject.

The researchers reported that when they asked a 12 year-old girl if she had understood anything from the experiment, she replied: *"No, nothing. Apart from the fact that improper replication of the*

*molecules causes genetic disease, we've understood nothing else."*<sup>75</sup>

Without any help from adults and teachers, the children were able raise their test scores – in terms of knowledge of the subject of molecular biology and English language – from seven per cent to about 30 per cent in 75 days. A further period of 75 days with a mediator increased their scores to about 51 per cent. These scores were comparable with those of children of the same age, taught by a trained and experienced teacher, in a privileged private school in the nation's capital, despite the Kalikuppam children not having any access to a subject teacher.<sup>76</sup>

Alternative forums of learning, such as clubs, community schools and vocational training programmes, can also offer a vital second chance. Like the formal system, these platforms can empower or limit girls through what they teach.

*Taking the family to work in Benin.*

*Vocational training in Bangladesh.*



AFM SHAMSUZZAMAN





MANOCHER DEGHATI/IRIN

## SAFE SPACE IN AFRICA'S LARGEST SLUM

Kibera is the biggest slum in Africa, and one of the biggest in the world, housing over 60 per cent of Nairobi's population in small mud shacks with corrugated tin roofs. The conditions are basic: fewer than 20 per cent of the houses have electricity, there are only two public taps for water, and there are no toilet facilities. Kibera also has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world, at 50 per cent of all 16-24 year-old girls.

Binti Pamoja (Daughters United) was established to provide adolescent girls with a safe space, where they can meet with girls of the same age and learn life, leadership and financial skills. The girls also receive age-appropriate sex education, access to contraceptives for girls over 14 years old, should they need them, and access to a clinic and nurses. When issues of violence surface, a dedicated social worker is sent to conduct a home visit and to follow up with authorities as needed. A parent forum and

community-based theatre show reaches out to the rest of Kibera, recruiting more girls into the project.

To date, Binti has opened more than 38 safe spaces run by 68 girl graduates. Linnet is 24 years old; she joined Binti when it first opened its doors back in 2003. Since then she has graduated and is running her own safe spaces group. She says: "There are a lot of idle men near bars, lots of drugs and alcohol in some areas. Men harass us in the street. But we just walk away."

Binti is providing girls with two important services – scholarships and life skills – which could decrease early pregnancy and school drop-out. "Binti has empowered me," says Siama, who is 22 and has been with Binti for over a decade. "The most difficult age is 14; that is when girls are more likely to drop out of school and become pregnant. But if they stay in school, they are less likely to end up pregnant and more likely to find a good job."

*At work in Kibera.*

## 8 Private vs state schools

Private – not state run, and often fee paying – schools provide an alternative education in many communities. This is a contentious issue as the right to universal and free access to education – defined as a public good that it is the duty of the government to provide – has been at the root of the debate about education for many years.

In 23 of the 48 countries where Plan works, 35 per cent of all lower secondary school enrolment is in private schools, with girls making up 51 per cent of students\*.<sup>77</sup>

In contrast, girls in these countries only make up 45 per cent of students in lower-secondary education in public, state-run schools.<sup>78</sup> This may be because private schools are more responsive to parents' concern with the safety of girls, or because they may be closer to where they live. At the same time, it's important to reiterate that education is a basic right that government has a duty to provide to all children, and private provision is an alternative few people can afford. The risk with turning to private education is that those already marginalised will be further disadvantaged.

## NON-STATE SCHOOLS – AN OPTION FOR GIRLS?

There were 69 million more children in primary school in 2007 than in 1991. Of these, some 23 million – a third of the increase – were actually in non-state schools.<sup>79</sup> For example, in India alone more than 23 million children attend non-state primary schools, and in Bangladesh 96 per cent of the secondary-school enrolment is in non-state schools.<sup>80</sup>

The low quality of government schools is cited as the main reason for the growth in the numbers of private schools.<sup>81</sup> A UNICEF survey across eight states in India mentions teaching quality in public schools, as well as better provision of toilets for teachers and for girls in private schools.<sup>82</sup> In some countries, private schools are a better quality education option for poor girls. Many Aga Khan Education Services schools, for example, specifically target

\* Out of over 68 countries



ALF BERG

girls in remote areas where government schools do not reach.<sup>83</sup>

In a survey of private schools in India, Nigeria and Kenya, researchers James Tooley and Pauline Dixon found that there was parity between the sexes in enrolment.<sup>84</sup> They found that these schools had better pupil-teacher ratios, high teacher commitment and better facilities than government schools. For girls, this included better-trained teachers and, usually, separate toilets. The Aga Khan Foundation concludes that public-private partnerships offer choice and access for excluded children, especially girls.<sup>85</sup>

However, the picture is mixed. Research by the Population Council in Pakistan showed that private schools do not always reach poor girls, even in urban areas. In three different districts, researchers found that private schools flourished in the relatively more prosperous communities but were not available to or accessed by the poorest girls and their families.<sup>86</sup>

*Private school students in India.*



Cambodian girls at secondary school.

## 9 The hidden gender agenda

*"I think boys are confident enough and they can ask questions in the class. This gives teachers the idea that they are understanding the topic and boys are intelligent. We girls also want to ask questions, but we are shy and cannot ask questions. Thus, we become only listeners in the class."*

Girl, Pakistan<sup>87</sup>

There are a number of ways in which schools replicate and nurture gender stereotypes and norms. These include the attitudes, expectations and aspirations of parents, students and teachers, the images and messages within the school, the images and messages within the curriculum, and teaching methods and processes within the classroom.<sup>88</sup> Teachers' views on gender play a key role in shaping each of these areas. Gender issues in the classroom and how they affect learning have been examined for this report in schools in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Uganda and Cambodia (see page 92). This research shows that, as members of the communities and societies in which they work, teachers can be a vector in replicating and reinforcing gender stereotypes. Conversely, if they have space to reflect, together with appropriate training, and become aware of these same biases, they can help girls and boys to begin to question their

roles in society and analyse the impact these stereotypes have on their lives.

Initial work on effective ways of teaching girls focused on 'changing girls' by persuading them to engage with typically 'male' subjects such as science and maths. Attention then shifted to 'changing subjects' by questioning the traditional curriculum and views of knowledge. However, there is now an emerging focus on adapting how subjects are taught to suit a wide range of learners, and to encourage various ways of learning and teaching.<sup>89</sup>

In a study on 'Gender Responsive Schools' differences were observed in four study schools in terms of how male and female students occupied space.<sup>90</sup>

Observations of classroom teaching and learning, games, lessons and recess hours revealed a gender pattern in this regard.<sup>91</sup> For instance, girls were found huddled together both inside and outside the classroom, while boys occupied space more comfortably by spreading around. This was also explicit in teachers' descriptions of how boys and girls occupy space available in the science laboratory. According to a science teacher quoted in the study, generally girls would hover around one table while doing experiments. Boys, on the other hand, would spread out and occupy all the tables. The science teacher interpreted it as girls' attempts at seeking security and help from their peers.

The study looked at seven countries and found that in each country, the teachers were actively reproducing dominant gender stereotypes in their teaching, discipline and general classroom practices.<sup>92</sup> In an in-depth analysis of the views of teachers and students in Pakistan, the research found that female and male teachers accepted and reinforced gender stereotypes. Indeed, most were unaware of the concept of gender, or its impact on learning and the school environment.<sup>93</sup>

Teachers consciously or sub-consciously transmit stereotypes to their students which may have an adverse affect on their learning outcomes. If a teacher assumes girls will have less natural aptitude for mathematics, since it is considered a 'male' subject, girls might not perform as well in examinations. PISA tests\* have shown that where there are differences in achievement, the general global trend is that boys perform better in maths, while girls perform better in reading.<sup>94</sup>

But context matters – in South Africa and Lesotho girls outperform boys on standardised tests in both mathematics and reading, and the opposite is true in East African countries such as Uganda and Kenya. Social conditions undermine the performance of both boys and girls in different contexts in different ways.<sup>95</sup> Research in Malawi highlights that when girls were taught independently of boys, and

teachers were trained to address these issues, girls' achievement in maths improved.<sup>96</sup>

Once we start to understand how gender socialisation affects subject choice, we realise that, often, choices do not reflect what girls want to do, but rather how an understanding of what is appropriate limits aspirations. Amartya Sen has called this 'adaptive preference', how our desires narrow when opportunities are constrained.<sup>97</sup> It is this kind of socialisation, and not natural aptitude or even choice, that is reflected in what girls and boys study at higher education.

Peers are as important as teachers in transmitting these assumptions. The spatial dynamics of the classroom have been discussed above, but the verbal dynamics – what gets said, what doesn't, and who speaks – are equally important. Research in Botswana and Ghana found that boys dominated both the physical classroom space, and the verbal space.<sup>98</sup> Boys would shout answers, jeer or shout "shhh" when girls attempted to participate actively, and ridicule girls if they answered wrongly. Teachers generally did not make an effort to control the use of public spaces or moderate the verbal dynamics in the classroom. These kinds of constraints reinforce dominant ideas of appropriate behaviours of boys and girls, to the detriment of both adolescent boys and girls, and constrain the educational opportunities and future aspirations of all the students.

### Gender segregation in the field of study: In most countries, women dominate health and education studies and men dominate engineering and sciences

Field of study	Fraction of countries where the field of study is			Number of countries
	Female dominated %	Male dominated %	Neutral %	
Agriculture	3	74	22	89
Education	84	6	10	97
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	0	100	0	97
Health and welfare	82	4	13	97
Arts and humanities	55	6	39	96
Science	13	68	20	96
Services	21	59	21	87
Social sciences; business and law	23	16	61	97

\* The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international study, which began in 2000. It aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15 years olds in over 70 participating countries.



GLORIA THE MECHANIC

*"Sometimes when I go home wearing overalls, everyone starts laughing at me. They shout, 'Women should not be wearing overalls! It's not for a woman! It's a man's work!' They think that I am a big embarrassment. But I stay strong because I know I am doing the right thing. I am very happy and very proud: what a man can do, a woman can also do."*

*I am one of the first female mechanics to train at Juba Technical High School. Look around South Sudan and you see male mechanics everywhere: no women. But I say it's good for me to take on the role.*

*I am studying everything about cars. I have learned so many things – how to take apart the engine; the gears; the radiator. If a car fails, I know how to fix it.*

*I learned during the war that if you don't have a job, you will suffer more. In South Sudan, if you don't have contacts, you will search up and down and you will not find a job. But if you know how to build, or be a carpenter, or be an auto mechanic, it's much easier: you'll get a job. That's why I decided to come to this training school.*

*Here, women do not usually have good jobs. Sometimes you'll find a woman working, but she will not have studied. Or you'll find a woman with education, but she cannot find a job. She'll be poor, even though she has a lot of knowledge. When you are married in this country, the husband will not allow you to work. Even if you read, even if you have finished all your school, he will not allow you to work. In the future, I want to be a very successful auto mechanic. I think I am a*



JIRO OSE

*good role model. Sometimes people in high positions encourage me and advise me and tell me I'm a good example. I make them happy as they just cannot believe that a lady can do such things!"*

Gloria Joy, 18, Trainee Auto Mechanic, Plan International's Juba Technical High School, South Sudan

Gloria

Conclusion

Girls will not learn just by enrolling in or even attending school regularly. As this chapter has shown, there are a number of obstacles and challenges adolescent girls continue to face while they are in education. By placing gender equality at the heart of learning, each of these challenges can be turned into an opportunity.

Deeply entrenched assumptions about girls are difficult to challenge, or even to uncover. Teacher-training courses need to explore gender in a way that allows teachers to reflect on their own understanding, as well as to challenge the discrimination and beliefs that result in inequality. Providing the right educational environment is complex, but not impossible.

Resources can be made relevant and available; the place where girls learn can be safe and offer education when, where and how girls need it; their teachers can encourage them to aspire to do whatever they want to do. Educators can look not just at the number of resources and teachers, but at how those resources are being used and by whom, and at what and how teachers are teaching. By looking at these issues from the perspective of adolescent girls, education systems can remove the barriers which are preventing girls from learning.

A focus on access issues, as we explored in Chapter 2, can lead to an analysis that places responsibility and even blame on parents for not supporting girls, or on culture or religion for limiting girls' opportunities. An analysis of the quality of education, though, reveals that parents' and communities' aspirations, expectations and attitudes towards girls'

education can be shifted when the education that is available to girls is relevant, gender sensitive and respectful of their concerns.

When girls learn in a place that understands them, meets their needs and challenges them in constructive rather than limiting ways, they are handed a key. But as we will show in the next chapter, finding the door into which that key will fit is a task that cannot be met by educators and schools alone.

At school in India.



ALF BERG

What Gloria had to overcome to become the first female mechanic in her community:

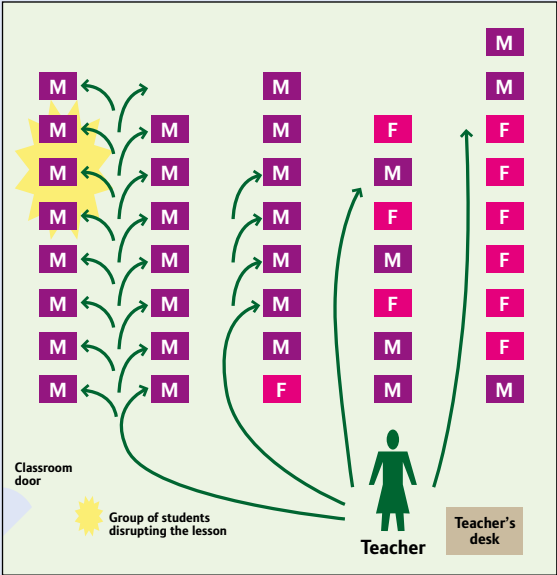


REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES

# CLASSROOM DYNAMICS

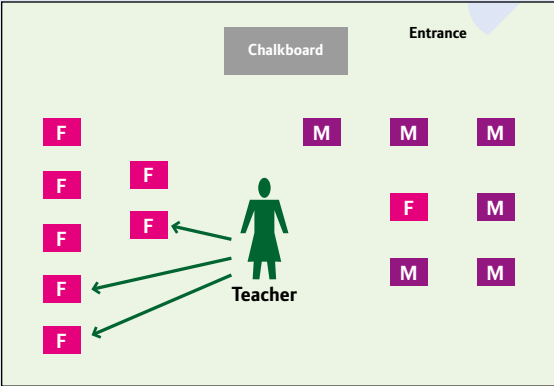
Plan’s school observation research in four countries – Uganda, the Dominican Republic, Uganda and Cambodia – sought to uncover some of the informal and subliminal messages teachers and fellow students send to girls, and how these may influence girls’ learning achievements. The findings showed that classrooms are a ‘gendered space’ which can actively challenge, or alternatively support, traditional gender stereotypes, such as ‘girls must sit at the back’.

The diagrams below highlight how space reflects broader social dynamics that exist outside the classroom which are ‘exported’ into schools by teachers and students.



**School 1: urban school in Brazil**  
What this diagram shows us is the disproportionate amount of the teacher’s time taken up by the male students who were disrupting the lesson. The arrows show that during the lesson, the teacher walked past the female students, generally grouped together, and did not spend her time with them.  
In another lesson with the same group of students, the researcher observed that more than 20 of the male students did not engage with the lesson at all, and that the lesson began with a student returning from being punished by the headteacher. The researchers commented:  
“It was a very agitated class, with very nervous and aggressive students – both boys and girls. The

presence of the teacher in the classroom didn’t affect them and they didn’t show any respect or consideration for her. There was a lot of cursing and offensive language, with the use of cruel, degrading nicknames. These attitudes were mostly shown by the boys, towards one another. The girls (two from a total of 10) called them bad names and hit them on their backs. The teacher couldn’t do much amidst such chaos. In the end, three students were sent out of the classroom and in retribution they spat through the window, without worrying about who they would hit. A girl who was spat on screamed and cursed, and left the classroom to wash herself.”



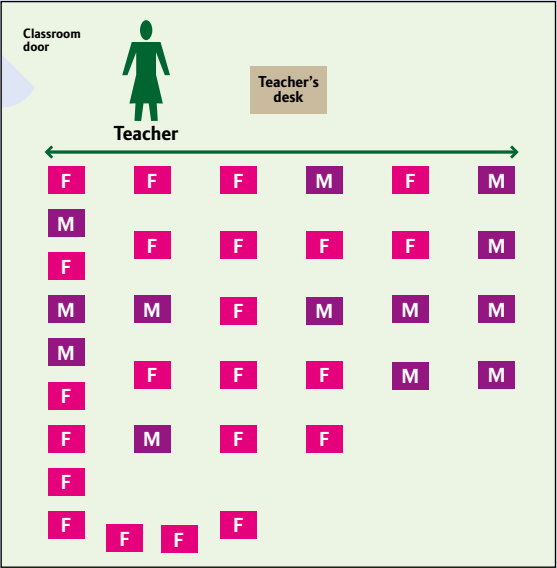
**School 2: rural school in the Dominican Republic**  
As the diagram shows, in this classroom the teacher was turned towards the female students, moving towards them during the lesson, and they in turn were focused on her. In this lesson our researchers noted: “It is probable that not all students listen clearly due to the noise in the next-door classrooms. The higher level of participation is observed in girls. It’s clear that the teacher pays more attention to the group of female students, as if it were obvious for her that the girls are going to answer the question.”  
During another social science lesson, four male students had their phones out, and one was listening to music. All of the female students except two had their homework ready to be checked by their teacher, compared to only two of the male students. The male students in this class were also more likely to answer questions with a monosyllabic ‘yes’ or ‘no’, while female students were more likely to answer with a full sentence.



Dominican Republic primary school.

**School 3: peri-urban school in Brazil**  
In this classroom there were 35 students and 20 textbooks, but the researcher noted these were shared by students with their partners. This mathematics teacher had been at the school for nine years and had a very positive relationship with the students. She joked that if they were able to calculate a 10 per-cent discount when they went shopping, they should remember that they were her students. She encouraged her students to ask questions – this classroom had the highest number of male and female questions and responses of those which we observed. When a female student asked how to solve a problem, she was encouraged to have a go herself, and then explain it to the class. Her teacher told her: “You got it! You have a lot of potential.”

The gendered dynamics of space are not, of course, the only factor. In School 1, for example, the teacher was in her first year of teaching with no prior training. In School 3, on the other hand, the teacher had a first degree and a teaching degree, as well as nine years’ experience. What is interesting, however, is that an improvement in the



quality of the lessons correlated with the way in which the space was organised in terms of gender – something the experienced teacher may well have been aware of.





# Life after school: the promise of a better society

# 4

- How education equips girls for life: the capabilities approach
- Sexual and reproductive health: the impact of education
- Relationships: the impact of education on friendships and family life
- Does education prepare girls for the world of work?
- Latin America: educated girls still behind boys in the job market
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*"Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."*

Nelson Mandela

*"We are a group of hoppers and a group of friends. Rabia hopes to become a veterinarian; Sena hopes to become a police officer; Intissar hopes to become a science teacher; Fatima hopes to become a teacher of earth and life sciences; Meriem hopes to become a psychologist; and Farud hopes to become a science teacher as well. And I hope to become a scientific engineer. Education is imperative to achieve our dreams and inform ourselves."*

Adolescent girl, Morocco<sup>1</sup>

What do you want to be when you grow up? We ask all children this question. And we hope that the answers they give will include big dreams and great aspirations.

Every girl should dream of being a doctor or a teacher or head of state, as well as of the home and security she hopes to have. These dreams capture a vital role of education: to help girls imagine, strive for, and shape their own lives.

How education opens up – or conversely closes down – girls' aspirations is complex and related to what happens while girls are in school as well as to what is going on all around them.





Schoolgirls in Zimbabwe.

So far in this report, we have been mainly concerned with policy and practice within schools and how the education system could better respond to the needs of adolescent girls. Governments have a duty to observe a girl's right to regular education in a place that encourages and fosters learning. Signals given to girls in schools, by adults and by other children, are vital in deciding whether education shuts down opportunities for girls or helps them find the key to open up new ones.

This chapter explores the role education plays in supporting girls to effect changes in the rest of their lives and in the world around them. It will argue that the essential outcome of education should be concerned with wider social justice. Without education, equality goals will be unreachable. But education alone is not sufficient. In both Latin America and the Middle East, recent increases in female education levels have not led to corresponding equality in the work-place or at home.<sup>2</sup> Girls and young women still

emerge struggling with the idea that they are second-class citizens. If they are to play an equal part in society once they finish their education, that education must be empowering and equip them with the capacity and determination to challenge the discrimination they will inevitably face.

### Girls taking control

*"The idea of capabilities is that you ask the question: what are people actually able to do and to be? I specify 10 central things that I think are central indicators that any decent society would make quite pivotal..."*  
Martha Nussbaum<sup>3</sup>

What girls are actually able to do and be gets to the heart of the matter. In this chapter, we look not only at what rights girls and young women have, but what they are able to do with those rights, using the capabilities approach articulated by Amartya Sen and developed as a list of indicators by Martha Nussbaum.<sup>4,5</sup>

### THE CAPABILITIES APPROACH<sup>6</sup>

- 1 Life – being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length.<sup>7</sup>
- 2 Bodily health – being able to have good health, including reproductive health; being adequately nourished; being able to have adequate shelter.
- 3 Bodily integrity – being able to move freely from place to place; being able to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
- 4 Senses, imagination, thought – being able to imagine, to think, and to reason and to do these things in a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education.
- 5 Practical reason – being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life.
- 6 Affiliation – being able to live for and in relation to others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; having the capability for both justice and friendship.
- 7 Other species – being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
- 8 Play – being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
- 9 Control over one's environment – Political: being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the rights of political participation, free speech and freedom of association. Material: being able to hold property (both land and movable goods); having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others.
- 10 Emotions – being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves; being able to love those who love and care for us; being able to grieve at their absence, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger; not having one's emotional development blighted by fear or anxiety.

These 10 indicators cover all the aspects of an adolescent girl's life and her capacity for emotional, intellectual, creative and physical development as she becomes an adult. Her control over that life and her ability to bring about change will be largely based on what she can do and be in four critical areas: physical and reproductive health, emotional life and relationships, working life, participation and politics.

Section One of this chapter will look at girls taking control of their bodies. It will look at how education supports girls to protect themselves and their health, and how it relates to their views on violence.

The second section looks at girls in relationships, within their family and with their partners, and how education supports them to form more equal and respectful relationships.

The third section looks at girls in work and how education supports girls to secure equal access to decent, well-paid work. This includes gaining valuable marketable skills as well as the confidence to demand equal pay. The final section looks at education's role in supporting girls' decision-making, including gaining fair and equal access, representation, and consideration under the law and in policymaking.

After-school football in Brazil.







PAOLO BLACK FOR THE YOUNG HEALTH PROGRAMME

## 1 It's my body

By making decisions about their health and making choices about sex and reproduction, girls exercise greater control over their bodies and improve their quality of life.

Education is vital to girls' health, making it possible for girls to make their own decisions and choices about healthcare and reproduction.<sup>8</sup> Adolescent girls who are in school are likely to marry later, are less likely to have pre-marital sex and more likely to use contraception. Even completion of primary school is strongly associated with later marriage and childbirth, and lower lifetime fertility.<sup>9,10</sup> Research shows that as women gain four additional years of education, fertility rates drop by one birth, but girls with fewer than seven years' schooling are more likely to be married by age 18.<sup>11,12</sup> An eight-country study from 1987 to 1999 concluded that a girl's education from secondary level onwards is the most consistent factor in determining whether or not she will bear her first child while still an adolescent herself.<sup>13</sup>

Even basic literacy and numeracy increases a girl's ability to engage with the healthcare system and with health information; this helps her to choose a healthy lifestyle and diet.<sup>14</sup>

Low levels of education, coupled with societal and cultural constraints, mean that all too often adolescent girls have limited control over their own health. In Benin, Senegal and Burkina Faso, for example, fewer than 10 per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 felt they were able to make their own healthcare decisions.<sup>15</sup>

As they grow up, educated girls are better able to manage and sustain their health. Studies show an inverse relationship between susceptibility to diseases, such as HIV, malaria and cholera, and level of education.<sup>16</sup> In Swaziland for example, a study found that two-thirds of teenage girls in school are free from HIV, whereas two-thirds of out-of-school girls are HIV positive.<sup>17</sup> Girls with more education know how to protect themselves against HIV, are more likely to delay sexual activity, and will have children later.<sup>18</sup>

Health education in India.

*"I would like to get married when I am 25 or 27... because I have my goals, as I told you already, to graduate [from high school] and also to graduate from university."*

Indigenous adolescent girl, Guatemala<sup>19</sup>

There are a number of ways in which a girl's education can affect how many children she goes on to have. For example, a higher level of education may raise a girl's income, opening up a wider range of options and making her more likely to choose to have fewer children. Education can also improve her ability to understand information on fertility options and healthy pregnancy.<sup>20</sup>

*"Through talking with the counsellor, my teacher and the Imam, my family have agreed to take part in a meeting... to discuss the suffering I might face during pregnancy and the illegality of child marriage."*

Hosna, 14, Bangladesh, who managed to avoid early marriage after seeking guidance and advice from a school counsellor<sup>21</sup>

Community health worker in Cambodia.



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ALF BERG

But education does not always help girls avoid early pregnancy or delay sexual initiation. Research on girls exchanging sex for school fees – the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon – shows a high correlation with poverty, despite a girl's level of education and sometimes because of her desire to stay in school.<sup>22</sup> In recent research in West Africa, Plan has found that girls who engage in transactional sex have little power in these relationships and cannot insist on using condoms. They thus face high risks of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.<sup>23</sup>

## The ability to negotiate

*"Human Rights Watch and other activists point out that every abstinence-only programme that has ever been evaluated has failed to reduce rates of teen pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease."*

Helen Epstein<sup>24</sup>

Over the past 10 years, many initiatives have been launched on girls' health. Some support girls' ability to make choices with respect to their sexual activity or health, such as the Safe Spaces programme in Kenya mentioned in Chapter 3. But many of these programmes focus simply on imparting

information or presenting a religious or morally based dictum on how girls should behave. While the level of girls' knowledge of and attitudes towards sexual activity can be affected by these types of programmes, they appear to have little impact on girls' behaviour. This may be because so many programmes have promoted abstinence and offered no open discussion to help girls develop their ability to choose or to negotiate within sexual relationships.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, an experiment in Kenya in a set of randomly selected schools found that the provision of information to girls that HIV prevalence is higher among adult men than among teenage boys, led, after one year, to a 61.7 per cent decrease in the incidence of pregnancies with adult partners relative to the comparison group. Information was provided to primary school students in Grade 8 by a trained officer from a local NGO rather than by a teacher.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, research on the decline in HIV rates in Uganda over the 1990s shows that abstinence programmes had little impact, while programmes that addressed being faithful in relationships and challenging women's subservience to men were very effective.<sup>27,28</sup>

Similarly, a number of studies have shown no change in attitude towards violence against women as a result of school-based programmes that specifically target this issue, rather than engaging in a more in-depth discussion about, for example, femininity and masculinity.<sup>29</sup>

Discussing health issues in India.

Learning about HIV/AIDS through drama.



SEAN SPRAGUE/PANOS PICTURES



As we have seen in Chapter 3, the ‘hidden gender curriculum’ is critical. With the right educational environment, with teacher training and materials in place, girls and boys can build their capacity and confidence to engage in society. However, if a girl’s education reinforces a stereotypical role, such as the primacy of women’s roles as mothers and housewives, this may actually weaken the link between more education and lower fertility.<sup>30</sup> Studies have shown that whether teachers treat boys and girls equally, and whether harassment is prevented, has an effect on whether girls delay pre-marital sex and stay in school.<sup>31</sup> For example, a study in Benin found that school related gender-based violence causes around 40 per cent of female students to drop out of school.<sup>32</sup>

Good quality education appears to be an effective way to build girls’ confidence, insights and networks, particularly in enabling them to tackle power issues and gender-based violence. Data on levels of education, correlated with women’s responses to questions about their experiences of violence, bear this out, as the research below demonstrates.



The journey to school.

MIKKEL ØSTERGAARD/PANOS PICTURES

## THE PROTECTIVE ROLE OF EDUCATION

By Charley Nussey, Institute of Education, University of London

There has been a lot of work on breaking the silence around the violence against girls which can occur in and around schools. Girls experience gender-based violence on the way to school, at school, and as a consequence of aspirations nurtured through school.<sup>33</sup> What this focus in research has perhaps masked, however, is the value of education in providing girls with confidence, insights and networks to challenge the gender-inequitable norms and power balances which are associated with violence. Some of the effects of this are evident when demographic and health survey data on women’s level of education is analysed together with responses to questions about experience of different forms of violence.

Violence against women is a hugely complex issue. While, as we discuss below, higher levels of education for women appear to provide some protection against forms of violence, educational attainment is not enough, without simultaneously addressing issues of power, representation and socialisation.

The trends across the DHS data in the tables opposite,<sup>34</sup> however, highlight that education has a protective role in terms of gender-based violence, in relation to the education level of both men and women. Not only are women who are educated to secondary level or higher less likely than their non-educated or primary-educated counterparts to experience violence, but men who are educated to secondary level or higher are less likely than their non-educated or primary-educated counterparts to perpetrate violence. These trends are in relation to education specifically, and are not proxies for socio-economic background or employment. The data suggests that secondary education has a bigger impact on gender-based violence than the more complex impact from high family wealth or female employment.

Women in 11 out of 14 countries analysed, who had been educated to secondary level or higher, were less likely to experience violence. For men, the data indicates that in nine out of the 14 countries, a smaller proportion of husbands with higher levels of education have carried out physical or sexual violence. Although there are

### Women’s experience of violence + their own education level

Country	% of ever-married women aged 15-49 who have ever suffered physical or sexual violence, by their education level		
	No education	Primary (complete)	Secondary education +
Bangladesh	61.9	52.8	36.4
Cambodia	29.3	22.8	10.0
Ghana	21.1	27.1	11.3
Kenya	49.4	40.5	29.8
Liberia	35.0	42.3	42.7
Malawi	23.6	32.9	32.8
Nigeria	11.7	26.9	19.3
Philippines	19.8	21.3	15.9
Rwanda	33.5	34.9	25.5
Tanzania	41.6	44.5	32.9
Uganda	58.5	62.5	44.8
Ukraine	n/a	16.9	10.9
Zambia	41.4	52.2	44.1
Zimbabwe	42.1	41.9	29.8

exceptions, and in some countries the percentage differences are small, it appears that more schooling for men may limit some levels of physical and sexual violence against their wives. For men in most countries, continuing schooling beyond the primary level decreases the risk of committing violence.

Education seems to shift attitudes, and cycles of violence can be broken as women become more likely to report it, or to join together to fight against gender-based violence and to campaign for progressive laws. In many countries, the proportion of secondary-educated women thinking that violence is justified is less than half the proportion of women who have only been educated to the primary level. This data\* points clearly to the importance of secondary education

\* From 35 different countries globally, 22 of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### Women’s experience of violence + husband’s education level

Country	% of ever-married women aged 15-49 who have ever suffered physical or sexual violence, by husband’s education level		
	No education	Primary (complete)	Secondary education +
Bangladesh	61.5	52.0	38.2
Cambodia	14.9	16.1	9.6
Ghana	20.4	31.9	18.3
Kenya	46.7	38.1	no data
Liberia	36.1	39.8	38.9
Malawi	31.3	30.8	31.5
Nigeria	11.7	23.5	22.1
Philippines	22.2	22.8	15.4
Rwanda	36.5	35.1	21.7
Tanzania	40.7	46.3	32.5
Uganda	17.3	26.9	19.3
Ukraine	n/a	17.3	9.5
Zambia	47.7	49.6	46.9
Zimbabwe	38.3	43.8	35.1

in changing beliefs that violence against women is justified.

- In Ethiopia, 68 per cent of women with no education think that violence is justified when a woman has burnt food, compared to 61 per cent of primary-educated women but 24 per cent of women with secondary education or higher.
- In Nigeria, 71 per cent of women with no education think that violence is justified when a woman leaves the house without telling her husband, compared to 33 per cent of women with secondary education or higher.
- In Kenya, 61 per cent of women with no education think that violence is justified if a woman argues with her husband, compared to 52 per cent of primary-educated women, but 27 per cent of women with secondary education or higher.



2 These are my relationships

*“The thing that helps us to realise our dreams is encouragement of the family.”*  
Adolescent secondary school girl, Morocco<sup>35</sup>

Education plays an important role in increasing a girl’s status within her family and also in wider society, especially in terms of the sharing of resources and power negotiations. For example, improved access to education has been shown to increase the age at which girls marry; and when girls marry later they are more likely to choose their partner, to marry men closer to their age, and to have more equal roles in their relationships.<sup>36,37</sup> Girls with more education are more likely to say that their opinion has weight in household decisions, and they are more likely to think that girls and women should have decision-making input on matters both within and outside the customary female domain.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, educated boys and men give more weight to the opinions of women and girls in their lives.<sup>39</sup> And fathers with secondary education themselves are more likely to see the value of it for their daughters as well as their sons.<sup>40</sup>

For adolescent girls, aspirations and life goals are deeply affected by the people around them with whom they have important relationships. For example, parents’ expectations play a critical role in limiting or opening up a girl’s aspirations. If parents signal to their daughter early in her educational career that they are unlikely to make the level of investment necessary for her to continue into and beyond her secondary education, a girl will reduce her expectations in line with her parents’ goals and may drop out of school early. Programmes that link girls with mentors and that get mothers and fathers more involved in school management, have been shown to have an impact on girls in a number of ways.<sup>41</sup> They open paths for parents and girls to gain a better understanding of the role and potential of girls’ education and increase parents’ commitment to helping their daughters make the best use of that education after they complete.<sup>42</sup> They can also make schools into more girl-friendly spaces, encouraging girls to learn and to build their confidence.

Learning to read in Vietnam.



CAMFED/JONATHAN BIRCH

**CAMA – YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS<sup>43</sup>**  
When Camfed started working in Zimbabwe in 1993, its goal was to get more girls to enrol in and complete secondary school in rural areas. Camfed approached this issue with three key interventions: providing scholarships for girls based on need; making a commitment for the duration of her education to any girl it worked with; getting powerful gatekeepers in the community involved. In 1998, when the first cohort of Camfed-supported girls emerged from secondary school achieving an impressive 98 per cent completion rate, they looked to each other and to Camfed to answer the question: what next?<sup>44</sup> In answer, this group of girls came together to form CAMA, an association of young educated rural women. CAMA members offer networking and support to each other. They mentor younger girls in school, take leadership positions in their communities – especially on issues affecting girls and young women – and serve as powerful role models for younger girls and older women alike. Today, there are over 17,000 CAMA members in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Ghana and they work together as a powerful movement of young, educated African women to change the opportunities and aspirations of their peers and of younger girls.

Already 1,845 of them are trained as health activists, reaching thousands of children in rural schools with practical information about protecting themselves from HIV. Out of their own earnings, CAMA members today give back to their communities in a very tangible way: they fund the scholarships and support the educational costs of 220,184 children in their communities.

Cama members run a training session in Ghana.

When it comes to developing girls’ capacity to enter into respectful relationships and be valued in their families and communities, the way in which education teaches boys and girls about what is socially appropriate could be more important than the actual skills or knowledge they are taught. This applies equally to giving boys an opportunity to engage with issues of masculinity, as giving girls an opportunity to think about their roles in society. Education can, especially during the crucial stage of adolescence, set patterns of behaviour that affect choices throughout adult life.

*“The president of the young reporters’ club approached me to ask if I wanted to become a member... It was the first time in my life to meet up and discuss with other peers like that. The joining of the club changed many things in my life in the years to come.”*  
Rama, Burkina Faso, Participating in Plan’s ‘Young Reporters Club’<sup>45</sup>

Young reporters.



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NIELS BUSCH

### 3 I want to work

*"Helping my parents when I grow up and getting a job of my own is what matters to me. I want to help my parents, who looked after me when I was young."*

Girl, 14, Uganda<sup>46</sup>

The benefits of girls' education have been demonstrated by a wide range of studies, both in terms of percentage increases in national GDP and the contribution educated mothers make in raising their families out of poverty.<sup>47,48</sup> How much more an educated girl can earn has remained a central argument for governments investing in girls' education.

#### ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF GIRLS' EDUCATION

- If more adolescent girls had access to quality secondary education, their future wages would increase. An extra year of secondary schooling for

adolescent girls can mean an increase of 10 to 20 per cent.<sup>49</sup> The benefits of education grow exponentially in proportion to the level of education girls complete.

- If young women were able to start successful businesses, economic growth would increase. In Tanzania it could add one per cent to the annual economic growth rate if barriers to women entrepreneurs were removed.<sup>50</sup>
- If more young women had decent jobs with good pay, gross domestic product (GDP) would go up. In India, if the ratio of female to male workers were increased by only 10 per cent, total per capita output would increase by eight per cent.<sup>51</sup>
- If women's labour force participation had increased at the same rate as education during the 1990s in the Middle East and North Africa, the average household income would have been higher by 25 per cent.<sup>52</sup>
- If young women had better access to farming land, fertilisers, credit and agricultural training, more food would become available and children's nutrition would improve. If women farmers in Kenya were given the same level of education as their male partners, their yields for maize, beans and cowpeas would increase by up to 22 per cent.<sup>53</sup>
- Education and employment are linked to young women postponing marriage and scheduling births later in life.<sup>54</sup> It has been estimated that an extra year of female schooling reduces fertility rates by 10 per cent. In Mali, women with secondary education have, on average, three children, while those with no education have an average of 7.<sup>55</sup> Delayed marriage and fewer children mean a better chance of increasing per capita income, savings and achieving more rapid growth.<sup>56</sup>
- If young women were better able to access credit, more children would go to school and households would have more cash. Female borrowing from microcredit institutions has had a larger impact on children's enrolment in school than borrowing by males.<sup>57</sup>



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And indeed, as girls' access to education has increased, so have their economic activities and their earnings. The participation of women in the labour force has increased worldwide during the past few decades. In developed countries, it rose from 38 per cent in the 1970s to 45 per cent in the 1990s; and in developing countries, it went up from 20 per cent to 30 per cent over the same time.<sup>58</sup> This increase may be due to a multiplicity of factors, including the relative importance of the service sector in the economy. But it remains true that without increased access to education, women and girls would be less well-placed to take advantage of the economic opportunities of the twenty-first century.

Such economic 'rates of return to education' (or ROREs) have been at the root of the policy to focus on primary education. Over the past 10 years, ROREs have been used to support the view that primary education is enough – or even that four years of education is enough, this being the point at which the marginal gains in income of additional years of education appear to lessen.<sup>59</sup> This policy conclusion has been detrimental for adolescent girls. Additionally, the early research, which was so influential on education policy, was based on data from the 1960s. More recent data shows that rates of return at secondary level are increasing.<sup>60,61</sup>

A research study in 2007 demonstrated that, in today's labour market, secondary education does have higher rates of return in comparison to primary education. There is a dearth of skilled labour and a reduction in the number of jobs that can be done by those with only a basic level of

education. Secondary and tertiary graduates are increasingly a vital component for a successful economy.<sup>62</sup>

*The tomato harvest in Kenya.*

Measuring the potential incomes of educated girls also limits our view of how girls and women interact with work. While it may seem obvious that more education leads to better employment prospects, the relationship between girls' and women's opportunities in the labour market and their level of education is actually far more complex.

#### EDUCATED AND JOBLESS – YOUNG WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA

*by Nikki van der Gaag*

Fawziah al Bakr was a lucky child. When she was growing up, she says; "The government was just opening schools and not only were they free, but we got a monthly allowance. They desperately needed teachers for the girls' schools so I was guaranteed a job at the end as well." Today, Fawziah is professor of education at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She is unusual in having such a senior academic job in a country where women still cannot drive or vote or go out without a male chaperone, and where universities are segregated so that women and men cannot study together. But then she is an unusual woman. She puts it all down to her mother's influence. "My mother was not educated, but when my father left her with seven children she was determined not only that we should all go to school, but that we should get a university education."



MARC SCHLOSSMAN/ PANOS PICTURES



She feels that many things have improved since she was young: “Girls are now getting educated, the quality of education is much better than it was in my day; and in universities there is an opening up of different specialities, which means that, in theory at least, teaching is not the only profession open to women.”

But she is worried about the future for the young women she teaches. “It is much more difficult for a woman to get a job today than it was when I was young. There are many thousands of qualified teachers applying for every post. And there are few other jobs that women here can do.”

A survey in 2010 showed that although 93 per cent of women have a secondary or university degree, only 18 per cent of women in Saudi Arabia have jobs, compared with Kuwait (41 per cent), Qatar (40 per cent) and the UAE (38 per cent).<sup>63</sup>

The country’s strict laws on women make it difficult to hold down a job. Professor Fawziah says: “Women do not go outside in the street because they would be harassed.”

Women still earn less than men in almost every country, with a global wage gap average of 22 per cent, increasing to 38.5 per cent in some developing countries.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, while educated girls may be earning more than girls without an education, it still does not mean that girls will earn as much as boys for the same work or that they can access the same work as boys. Examples of these gaps in pay and gender difference in access to different types of employment can be found in almost every country.<sup>65</sup>

*“Many women in Uganda are still held back by inadequate resources, lack of capital, traditional and cultural norms that dictate that we must be submissive and act like women. These stereotypes will continue to quash our quest for equality.”*

Rebecca Namayanja, fisher,  
Lake Victoria, Uganda<sup>66</sup>

For women in societies where male and female roles and status are most clearly divided, the gaps are even greater. Women earn as little as 50 per cent of men’s wages in the agricultural sector, which is where

most women from poor and marginalised communities work.<sup>67</sup> There is also proof that girls’ education contributes more to economic growth and increased family income, where society and culture allow girls and women to work outside the home.<sup>68</sup> The nature of informal, irregular employment – which is less secure and often unregulated and can be done in the home – means that this form of employment may do little to contribute to girls’ empowerment and agency.<sup>69</sup>

#### MALAYSIAN WOMEN – ONE STEP FORWARD

In Malaysia, women have achieved parity in education, with girls accounting for 50 per cent of pupils enrolled in primary and secondary education.<sup>70</sup> In higher education, there has been a huge expansion in girls’ enrolment in recent decades, rising from 29 per cent of students in higher education in 1970 to 61 per cent of students in 2006. However, there are signs of male disengagement from education, higher achievement among girls than boys, and a decline in the male population at tertiary level from about 50 per cent in the 1980s to about 40 per cent in 2000.

Despite girls’ gains in education, a gender gap in employment and wages persists. Female participation in the labour force declined from 47 per cent in 1990 to 45 per cent in 2006. The majority of women in employment are in lower-income occupations and in clerical and service positions. While women occupy just over half of the management positions in public services, they occupy only a quarter of the most senior positions. While women receive the same wages and privileges as men in the public sector, in the private sector they are subject to discriminatory practices.<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, while Malaysian women have achieved rights to and within education, they do not appear to have gained the ability to secure greater equality in work as a result. They remain shut out of equal access to and pay in decent and valuable work. The government is intending to address this by instituting a 30 per-cent quota for women in decision-making positions in



CHRIS STOWERS/PANOS PICTURES

the public sector, but this policy could be aided by measures to address gender equality and gender norms in education.

In some countries, the positive relationship between years of education and girls’ access to more and better-paid work, has not held true. The ratio of girls to boys with at least secondary education has increased in China and India from 1995 to 2010.<sup>72</sup> Yet during the same period, girls’ labour force participation rate declined steadily from 79 per cent to 75 per cent in China and from 37 per cent to 30 per cent in India.<sup>73</sup>

In Kerala, which has the highest rates of girls’ education amongst all the Indian states, girls’ labour force participation is also one of the lowest and girls’ unemployment is the highest.<sup>74</sup> While boys’ work participation rates have increased in the past two decades, girls’ rates have declined, contrary to the general trend in other Indian states. In Sri Lanka, unemployment rates are highest for girls with secondary-school level qualifications and above, which has been attributed mainly to the narrower band of occupations in which girls and women receive and accept job offers.<sup>75</sup>

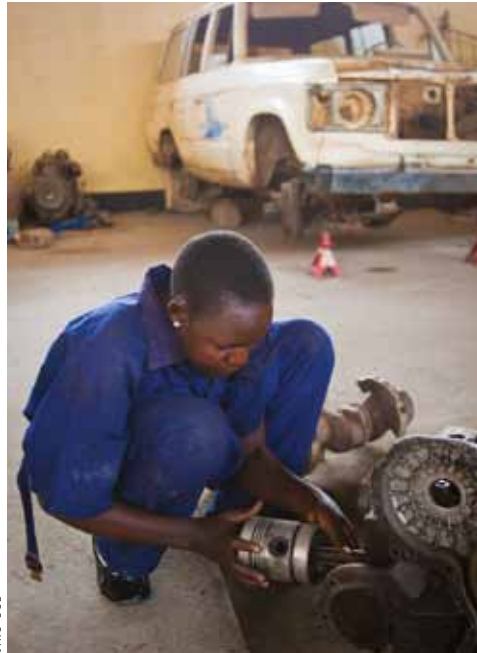
The World Bank has argued that one of the reasons that earnings differ for men and women is that subject choice still differs by gender, particularly at tertiary level. Women are more likely to graduate with a degree in education or in the humanities, leading to career trajectories with different average earnings.<sup>76</sup>

But this does not fully explain the pay gap. Even for men and women who hold the same degree, incomes and employment choices can still be significantly different. Research in the USA found that even in the highest-paid jobs, women doing the same job as men earned up to 25 per-cent less.<sup>77</sup> For women and men with science degrees, 55 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women are in occupations relating to maths, physics or engineering; on the other hand, 22 per cent of women and 13 per cent of men with science degrees went on to become teachers.<sup>78</sup> Fields of work that are regarded as ‘female’ (or become so) are also valued and paid less.<sup>79</sup>

How, then, can education enable more equal and open choices for girls in work? First, by developing a wide range of skills that girls can use in the labour market,

Schoolgirls in Malaysia.





JIRO DSE

education can increase girls' productive capacity, leading to better employment prospects.<sup>80</sup> Second, education can foster attitudes, values and ideas that will give greater flexibility and make the transition to paid employment easier for girls.

This is both in terms of the work itself and equipping girls to succeed in an as yet unequal environment, with greater confidence and support networks.<sup>81</sup> As we saw in Chapter 3, equal access to technical and vocational training for girls and boys, without gendered assumptions about what type of training is appropriate, will go a long way to changing attitudes outside education as well.

*"I was really struggling in the village when I heard a message on our community radio about a project enrolling girls who wanted to learn certain skills. My brother, who was trying to get me married, did not encourage me at all. I went and took the test, which I passed. People were giving me bad looks, because here in the northern part of Sierra Leone, women are not encouraged to go to school, but it's even worse when they try to do jobs that are 'supposed to be men's jobs', like an electrician, mechanic, or engineer."*

Aissata, 21, Sierre Leone<sup>82</sup>

The content of the formal curriculum does have an impact on the economic returns a girl can see from her education. For example, the language in which she is primarily taught can affect the work opportunities available to her.<sup>83</sup> If education also concerns itself with social transformation, it can help girls to overcome historical disadvantages and stereotypes that persist in economies. This type of education would, first, directly address gender issues, particularly in subject and career choice (such as girls in science) and, second, provide additional training for girls in leadership and decision-making. If educators address these issues directly, girls could leave school with a greater capacity to recognise discrimination and have the skills to demand fair, decent and equal treatment at work.<sup>84</sup>

#### TRUMPING TRADITION – ZERO GENDER DIFFERENCE IN VICTORIA

The state of Victoria in Australia offers a core curriculum that promotes science and mathematics as critical subjects for girls as well as boys, trumping traditional gender stereotypes regarding these subject choices. In the first four years of secondary education science is a compulsory and core part of the curriculum. The science syllabus for each subject is designed to support the link between science and society, therefore explicitly addressing the aversion

*Learning about cars in South Sudan.*

*Secondary schoolgirls in Zambia.*



PAOLO BLACK FOR THE YOUNG HEALTH PROGRAMME



ALF BERG

girls have traditionally shown towards physical science subjects. Consequently Australia has achieved almost zero gender difference in science literacy, though some stereotypical differences still exist over choice of science subjects, with more girls preferring biology and boys preferring physics.<sup>85</sup>

But the role education can play must be viewed alongside other policies that affect young women's work, such as employment law, maternity and paternity rights, childcare and social acceptance of, and support for, working mothers. Employment policy and social context are crucial in determining how and whether girls can use their education to improve their working conditions and opportunities.

This is most important because when girls and women do come to dominate in any sphere – whether it is in an area of work, such as teaching, or in achievement in education, such as in literacy – that area can swiftly become devalued, with pay dropping and returns decreasing.<sup>86</sup>

The feminisation of poverty, where women make up a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor, is well known.<sup>87</sup> Less well researched is the 'feminisation of achievement' – the phenomenon whereby the value and impact of a degree or a job decreases as the number of women reaching that level increases.

Latin America is a prime example. Today in most Latin American countries, more girls enrol in school, perform better, and continue through to higher levels of education than boys. Yet boys and men still earn far more than girls and women, while violence against women remains high.

The World Economic Forum's research shows that educational attainment for girls in Latin America is just behind North America but higher than Europe.<sup>88</sup> Yet in three countries in Latin America not one woman holds ministerial office; across the region only 13 women for every 100 men hold political office.

Women in some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean earn up to 40 per cent less than men.<sup>89</sup> It may be the very security that men and boys feel in their higher social position, that gives girls and women the space to achieve educationally. Boys and men need not fear that their own privilege is in any way threatened by better educated girls and women.<sup>90</sup>

The real issue is power. Equality between the sexes is about more than equal access to resources or services. As the Latin American example shows, girls' inequality is rooted in deeply embedded attitudes that place greater value on the choices of men and boys over those of women and girls. This is in spite of numerous studies showing that when women do get more access and equality, they make a great contribution to society and improve opportunities for all.<sup>91</sup>

*Laos teacher in front of the class.*



JENNY MATTHEWS

*Nicaraguan schoolgirl.*



EDUCATION – A MAGIC BULLET?

By Martha Lanza Meneses<sup>i</sup>



Closing the gender gap in education has been, and still is, on the agenda for Latin American women. However, despite significant progress – Latin America is seen very much as an educational success story – the reality is complex. The relationship between girls’ and young women’s access to and continued presence in school, and their socio-economic situation upon leaving the education system, is limited.

In recent years, the region has made significant strides in terms of education for all and shows high levels of parity, especially in primary education, where girls are tending to outperform boys; even the rates of those finishing their secondary education are higher for young women. They stay in school longer, and in most countries the drop-out rate is higher among boys; women are also more likely to attend university than men.

However, a number of factors associated with the recurrence of gender- and ethnicity-based inequalities and hierarchies mean that access to schooling and remaining in education do not necessarily contribute greatly to their future socio-economic status. One of the most significant indicators in this respect is gender gaps in income. On average, comparing men and women of the same age and education level, the gender gap in income is 17 per cent. While in Brazil the gap is 30 per cent, the differences are minimal in Bolivia and Guatemala, as the following data illustrates.

Salary gaps by gender<sup>92</sup>

Latin America	17.2%		
Bolivia	-1.8%	Paraguay	16.0%
Guatemala	0.3%	Honduras	16.3%
Colombia	7.1%	Ecuador	16.4%
Mexico	7.8%	Dominican Rep.	16.6%
El Salvador	11.9%	Chile	19.3%
Panama	13.6%	Peru	19.4%
Costa Rica	13.7%	Nicaragua	20.3%
Venezuela	13.9%	Uruguay	26.3%
Argentina	14.2%	Brazil	29.7%

In general, men earn more than women in any age group, at every level of education, in any field of employment, in large and small companies alike. The wage gap is lowest among young people with university degrees. The largest gaps appear between lower-income workers with incomplete secondary education, who live in rural areas. In general, the largest wage gap is seen among the self-employed, which contradicts the traditional notion that wage gaps are caused by discrimination by employers.

Salary gaps by ethnicity<sup>93</sup>

Latin America	28%		
Ecuador	4%	Paraguay	22%
Bolivia	17%	Guatemala	24%
Peru	21%	Brazil	30%

Wage gaps corresponding to ethnicity widen markedly in countries with indigenous populations. Brazil has the highest ethnicity pay gap and Ecuador has the lowest. This data indicates that in these contexts, the situation of indigenous women is twice as complex.



Various efforts to explain the causes of this situation place emphasis on the educational system and the structure and dynamics of the labour market, both structures which generate and reproduce the discrimination and subordination of women.

School and the reproduction of inequality

An underlying factor is the construction of schools designed to preserve social, ethnic and gender differences and hierarchies, a product of the long process of colonialism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Education systems shape and reproduce gender stereotypes and discourage the employment of women in non-traditional female areas.

On the whole, teachers’ expectations regarding future employment options are gender-biased. The trend among young women entering tertiary education is to get into areas related to reproductive roles, while the presence of women in engineering or technical fields, for example, is lower. Even more worrying, however, is the fact that in public schools, which provide education for the poorest sectors of society, teachers’ expectations for students’ future life is perverse: in general teachers think that upon finishing school poor students can only aspire to be construction workers, street vendors, domestic workers – meaning that they will end up in the least valued and lowest paid areas of the labour market<sup>ii, 94</sup>.

By the same token, parents’ expectations regarding the future of their children are, in the best-case scenarios, aimed at their integration into traditionally female or male areas. This is especially true in the case of migrant families of indigenous origin and poor people. The university subject choices of young women also demonstrate this trend.<sup>95</sup>

Meanwhile, the school does not incorporate the world views or the scientific and technological knowledge of indigenous peoples – especially of women – into the composition of the school curriculum. As a result, in rural areas, knowledge and practices required for the reproduction of economic, social and family life are not learned in school, so parents are reluctant to let their children, and especially their daughters,



stay in school until they complete their secondary education. An investment in education does not have immediate benefits to the family, and even in cases where the sons and daughters do finish secondary school, the kind of jobs they get do not necessarily improve in line with the increased investment in education.

Employment of women

In most countries in the region, women’s participation in the workforce has increased since the early 1990s at rates close to one per cent per year, especially among middle-aged women and those with a lower level of education. Participation in the labour force has always been greater among women with higher levels of education; therefore, increasing enrolment has led to higher overall numbers of women in the workforce. It is estimated that changes

in educational level account for between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of the increase in female participation in the workforce.<sup>96</sup> In general, this expansion has been driven by increased participation of women in all sectors and not only in traditionally female areas, although there continues to be a concentration in traditionally female occupations in which the pay is low. These trends suggest that increased participation is more related to the removal of constraints than to the expansion of employment in certain sectors open to women.

Female employment has increased steadily, despite fluctuations in economic activity. This pattern indicates that the



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<sup>ii</sup> Especially in rural areas or schools with high migrant populations.



main causes of the increase in female participation must be long-term factors such as better access to education, lower fertility rates and increased availability of clean drinking water. There is also an increasing adoption of electrical appliances, which save time for women which they can devote to paid work, in addition to encouraging a change in the role of women in the home.

The participation of women in the labour market is at its highest in the informal sector of the economy in most of the region. This means that women settle into occupations that generate less income, are less valued, where the use of technology is low, which require a lower educational level and which allow them to do housework and childcare while still earning money. The largest gender gaps in income are recorded in this sector.

Women are less likely to be business owners employing other workers and more likely to be self-employed, without the opportunity to expand their businesses, possibly due to the burden of domestic work and care that adversely affects the size and performance of a company.

On the other hand, women who migrate and enter the agricultural industry do so under precarious conditions, without social security and other benefits, and in occupations that require 'feminine skill', while the men become technicians and the like. This once again creates income gaps and occupational segregation. In the case of the manufacturing industry, the trend is the same. Finding out why women are joining the labour market with these characteristics requires gathering different points of view and possible explanations.



Weaver in a Peruvian market.

DANIEL SILVA

iii The qualification is not only a technical definition of the quality of work but a relationship between certain technical operations and the estimation of their social value, in that establishing the value of work corresponds to a social construction subject to conflicts and negotiations, as a process of differentiation and construction of distinctions between types of work, but also among the workers who perform these tasks.

### The options for women

The basic questions regarding the characteristics of female employment are related to the following: whether it is a matter of choice or for lack of better options; whether they have fewer opportunities in the formal environment or they forego such opportunities in search of more flexible working hours or conditions; and finally, whether employers are less likely to employ women with children or other people to care for.

According to this trend, it seems women who come to the labour market do so as a result of one of two opposing forms of logic: the logic of necessity in the case of the poorest, especially those who are least educated and are heads of household; and the logic of choice and autonomy in the case of urban women, with high levels of education and who no longer have young children. The problem is that in both cases the gender gaps remain, both in the workplace and in terms of income, suggesting that the 'choices' for women are conditioned by a host of other factors.

### The social construction of 'qualifications'

Gender inequalities at work have to do with a social process of qualification.<sup>iii</sup> The masculine/feminine distinction is the hub around which the notion of qualification is defined. From this perspective, their socialisation and training in the education system enhance and stimulate certain areas of qualification, which are assigned a lower social value. Thus, there is an appropriation of the technological sphere on the part of the males, leading to the social construction of women as technically incompetent. This has an effect on women's identity, their future employment prospects and their integration into productive processes.

The consequences of these perceptions are clearly manifested in the wage and hierarchical structures, which determine a difference between the perception of skills and qualities required and those held by people of either sex. This is the prevailing culture in companies or institutions in which both men and women work.

### Family strategies and social networks

The rural-urban migration, a widespread phenomenon in Latin America, is characterised in general because migrant families or children



Trying to make a living in Mexico.

AUBREY WADE/PANOS PICTURES

usually enter the labour market based on family strategies determined by social networks. New migrant women usually enter a process of practical apprenticeship which is very poorly paid, despite having completed primary or secondary school in their home region.

In cases where these networks have an economic base in profitable but informal businesses usually managed by women, education, in the form of university or other studies, is not a part of their expectations, since the success of these businesses is not dependent on education. This means that women leading successful businesses have not necessarily completed high school. Meanwhile, economic success does not define more equitable gender relations. By contrast, it tends to accentuate machismo and the subordination of women.<sup>iv</sup>

### Migration and signs in the labour market

In rural areas, women's earnings per hour are lower than those of men and their options for achieving maximum wages are either found in urban areas, as self-employed workers, or by staying in rural areas as wage earners.

The number of years spent in education has a relatively minor importance in explaining the average income per hour worked – that is, it makes no difference whether they have four or 11 years of schooling, or have no schooling at all. Thus the motivation of a migrant does not seem to be the hope for higher returns on the human capital, but

iv According to the signalling theory in the labour market, a person has signs and signals that are seen when looking for work; the signs are unchangeable, (sex, skin colour etc.). The signals are modifiable (e.g. education).

rather the opportunity to jump from one context to another, to move from an area where incomes are low to another where they are somewhat higher.

In urban areas, economic conditions may be somewhat better, but differences in opportunities still remain. This suggests that while the demand for education enables migration, education alone is not sufficient for access to equal opportunities. This indicates that in settings with high indigenous populations, the 'market signalling theory' seems to work.<sup>iv</sup> This is to say, that despite a person trying to improve her 'signal' through education, she cannot change her 'sign': being an indigenous person or a female. Therefore being indigenous, or being a woman with any level of education, determines that she will face adverse conditions in the urban labour market.

### Economies with low demand for human capital

In countries where a large amount of the economic activity is characterised by unskilled labour requiring little education, where the economy does not demand human capital as a raw material, and where also the labour market is segregated by gender and ethnicity, the success of girls, and especially indigenous girls, in school is unlikely to translate into better job opportunities and therefore higher future income. Policies to promote education for all must therefore be accompanied by measures in the economic sphere.

### Final thoughts

The set of factors related both to education and to the structure and dynamics of the labour market help to explain more or less accurately – given the differences between the countries of the region – why equality in education is a necessary, but not a sufficient, factor in the empowerment of women. Everything indicates that the complexity of this problem requires measures to disassemble the mechanisms and systems that act to preserve discrimination and subordination of women, and which consolidate the sexual division of labour as a structural factor within gender relations, leading to the naturalisation of inequality and hierarchies.

The sexual division of labour, in the case of Latin America, is interwoven with factors of race, ethnicity and social class, to construct a complex reality in which, on a daily basis, women feel the consequences of being female, indigenous and poor.



## 4 I have a voice

Girls need to be involved equally and freely in decision-making and policymaking so that they can take an active role in shaping the world around them. If a girl has no voice and no power, then her ability to protect her health, to be valued in her relationships, and to gain equal and decent work can easily be subverted. If girls and women cannot represent themselves, their views and concerns will be marginalised, misunderstood or silenced altogether. By engaging in decision-making, whether through formal political structures or in other civic or community spaces, girls can influence the policies and practices that are central to their well-being.

### GIRLS MAKING MEDIA – PLAN GHANA, SIERRA LEONE, TOGO AND LIBERIA

Girls Making Media is a three-year project established in 2010, which aims to strengthen the capacity of adolescent girls engaged in children's and youth organisations in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo. The project advocates against discrimination and gender-based violence by making efficient use of diverse forms of media. In addition, the project works to support the establishment of a core group of female youth speakers. At the end of the three years, the project hopes to increase girls' opportunities to access media-related jobs, to train adult female journalists in issues facing adolescent girls in West Africa, and to increase public awareness of the needs of adolescent girls in the region.

*"We learn how to find information and to bring out problems and get solutions."*

Female participant,  
Girls Making Media Project

The programme directly benefits more than 560 adolescent girls and 140 adult journalists, and indirectly reaches an audience of approximately 600,000 via national and community radio and 400,000 via national television. The project trains talented adolescent girls to enter the journalism field, to fight



gender discrimination and inequalities, and to improve the quality of reporting on adolescent girls' issues in West Africa. Even though the project is primarily focused on girls, 25 per cent of membership of the clubs formed is opened to boys. This is to ensure representation and particularly bring boys along in the fight against gender discrimination.

In 2010, Girls Making Media began with one workshop for 20 young women on media skills and gender, and has since grown to serve more than a dozen schools. The project provides digital cameras, voice recorders, a radio, a notice board and Flip cameras, as well as the opportunity to meet and interview local and national figures, with a focus on women journalists, government officials and businesswomen. The project also helps to disseminate girl-made media through community, national and international media outlets.

*"I used to walk around without seeing, but now I see everything because I am looking for news. My mind has been opened."*

Female participant,  
Girls Making Media Project

Education imparts important basic skills that enable girls to engage in the wider world. Literacy and critical reflection, for example, are skills that a good quality education should provide, and both are necessary for girls to be able to participate in decision-making and engage in politics. Girls need to be able to read, understand and critique party policies and campaign literature, to discuss and reflect on their choices, and vote. Numeracy can help girls hold government to account and demand transparency in government budgets, helping them identify where and how their needs can be better prioritised.

Beyond literacy and numeracy, education can also act as a training ground for building political skills. For example, participation in school councils builds skills in public speaking and also in organising collectively. Such skills may inspire higher levels of confidence and know-how in girls, as well as an increased willingness to defend their interests. The effect may also be seen in girls' increased negotiating power within the home, along with improved reasoning, self-esteem and articulacy.<sup>98</sup>

Similarly, in India, one study found that, regardless of caste, religion, class or political affiliation, a clear positive relationship existed between the level of education a girl had and her likelihood of voting and of running for office.<sup>99</sup> As such, it is clear that going to school actually empowers girls to engage in decision-making and leads to greater mobilisation of girls and women.<sup>100</sup>

Outside of formal education, literacy drives and civic education have been shown to contribute to an increase in women's and girls' participation in civil and political society.<sup>101</sup> For example, in Uganda in the 1980s, political awareness campaigns resulted in a marked increase in women's participation in local and national elections, as well as women joining protests and forming civil society

organisations.<sup>102</sup> In Andhra Pradesh, the Total Literacy Campaign in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in women taking direct political action against the selling of alcohol in an attempt to control men's drinking, which is strongly associated with domestic violence.<sup>103</sup>





# RIGHTS THROUGH EDUCATION

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has stated that “education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights.”<sup>104</sup> So fundamental is it to human development, that access to education may be seen as a ‘gateway’ of empowerment, expanding the full spectrum of rights. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development encouraged adolescent girls to continue with education in order to “equip them for a better life, to increase their human potential, to help prevent early marriages and high-risk child-bearing and to reduce associated mortality and morbidity”.<sup>105</sup>

Objective 6.7 (b) of the same outcome document developed this idea, calling on all states to “meet the special needs of adolescents and youth, especially young women, with due regard for their own creative capabilities, for social, family and community support, employment opportunities, participation in the political process, and access to education, health, counselling and high quality reproductive health services”.<sup>106</sup>

At the 2011 Gender Policy Forum international conference on adolescent girls’ access to education, the keynote speaker emphasised that “gender equality in teaching and learning and gender equality in leadership and management are complementary”, saying that girls will only become future leaders if they are able to pass through an education system that fosters their development equally alongside boys.<sup>107</sup>

Norway’s Agency for Development Cooperation has established a programme which makes local communities more aware of the importance of allowing girls to receive an education, and to encourage them to become teachers – thus becoming role models for younger girls still at school.<sup>108</sup>

Female representation in education does not always necessarily lead to equal representation in the wider job market. In Mongolia it was recently noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education that the representation of women in the education system is “in contradiction with the lack of participation by women in the public affairs of the country”.<sup>109</sup>

Young women continue to find it difficult to access certain job markets which have

traditionally been male-dominated. An OECD report from 2011 stated that boys are still more likely to end up in computing or engineering industries, suggesting a need for school-level campaigns attracting girls to these areas, combined with supportive employment and family policies.<sup>110</sup>

The Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation has instigated a new project to improve the job prospects of 900 new female graduates, providing employability skills training and job vouchers to encourage firms to hire new female graduates and help overcome gender stereotypes.<sup>111</sup>

It is often difficult to challenge gender stereotypes regarding separation of work. UNESCO recently acknowledged that progress towards gender equity in labour markets has been much slower than in school systems.<sup>112</sup> In South Sudan, a new programme is currently being run to provide safe spaces for young women to socialise and seek jobs training. The vocational training focuses on non-traditional job roles for women in South Sudan, such as carpentry, joinery, welding and brick making.<sup>113</sup>

In Norway, a quota system to encourage more women to further a career in politics has been so successful that it has now been scrapped. Such quotas are divisive, but they have also proved to function as ‘incubators’ for encouraging women to participate. In Rwanda, a post-genocide change to the Constitution in 2003 set a quota for 30 per cent of the parliament to be made up of women. That number climbed to 56 per cent in the last elections in 2008, the highest percentage in the world.<sup>114</sup> A parliamentary women’s caucus in Rwanda (FFRP) has also led a “successful effort to pass ground-breaking legislation on gender-based violence in part by involving and garnering support from their male colleagues”.<sup>115</sup>

Young women still face the prospect of ‘glass ceilings’ in many industries and in many countries. In Kenya, whilst a new constitution has established that no more than two-thirds of any leadership/management positions can be of one gender, and despite high levels of female teachers, there are still very few female headteachers.<sup>116</sup>



JIRO OSE



MARK HENLEY/PANOS PICTURES

However, the presence of women in power may still contribute to a better understanding of gender equality and genuine democracy, regardless of the policies of the governments they are part of.

Sansad Bhavan (Parliament House, India).

## Speaking out

While the link between education and holding political office is not direct, the link between girls’ education and their participation in civic life and in advocacy for community improvements is stronger. In some parts of India, for example, the quality of health services improved as girls’ education levels increased, due to girls and women making informed demands and putting pressure on local services.<sup>124</sup> Educated women and girls in Bangladesh are three times more likely to participate in political meetings than are girls and women who are illiterate or less educated.<sup>125</sup>

## WITH HEADS HELD HIGH – TUSEME<sup>126</sup>

Tuseme is the Swahili word for ‘let us speak out’. The Federation of Women Educationalists (FAWE) named its programme Tuseme as it aims to foster in girls the courage and skills to speak out in the face of oppression and a tradition of female silence in most of Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>127</sup>

Since 1996, Tuseme has worked through a partnership between the Department of Fine and Performing Arts of the University of Dar es Salaam and

## Holding public office

According to global data there is, at best, a tenuous link between girls’ secondary education rates and proportions of women in national legislatures.<sup>117</sup> Country by country, there is a wide variation.<sup>118</sup> In some places, educated, affluent girls show indifference to politics or display a high degree of cynicism as to the effectiveness of any kind of political engagement.<sup>119</sup> In the South Indian state of Kerala, for example, despite high levels of girls’ education, there is a ‘gender paradox’, whereby girls have high social status but the women’s movement is weak and few women serve in political office.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, in the USA, girls outnumber boys in higher education but women have persistently low representation in politics.<sup>121</sup>

By contrast, Uganda, Rwanda and Mozambique, amongst the poorest countries in the world and with much lower levels of girls’ education and women’s literacy, each have between 25 and 30 per cent representation of women in parliament. This high level of representation is due in part to quotas (Rwanda) and may also be due in part to high levels of women’s activism and mobilisation in these countries. That said, there is as yet little evidence that more women in political power translates into better policies for women and girls in general. It is as important to ask what is being represented and how it is represented, as who is representing it.<sup>122</sup>

*“Women have got four representatives in parliament – feminism none.”*

Gyrithe Lemche, a leader of the suffrage campaign in Denmark in 1918<sup>123</sup>



FAWE

Tuseme campaigners at work.



FAWE to encourage girls' participation in secondary schools through this methodology of empowerment. Using drama, the project helps girls and boys work together to analyse constraints to girls' achievement and participation in secondary school. It also helps them find ways to discuss these issues with their parents and other elders in their community and work towards girl-led solutions.

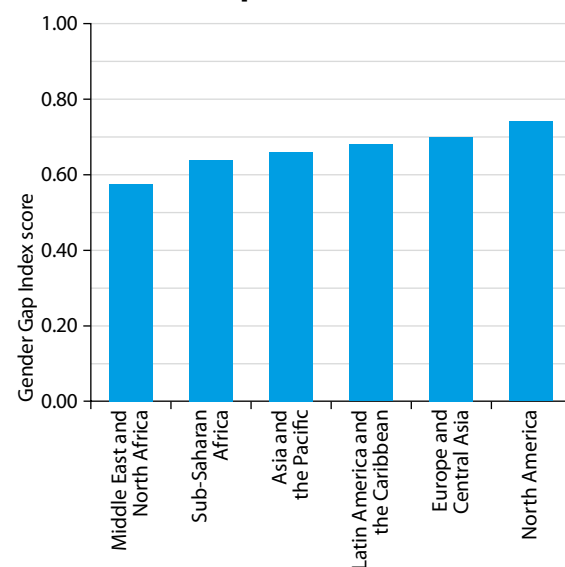
By the end of 2006, more than 70 schools in Tanzania had adopted the programme. These schools saw improvements in girls' performance in exams, greater teacher commitment, a reduction in drop-out due to pregnancy, and changes in attitude among teachers and parents. The government of Tanzania picked up the programme with the aim of rolling it out across all secondary schools by 2009, and FAWE has tested the approach in other countries in the region.

The Tuseme programme has helped to empower girls to say "No" and free them from harmful cultural practices that hinder their education and impede their economic development. The girls no longer have to walk with their heads down or dig the ground with their toes as they talk to men. With its variety of activities, among which is theatre for development, Tuseme is an effective tool for empowering girls to 'speak out'.

The impact of education can extend beyond the girls who actually get the education. What these girls go on to do, what they achieve, and the example they set, could change attitudes about the roles of women and girls in society over time.<sup>128</sup> As girls become more educated and enter the workforce, families and social structures can become reconfigured and gender roles may shift.<sup>129</sup>

That said, there is nowhere in the world today where women are equal to men. Four categories of empowerment have been identified by the World Economic Forum. These are: equality in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. But in not one country do

## Regional Performance on the Global Gender Gap Index 2011<sup>130</sup>



women's achievements match or exceed men's.<sup>131</sup>

This means that whenever and wherever girls and women strive for the same treatment and access as boys and men, they are still held back, paid less, or not heard. This is despite the fact that "smaller gender gaps are directly correlated with increased economic competitiveness."<sup>132</sup>

*IT lesson in Colombia.*



JOSE LUIS GÓMEZ

## Education = Empowerment?

So education is not the magic bullet: it cannot entirely compensate for or cancel out the other forces in society that work against a girl's ability to take more control over her life. As this chapter has shown, a number of other measures are needed to provide the enabling environment in which adolescent girls can transition to a flourishing adult life, with agency and choice.

That is not to say that education does not have a vital role to play. There is a stark difference between a girl entering the adult world with poor skills and low confidence (or even worse, with a host of bad experiences already behind her), and entering it equipped to deal with these inequalities and injustices. The education with which a girl leaves school is the foundation she stands on for the rest of her life.

There is an important distinction between the actual skills that adolescent girls leave school with, and the other ways in which their education can open up choices. Literacy is crucial for all areas in which girls need to be able to make choices. Other skills, such as confidence with new technologies, are also important building blocks for empowerment in adulthood in the world today.

Beyond imparting skills, education can make an even more crucial contribution. The transformative content of education is paramount. Without it, any other skills a girl gains may simply help her to fit successfully into existing, unequal structures. For too long, success in girls' education, and even the value of educated girls, has been measured in terms of gains for societies and families, such as reduced fertility, improved child health and increases in GDP. These findings have contributed to a number of important policy advances in support of girls.

But governments and policymakers must now turn to the challenge of monitoring what education delivers for girls themselves in the long term. MDG 3 puts gender equality at the heart of international policy.

It is an ambitious goal that has to be tackled at all levels of society and will mean far-reaching changes in the world in which we live. How can we measure the status



ELIAS ASMARE

of girls and women within their families and communities to monitor real gender equality? How can levels of gender-based violence be reduced and the equality of decision-making at home and at work be increased? How can we make sure that women are paid equally and girls equipped to play an equal role in society? Education of both girls and boys is key. Equality of opportunity at school, providing a good quality education and making sure that girls can benefit from it, is crucial. Education alone may not be sufficient to transform the society we live in but transformation can never be achieved without it. By caring about how education can contribute to girls' increased agency, educators and governments and girls themselves can find ways to design an education that truly supports girls to live freer and more fulfilling lives, and transforms the world around them.

*"We can change the world if we get together and force the issue to the top of the agenda. The true promise of equality for women is a promise of a better society."*

Cherie Blair

*"I am the only one in my family who attended university. I am a role model in my family and my community, and I always try to encourage the girls of my village to strive for the best, despite the poverty that seems to be a barrier to their dreams."*

Firehiwot Yemane, 24, Ethiopia<sup>133</sup>





# Translating ambition into action

# 5

Over the past 20 years, countries have invested heavily in increasing girls' access to school, but as many as 39 million 11-15 year-old girls are still missing out on an education. The reasons why are complex and found in the intersecting barriers of poverty and discrimination. Further analysis and better data is needed, as is a focus on quality which goes beyond access.

As this report has shown, the global development goals that shape national data collection on education are masking large disparities. Enrolment data inadequately captures attendance, ignoring the experience of girls who can't make it to school on a daily basis due to cost, distance, domestic chores or lack of support. In addition, the simple focus on numbers of children in school, and the resulting influx of students into inadequate, understaffed and under-resourced schools, has created a crisis of learning. Children are leaving primary school unable to read a simple sentence.

This poor quality education is not only hampering girls' chances of moving successfully into an empowered adulthood, it also threatens to undermine the ability of education to deliver the kinds of development progress the world expects. The fact that many girls leave school unable

to read and write a simple sentence also makes it harder for poor parents to continue making an investment in their education when the return seems uncertain.

However, education is still the best-known route towards empowerment and offers girls across the globe their best chance of breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Education has the potential to transform society and promote broader gender equality goals.

The post-MDG agenda will seek to build on the recent achievements in primary education enrolment. The natural focus for the future is ensuring universal access to, and gender equality in, secondary education. However, it is not enough to concentrate only on numbers of girls in school; a critical look at the quality of what and how they are learning, and if it promotes girls' empowerment, should be essential components in any future global development framework.

In the following sections we make recommendations to the education sector, working at international, national and local levels, supported by the private sector where appropriate, which could both transform the experiences of adolescent girls at school and the effectiveness of investments in the sector as a whole.



# Action plan

- 1 Ensure any post-MDG framework, maintain a strong priority on Education, but broaden our ambition to include the successful completion of at least nine years of quality education, with an intentional emphasis on gender equality.
- 2 Commit to undertake a gender review of government Education Sector Plans and support action to address the identified gaps.
- 3 Expand funding mechanisms to support quality education for girls.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

The global community, including UN member states, UN bodies, multilaterals and donors must:

**Ensure any post-MDG framework maintains a strong priority on Education as a goal that clearly:**

- takes an equity approach and includes gender-equality indicators, both quantitative and qualitative;
- redefines basic education to include post-primary;
- emphasises quality of learning in addition to enrolment and access.

**Rationale:** As the world considers a new generation of development goals, education must remain central to our approach, but we must also broaden the scope of our ambition to see that more girls not only go to primary school, but make the transition to secondary school and complete a quality education. An equity approach that reaches the most marginalised, especially girls, is critical at this time if we are to ensure real universal access to education. It is the successful completion of at least nine years of *quality* education that is the key to unlocking a girl's potential, moving her from a life of poverty to one of opportunity. As numerous studies have shown, an educated girl can help transform the world around her, and play a key role in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

**PROMISING PRACTICE**

Making the first nine years of education, primary and lower secondary, available in one single location has the potential to reduce costs for both parents and the education sector and to increase accessibility.

**Rwanda Education Sector Plan (2010-15)**

As part of the fast-tracking of the Nine-Year Basic Education (9YBE) programme, some primary schools have been transformed into nine-year schools ('groupes scolaires') offering the full nine years of basic education (six years of primary and three years of lower secondary), while others are formal lower secondary schools ('écoles secondaires inférieures') integrated into 9YBE. The latest Education Sector Plan (ESP) specifies that the post-basic education (PBE) system should be better tailored to meet labour-market needs through encouraging greater private enterprise involvement in post-basic education, including upper secondary and teacher education, expansion and strengthening of Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET), expansion of a sustainable student loans system targeting disadvantaged students enrolled in priority studies, and the introduction of open, distance and e-learning.

Rwandan school-children.



## RECOMMENDATION 2

Ministries of education should:

**Commit to undertake a gender review of their government's Education Sector Plans in order to ensure that all girls successfully complete at least nine years of quality education. The review should assess plans against girl-friendly criteria (see 'girl-friendly school scorecard') such as: accessibility, accountability, participatory school governance, safety and protection measures, gender-sensitive curriculum, and well-supported and qualified staff.**

**PROMISING PRACTICE**

**Girls' Education Initiative ('Girl-friendly Schools'), Egypt<sup>1</sup>**

The programme, implemented through the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in collaboration with seven regional NGOs, has already opened 1,063 schools and enrolled 27,784 students, 75 per cent of whom were girls, in 2005. The programme has recently expanded and aims to build over 1,000 more 'girl-friendly' schools. These schools must adhere to a list of criteria, both in terms of structure (proximity to the community, safe playgrounds etc.), teaching practices, and involvement of the local community through 'Education Committees'. The Girls' Education Initiative found that involving parents and other 'natural community leaders' (such as religious leaders) in school government structures has a strong positive effect on girls' educational attainment. An evaluation<sup>2</sup> found that education committees played a critical role in following up on girls who are missing school – "often when they enter into puberty" – in many cases convincing parents that their daughters should keep on attending school.

# Girl-Friendly School Scorecard

- A. Accessible to all girls, especially the most marginalised
  - affordable
  - physically accessible
  - inclusive
  - socially and culturally acceptable
- B. Accountable to all girls, school governance
  - involves girl students, their families and their communities in school management
  - governance systems are in place to support girls with extended absence or drop-outs
  - school has explicit commitment to promoting girls' education in the school charter
- C. Supports the learning and success of all girls
  - provision of school materials
  - ICT and vocational training
  - mentors and peer support
- D. Is a safe place for all girls
  - clear policy to prevent and respond to violence against girls perpetrated by staff or students, including all forms of sexual coercion
  - appropriate systems of reporting
  - separate toilets for girls
  - a female staff member assigned as counsellor
- E. Curriculum and policy is free from discrimination and stereotyping
  - school materials promote gender equality
  - comprehensive sexual and reproductive health is a core part of the curricula
  - girls and boys have equal access to all school provisions and equal support from staff
  - girls and boys are equally encouraged to participate in class
- F. Have motivated staff that support all girls
  - at least 40 per-cent female staff
  - gender-equality training to all teachers
  - teacher:pupil ratio is fixed at 1:40



1. Ensure the Education Sector Plan is updated with specific actions to address the issues identified by the gender review.

**Rationale:** Reviewing the education sector plan will identify clear areas of action to support girls' education. Addressing those gaps will allow the ministries of education, school boards and parents to identify, and communities to come together to support, the successful completion of a quality education for girls.

2. Identify and scale up best practices that allow for the easy transition of girls from non-formal to formal education.

**Rationale:** In many countries, civil society organisations have been leading innovative non-formal education interventions to support girls who have dropped out of the formal school system. Governments should engage with organisations working in this area to identify the most effective practices and support the scaling up of those initiatives which aim to transition girls back into formal schooling where possible. Ensuring adolescent girls have opportunities to stay involved in learning and education is a vital strategy to increase the numbers of girls accessing and staying in secondary education.

#### PROMISING PRACTICE

##### The Diphilana Initiative (Botswana)

The Initiative aims to reintegrate girls who have become pregnant early and dropped out of school, back into the formal education system. Girls are required to come back to school as soon as they give birth, though during a period of maternity leave their school work is sent to their homes and schools. The initiative has developed a distance education curriculum to suit the needs of girls who cannot attend formal education. When a doctor certifies that they are fit to come back to the school they do so with their babies; and if the father of the baby is in school he is also required to have time with the baby at lunches and break time. At Pekelele school they have provided a crèche that takes children as young as four months.

3. Increase the number and quality of teachers, with a particular focus on female teachers. Measures should include:

- Incentives or additional support to attract and retain female teachers, particularly at senior levels within schools;
- Quality training for all teachers and school administrators including on children's rights, positive discipline methods and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education;
- Raising the social standing of the teaching profession within communities;
- Promote female teacher career progression;
- Adequate pay and conditions for teachers, including housing.

**Rationale:** staffing school with well-trained female teachers is a direct and effective way of increasing girls' attendance, retention, learning and safety. Female teachers increase the confidence of parents in sending their daughters to school, especially at the stage of adolescence. Evidence shows that employing female teachers leads to increased enrolment of girls and that female teachers provide girls with much-needed role models, that can help promote overall goals of gender equality. (See Promising practice: Secondary School Assistance Programme in Bangladesh on page 126.)



Teaching in Togo.

4. To support the Ministry of Education, national governments should:

**Strengthen national gender equality institutions' capacity to support, monitor and report on their dedicated policy framework, legislation and spending on girls' rights.**

**Rationale:** by supporting gender equality offices, focal points and officers, governments can strengthen both the effectiveness of their national level policies on girls' education and also increase political commitment to gender equality at the highest levels.

#### PROMISING PRACTICE

Promoting gender equality and advancing girls' education go hand in hand. Political commitments to redress entrenched discrimination which leaves half the population disenfranchised have to be backed up with effective policy and legislative measures. These include establishing national level gender equality offices and ministerial level focal points.

##### South Africa Gender Equality Machinery<sup>3</sup>

South Africa has a strong policy framework for gender equality in education, with policies founded on commitments to equity and human rights in education. Though progress on girls' education has been mixed, there is little doubt that the Gender Equality Machinery and Gender Equality Policies are one of the most comprehensive in the region. A Gender Equity Directorate (GED) was set up in 2000 in the national Department of Education. The gender focal persons from the nine provincial education departments and the national GED meet quarterly as an inter-provincial group to discuss the work of all units. The national GED has a responsibility to monitor the system and its performance while coordinating activities and policy development across the system. The process of creating an effective gender machinery has resulted in the setting up of a new Ministry for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities after the 2009 elections.

\* This is the average national budget expenditure of low-income countries on education.



#### RECOMMENDATION 3

1. To improve funding mechanisms to support quality education for girls.

**National governments should:**

- Allocate at least 11.4 per cent\* of the National Budget to education, with an emphasis on adequate funding for lower secondary education;
- Protect national education budgets from austerity measures, recognising that education underpins economic growth;
- Review current budget allocation to fill funding gaps identified by the gender review of Education Sector Plans;
- Fund nine years of compulsory free education for all and progressively eliminate other cost barriers to girls;
- Better manage resources allocated to education and ensure transparency, accountability and zero tolerance of corruption;
- Strengthen the tax base at all levels to fund increases in the education budget.

**Rationale:** Governments which wish to emerge from the current economic crisis with a strong and productive workforce cannot afford to cut spending on education. It is through increased and targeted spending that governments can ensure that girls and boys who are entering the classroom today will transition into decent work which will boost economic growth and reduce national debt over the long term. This is particularly critical for girls, who will pass on the benefits of their education to their future children and their communities.

Technology lesson in Cape Town.





G. M. B. AKASH

*Walking to school in Bangladesh.*

## PROMISING PRACTICE

### Female Secondary School Assistance Programme in Bangladesh<sup>4</sup>

A review of the education sector plan in Bangladesh, coupled with large donor support, led to the establishment of a successful national stipend programme, which dramatically increased girls' school enrolment.

In 1993 the government-supported Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Programme (FSSAP) was launched, aiming to improve access and enrolment to secondary school for girls by providing tuition stipends. It also tackled issues of quality education through teacher training, provision of performance incentives to schools and students, and water and sanitation facilities. The project covered 121 of Bangladesh's 507 sub-districts. The result was that girls' enrolment in secondary schools in Bangladesh jumped to 3.9 million in 2005, from 1.1 million in 1991, including an increasing number of girls from disadvantaged or remote areas. In addition, the initiative stipulated a gradual introduction of female teachers at secondary education level, with the aim of recruiting 30 per cent more female teachers nationally.<sup>5</sup> This initiative has enabled Bangladesh to achieve one of its Millennium Development Goals ahead of time – gender parity in education.

\* The OECD/DAC code for secondary education should be split into lower secondary and upper secondary education to be able to monitor this.

## PROMISING PRACTICE

### Costa Rica<sup>6</sup>

Increased funding leads to increased attendance and completion rates of school. For girls, who are the least likely to feel the effects of national-level and donor-led expenditure on education, an overall increase in spending commitments means a greater chance of reaching those who need education the most.

Costa Rica's free and compulsory education for both girls and boys at primary level has been guaranteed by the Constitution for decades, and this has also been extended to secondary education, which is now free and compulsory. Since the 1970s the Government has invested nearly 30 per cent of the national budget on primary and secondary education. The country boasts a 93 per cent literacy rate for those aged 10 years or over: the most literate population in Central America.

## 2. Donor governments should:

- Increase aid to lower secondary education\* and ensure that all aid to education puts emphasis on improving the possibilities for girls to finish lower secondary school;
- Increase the share of predictable aid going to pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education to match partner countries' investment, which stands at an average of 11.4 per cent of their national budgets;
- Channel more funding through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as a way of aligning aid efforts, and work to make sure the GPE strengthens their monitoring of gender equality standards and civil society participation;
- Adopt innovative financing mechanisms<sup>7</sup> to increase revenue to support girls' education;
- Ensure country ownership by supporting national education plans and promoting an enabling environment for civil society participation, including organisations that promote girls' and women's rights, in line with the Paris Principles.<sup>8</sup>

**Rationale:** Donors can play an important part in ensuring girls enjoy a good quality education through funding mechanisms and capacity building (including direct support for civil society organisations), and by raising the profile of girls' education, especially where there is lack of political will at the national level.

## PROMISING PRACTICE

### Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) in Tanzania<sup>9</sup>

Gender-responsive budgeting is an excellent tool for engaging non-traditional actors (especially Ministries of Finance and central banks), influencing fiscal policies, promoting accountability and supporting civil society women's organisations. Gender budgeting allows women's organisations to shift the question from "Why is my slice of the pie so small?" to "Why is this whole pie so small?" This process allows women's organisations, together with national level ministries and offices, to influence macro-economic processes that have a real impact on where and how money is allocated, and whether it reaches those who are usually left off the policy agenda – girls.

The Gender Budgeting Initiative in Tanzania began in 1997 as an NGO lobbying initiative developed as part of TGNP's Feminist Activism Coalition (Fem Act) vision of influencing policymakers, economists, statisticians and researchers to adopt more progressive gender approaches. A number of campaigns were established with the aim of 'popularising' gender budgeting called 'Return Resources to the People', linking together issues of HIV/AIDS, water, education and maternal mortality. Open street meetings were held in various towns and cities where people were invited to hear in simple terms about the gender-responsive budgeting work being undertaken and take action in support of this process. A UN level assessment<sup>10</sup> found that TGNP succeeded on a number of fronts. In the water sector, the allocation increased from three to six per cent of the national budget – households with low incomes now have access, at no cost, to 80 buckets of water thus reducing the time

burden on girls. The allocation to the health sector increased to 15 per cent of the national budget. TGNP engaged with the Ministry of Planning to produce a more gender-sensitive social accounting matrix which led the government to include a time-use analysis in domestic surveys which recognises the cost of unpaid (domestic and care) labour.

## 3. The private sector and business community should:

- Fund and increase in-kind support to programmes which aim to make skills training more relevant to adolescent girls, inside and outside formal education, and empowers them to build the competence and skills needed to move into adult life;
- Harness business expertise to develop low-cost and accessible technology which meets the needs of girls and improves learning opportunities in low-resource environments;
- Engage in multi-sectoral policy dialogues to jointly support the importance of girls completing at least nine years of quality education;
- Increase philanthropic support which aligns with national education plans, in coordination with governments, donors and civil society, with a focus on ensuring girls achieve at least nine years of quality education.



AFM SHAMSUZZAMAN

*Skills training in Bangladesh.*



**Rationale:** The private sector and business community have an important role to play in development, one that is increasingly recognised by multilateral agencies, donors, governments and civil society. Investment in quality education is of strategic importance to the private sector, with a number of private sector actors increasingly paying attention to quality and improved learning outcomes.

When compared to other sectors such as healthcare, however, the private sector, the business community and philanthropists have yet to play a pronounced catalytic role in education. A step change in private-sector funding and advocacy will be crucial to achieve improved outcomes in quality education for girls and boys.

Beyond funding and advocacy, the private sector and business community are also critical to the development of technological solutions which could improve learning environments, as well as in contributing technical expertise for the improvement of formal and non-formal education. These contributions ensure that education is relevant and provides girls with the necessary skills to enter the labour market and into decent work. Information and communication technologies (ICTs), for example, can transform not only teaching methods, by empowering teachers, but also energise the wider learning process through innovation.

**PROMISING PRACTICE**  
**SMS for Literacy in Pakistan\***  
In 2009 Mobilink, Pakistan’s biggest mobile service provider, partnered with UNESCO to deliver a pilot basic education project in Southern Punjab province. The project was designed to improve female adolescent literacy rates, increase literacy retention amongst adolescent girls and motivate them. Each of the girls was given a low-cost mobile phone with pre-paid connection, and trained teachers would send up to six messages per day on a variety of topics to test their literacy abilities. The girls were required to practise copying messages and practise



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reading them out loud. The girls would then respond to the teachers via SMS, and the teachers would conduct monthly assessments of the girls’ learning gains. An evaluation of the project found that it had contributed greatly both to increasing literacy levels and technological fluency. A formal literacy exam showed an 80 per cent improvement with more than 60 per cent of girls scoring an ‘A’, compared with only 28 per cent of girls who scored the grade before the project began.

Conclusion

Drawing on the evidence in this report, and the clear steps outlined in this chapter, decision-makers and duty bearers at all levels can take action today to ensure girls enjoy at least nine years of quality education. The returns on investing in girls’ education have already been well documented. Yet progress on ensuring girls access their educational rights is slow. This chapter has provided a blueprint for delivering better outcomes for girls and for ensuring the education sector doesn’t suffer cutbacks due to the global financial downturn. Now is the time for increased focus and investment in girls’ education and girls’ empowerment – as a key strategy for poverty alleviation and delivering economic benefits.

\* For a more detailed account of this project, see page Section 3, page 162 of this report.

Girls’ education in the arena of international policy

International Human Rights Instruments	International Intergovernmental Declarations and Programmes of Action
<p><b>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989)</b></p> <p><b>Article 28:</b> affirms the right of the child to education and, when read together with Article 2, forcefully addresses discrimination in children’s access to education. Article 28 defines that all state parties are obligated to establish educational systems and ensure access to them. In the context of education it is important to remember and understand that it is children’s right to enjoy their human rights both in school and outside. Education must also be provided in a way that respects the strict limits on discipline reflected in Article 28 (2), and promotes non-violence in school.</p> <p><b>Article 29 (1):</b> “...underlines the individual and subjective right to a specific quality of education”. Compliance with the values recognised in Article 29 (1) requires that schools be child-friendly in the fullest sense of the term, and that they be consistent in all respects with the dignity of the child.</p> <p>Also 29 (1d) describes gender equality by referring to “the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin”.</p> <p><b>Article 2:</b> “1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.”</p> <p>Additional articles relevant to education are those dealing with child labour (Article 32), criminal responsibility (Article 40) and harmful traditional practices (Article 24).</p> <p>In addition, The Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General comment No. 1 (2001) on <i>The aims of education</i> CRC/GC/2001/1 paragraph 10 states that: “gender discrimination can be reinforced by practices such as a curriculum which is inconsistent with the principles of gender equality, by arrangements which limit the benefits girls can obtain from the educational opportunities offered, and by unsafe or unfriendly environments which discourage girls’ participation. [...] All such discriminatory practices are in direct contradiction with the requirements in Article 29 (1) (a).”</p> <p>Also important to note, The Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General comment No 13 (2011) on <i>The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence</i>, CRC/C/GC/13 which addresses the issue of violence in schools and its gender component.</p>	<p><b>Beijing Declaration</b></p> <p><b>Education and Training of Women:</b></p> <p>Strategic objective B1: Ensure equal access to education</p> <p>Strategic objective B2: Eradicate illiteracy among women</p> <p>Strategic objective B3: Improve women’s access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education</p> <p>Strategic objective B4: Develop non-discriminatory education and training</p> <p>Strategic objective B5: Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms</p> <p>Strategic objective B6: Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women</p>



Girls’ education in the arena of international policy

International Human Rights Instruments	International Intergovernmental Declarations and Programmes of Action
<p><b>Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979)</b></p> <p><b>Article 10</b> obliges states to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education, and in particular, on the basis of equality of men and women...”</p> <p>Also important to note, CEDAW General Recommendation 19, A/47/38 on violence against women.</p>	<p><b>Dakar Education for All (EFA) Platform for Action (2000)</b></p> <p>Six internationally agreed education goals aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.</p> <p><b>Goal 1</b> Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.</p> <p><b>Goal 2</b> Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.</p> <p><b>Goal 3</b> Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.</p> <p><b>Goal 4</b> Achieving a 50 per-cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.</p> <p><b>Goal 5</b> Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.</p> <p><b>Goal 6</b> Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.</p>

Girls’ education in the arena of international policy

International Human Rights Instruments	International Intergovernmental Declarations and Programmes of Action
<p><b>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)</b></p> <p><b>Article 24</b></p> <p>1. States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education...</p> <p>2. In realising this right, States Parties shall ensure that:</p> <p>(a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;</p> <p>(b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;</p> <p>(c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;</p> <p>(d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;</p> <p>(e) Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.</p> <p>3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:</p> <p>(a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;</p> <p>(b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;</p> <p>(c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development.</p> <p>4. In order to help ensure the realisation of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.</p> <p>5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Also of importance – Article 5 on equality under the law and Article 7 on rights of expression.</p>	<p><b>Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000)</b></p> <p><b>Goal 2</b> Achieve universal primary education</p> <p>Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</p> <p><b>Goal 3</b> Promote gender equality and empower women</p> <p>Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>

Girls’ education in the arena of international policy

International Human Rights Instruments	International Intergovernmental Declarations and Programmes of Action
<p><b>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 1976</b></p> <p><b>Article 13</b></p> <p>1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.</p> <p>2. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise that, with a view to achieving the full realisation of this right:</p> <p>(a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all;</p> <p>(b) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;</p> <p>(c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;</p> <p>(d) Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education;</p> <p>(e) The development of a system of schools at all levels shall be actively pursued, an adequate fellowship system shall be established, and the material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved.</p> <p>3. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.</p> <p>4. No part of this article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of this article and to the requirement that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.</p> <p>Also, important to note – ICESCR Plan of Action for Primary Education under Article 14 (E/C.12/1999/4) and ICESCR General Comment No. 13 (1999) on the Right to Education (Art.13).</p>	<p><b>Global Partnership for Education</b></p> <p>Established in 2002, the Global Partnership for Education is comprised of 46 developing countries, and over 30 bilateral, regional, and international agencies, development banks, the private sector, teachers, and local and global civil society groups.</p> <p>The Global Partnership for Education's strategy will achieve three objectives:</p> <p><b>1. Increase support for fragile states</b> Why is it essential? Over 40 per cent of the 67 million out-of-school children currently live in conflict-affected or fragile states and are at higher risk of being marginalised.</p> <p><b>2. Improve learning outcomes and quality education</b> Why is it essential? 200 million children are currently in school but are learning very little.</p> <p><b>3. Support girls’ education</b> Why is it essential? Millions of girls are still out of school and their completion rates and learning levels remain low; their participation in upper secondary school, critical to reducing birth rates and improving child and maternal mortality, is low.</p> <p>1. Increase gender parity and enrolment overall;</p> <p>2. Provide strong incentives, technical and financial support to developing country partners, to include gender strategies in their education plans;</p> <p>3. Support the enrolment of out-of-school girls into primary school;</p> <p>4. Ensure that girls make the crucial transition to and through secondary school.</p>

Girls’ education in the arena of international policy

International Human Rights Instruments	International Intergovernmental Declarations and Programmes of Action
<p><b>Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948)</b></p> <p><b>Article 26</b></p> <p>1 Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.</p> <p>2 Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.</p> <p>3 Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.</p> <hr/> <p><b>International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) (1990)</b></p> <p><b>Article 30</b></p> <p>Each child of a migrant worker shall have the basic right of access to education on the basis of equality of treatment with nationals of the State concerned. Access to public pre-school educational institutions or schools shall not be refused or limited by reason of the irregular situation with respect to stay or employment of either parent or by reason of the irregularity of the child's stay in the State of employment.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)</b></p> <p><b>Article 14</b></p> <p>1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.</p> <p>2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.</p> <p>3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.</p>	<p><b>United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative's Dakar Declaration (2010)</b></p> <p>Despite the progress that has been made, poor quality of education, extreme poverty, structural inequality and violence against girls continue to jeopardise the achievement of the education- and gender-related Education for All and Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Powerless and poor girls make up the most disadvantaged group in education. Achieving equity in education will entail putting in place a rights-based empowerment framework that will target the most vulnerable and transform power hierarchies in learning spaces, communities and policy structures in order to give poor and vulnerable girls a voice and ensure that their right to quality education is sustained.</p> <p>Gender equity is at the centre of transformative, quality education. Attention to the physical, social and academic aspects of multiple learning environments is necessary to enhance opportunities, especially for adolescent girls, and to move beyond basic education. Recognition of teachers as professionals, supported by gender-responsive curricula, is likewise key to ensuring gender equality.</p> <p>Because poverty is both structural and multidimensional and has differential impacts on girls and women, interventions for girls’ education must cover multiple sectors. Education policies, strategies, plans and budgets must all be gender-responsive.</p> <p>Gender-based violence remains an obstacle to the full achievement of girls’ rights to education. We call for effective strategies and for enforcement of legislation and policies to ensure safe and secure learning environments for girls. Protective and innovative learning opportunities must also be created for children and young women affected by HIV and AIDS and for those in armed conflict and emergency situations.</p> <p>We envision a world in which a special initiative for girls’ education is no longer needed – a world in which all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realise their full potential and contribute to transforming their societies, so that gender equality becomes a reality.</p>



# Because We are Girls

'Real Choices, Real Lives'  
cohort study update



*Sipa with her mother and brother.*



# Everything will be different in her life: can the changing attitudes of a generation of mothers help to transform girls' lives?

*"This new generation has a chance to access education. I always advise them to study hard."*

Hean, Sipha's mother, Cambodia

This year, the girls taking part in Plan's cohort study will reach the age of six – quite a milestone in their lives. Most of them are now attending school, so this is the year when influences outside the home start to have a bigger impact on their lives. They will meet a wider range of people and although their mothers will remain the key influences and role models, teachers, friends and older children will also become increasingly important to them.

At home, it is the women of the family with whom the girls spend their time; they are already mimicking female household work while they play and some, even at six, are being set household tasks clearly defined by gender. Chhea from Cambodia wants to be a teacher, but also told us, *"I like to wash dishes as well and help my mother to collect firewood"*.

This year we will consider how the life histories, attitudes and actions of the girls' mothers have influenced the girls' upbringing and daily lives so far, and how their mothers' past experiences will shape their daughters' futures.

We have conducted in-depth interviews with the girls' mothers, taking them on the journey from their own childhood, through the life changes and critical decisions made during adolescence, to their lives today as mothers. Last year we spoke with almost 100 of the girls' fathers. The differences



between these two sets of interviews are illuminating, particularly in terms of the men's experiences of adolescence. This is when life's opportunities seem to open up for boys and where they close down for girls.

We will focus on four critical areas in this report:

- the early life of the girls' mothers;
- the impact of adolescence on their hopes and dreams;
- the attitudes to gender roles in their homes now;
- their ambitions for their own daughters.

We will also look at the impact of wider societal change in their lifetime.

## REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES UPDATE

Now in its sixth year, the 'Real Choices, Real Lives' study follows 142 girls living in nine countries around the world – Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Philippines, Togo, Uganda and Vietnam. The study aims to achieve a better understanding of young girls' lives through in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with their relatives and others who live around them.

The majority of the girls taking part in the study are now either attending a pre-school facility or are at primary school. A small number of girls are still not enrolled in school, their parents citing distance to school and the girls' poor health as reasons for this.

Generally, parents continue to express pride in their girls' progress in school. At the same time, they are becoming increasingly vocal about the quality of education their daughters receive. Several parents repeatedly asserted that they would send their daughters to better schools if they could afford to do so or if it were safe for the girls to travel on their own to a better school further from home.

Many of the girls have had minor illnesses in the past year, requiring no more than a visit to a local health centre or pharmacy for treatment. As we have reported in previous years, the girls in three countries – Benin, Togo and Uganda – continue to suffer regularly from malaria. In these countries, parents talk about the ongoing expense of taking their daughters to health centres and hospitals for medical treatment as a major constraint on their family finances.

Many of the families taking part in the study have reported that the cost of living has risen over the past year, and many have had to cover additional medical costs. For most, the greater part of their income is spent on food. But for many, raising a young family also means having to cover some of the costs of sending their children to school.

The mothers' determination to send their daughters to school is obvious, as is their acknowledgement that girls and women still face many challenges. Josephine, Charnel's mother in Benin, talks about how "poverty and misery" have been the most influential experiences of her own life so far. She had no formal education herself, but she is determined that all five of her children do well. She explains how different life could be for her six year-old daughter, Charnel: "I hope she will make progress until she has her degree and a job. Everything will be different in her life."

Charnel and her parents.



## 1 Early girlhood

The earliest memories for most of the women had to do with the dynamics between their mothers and fathers. The majority said that their parents' relationships were respectful and loving, unlike the memories of domestic violence recalled by their husbands when we interviewed them last year. However, some did talk of less harmonious homes. Maria's mother, Edna, in Brazil, recalls: "It was a relationship where my father gave the orders and my mother only obeyed. Sometimes they fought. There





was something that made things worse: my father used to drink a lot, and this caused much suffering to our family.”

Thi Thuy Van’s mother, Thuy, in Vietnam, says: “My father didn’t pay much attention to my mother. He cared little for my mother. He worked and would hang out for fun. He seemed not to care about his family. However, he never hit my mother.”

The women recalled a mixed picture regarding how decisions were made in their childhood homes. In most families, men made the main decisions. In some households, decision-making was joint and mutually agreed. Only in a few did women have control of family finances and decisions, and these were mainly in female-headed households. Rudilania’s mother, Elena, from the Dominican Republic explains what it was like growing up with her grandparents: “My grandmother has always taken the decisions. She has been the man and the woman of the house.”

Generally, the girls’ mothers report that the main decision-makers are women only where the households are headed by women.

The majority of the women told of an early childhood where girls’ and boys’ domestic roles were clearly defined. As girls, they noticed early on that they had less time to play and less time for school work than boys did. The strictest gender codes appear to be in Togo. Brenam’s mother, Bella, says: “My father forbade boys household tasks. Women worked in the kitchen. Everybody worked on the farm. The boys were



Huguette.

academically privileged.” Having clearly defined roles was perpetuated both by men and women. Maria’s mother, Edna, in Brazil explains: “My mother still does everything in the house, but she believes things have been like this since the beginning of the time.”

A small number of the women grew up in households where domestic arrangements were different. Delphine, Huguette’s mother in Benin, explains: “My elder sister and I would both do some domestic chores. But when we had homework from school, my mother would cook and our little uncle also used to help us in our domestic tasks. I used to sweep and to wash clothes. I was not entrusted any great responsibility. So, I had enough time to play, to rest and to do my homework.”

In the main, strict divisions of labour continue to have an impact on the women’s lives today, while men are either unprepared or unwilling to support their families with household work.

## Networking

Complex social networks continue not only to provide material support for many of the families taking part in the study, but also include people who act as influential role models and mentors for girls. These networks are made up of people living in the families’ communities, from extended family members and neighbours, to teachers and local politicians. In Uganda, Anna Maria’s mother Alisat explains how her aunt supported her education and how, as a girl, she admired the way her aunt took care of her own family: “My role model was my uncle’s wife, who used to care for her children, even though her husband did not take care [of them]. She would go to relatives to make sure that her children



Rudilania and her brothers.

studied until they gained formal education.”

As they grew up, most of the mothers we interviewed looked up to women outside of their families – teachers, nurses, midwives and businesswomen. Often these were the female leaders in their communities, and for those with access to television and the internet, they might be global personalities such as stars of the music and film world. Emily, Mikaela’s mother in the Philippines, tells of her admiration for her childhood bible-school teacher, an influence so strong that Emily is now a university-educated pastor. In Brazil, Kevyllen’s mother Keulle says: “My role model was my mother... I wanted to be a lawyer because I have an aunt who works in this area.”

## MARIE

Marie is six year-old Consolata’s mother in Benin. Marie’s story shows how the influence of a female role model in a non-conventional career provided her with the drive to achieve a secondary education. She was educated up to the third year of secondary school, the only mother in the Benin cohort to achieve this level of education. Marie’s father was a photographer but her role model was actually a woman photographer. Her dream, she says, “was to become a journalist”.

However, her formal education came to an end when she and her parents disagreed about where she could continue. Marie wanted to go to school

in Cotonou, the capital of Benin; her parents wanted her to stay in the town nearest to the family home. Now, Marie is a photographer herself. She reflects on what has influenced her life so far and how dropping out of school impacted on her life. Her biggest hope for her daughter, Consolata, is that “she will be better educated than me”. Although she acknowledges that society has strict boundaries around gender roles and responsibilities, she is clear that in her family equal investments are being made in the education of girls and boys. Marie hopes that her children will see the investment that their parents are making in their education.

Most of the girls’ mothers tell of lives lived through interrupted ambitions and failed dreams. Many reported entering domestic service at adolescence. They recalled that this not only had a negative impact on their formal education, but also that many of them were abused and ill-treated, sometimes by their own relatives.

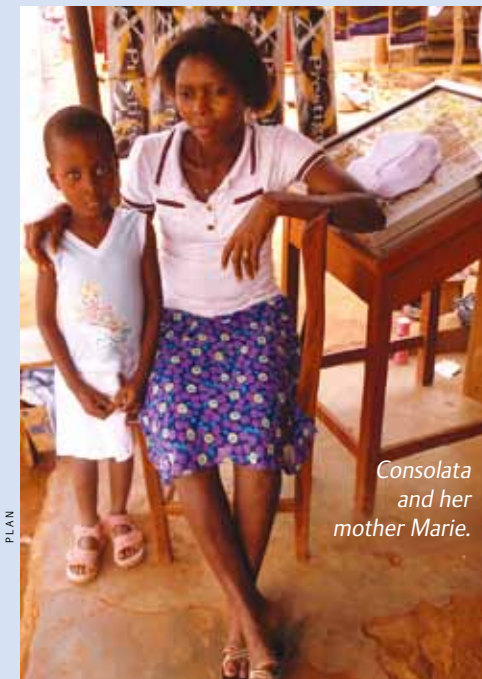
## 2 Adolescence

*“They made the mistake of taking me to another family.”*

Austria, Estefani’s grandmother from the Dominican Republic

Adolescence brings a particular set of challenges for girls. Many of the women told of becoming increasingly responsible for unpaid household work, including taking main responsibility for younger siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews while their own mothers worked, either in or outside the home.

The teenage girls’ domestic responsibilities, over time, took precedence over their schooling, play and leisure. A smaller number stopped going to school altogether, to take on domestic tasks, to look after their own siblings, or to go into domestic service. In the Dominican Republic, Rudilania’s mother, Elena, talks about her early life: “When I was 10 or 11, my grandmother sent me to the house of one of her daughters. My aunt was the one who knew everything in the house, but she didn’t stay at home. So I was the person who was responsible.



Consolata and her mother Marie.



Judith and her family.



PLAN

I had to mop, to cook, to wash clothes, to do everything in the house."

Justine is Judith's mother in Benin. She dreamed of being a nurse and looked up to the female community nurse. However, she left school early to look after her younger brother. When Justine became an adolescent, things changed. "I stayed with my maternal aunt and kept her child for her. [Then] I went to stay with a lady in Cotonou whom I helped sell maize and beans. I didn't like carrying loads on my head to go round and sell because it was very tiring."

Abigael's mother Elise, in Benin, tells of her childhood: "I stayed with my maternal aunt at Avegamey, not far from my village, where I helped her look after her children. She was not good to me. I used to help some women making groundnut cakes in order to get some money to buy underwear. I didn't have clothes. I could hardly eat and I had to finish everything before getting a little food."

Also in Benin, Charnel's mother Josephine was never sent to school. She was her parents' youngest child. She explains what her days were like: "I alone did the domestic tasks. I was in charge of cooking the food and cleaning the house. I used to look after my brothers and myself. Sometimes, I found it very hard, but I was obliged to do it." She continues: "I dreamed of becoming rich. I went to Nigeria to work for a household and my wage was \$22 per month. I was 15 when I went. I was in charge of cleaning the house of a childless couple. I didn't experience any difficulty because I was just in charge of the above duty in their house. It was my boss herself who was in charge of cooking."

### "I BECAME A LITTLE WOMAN WHEN I WAS SEVEN"

Here is the story of Austria, Estefani's grandmother from the Dominican Republic. She was never sent to school and had domestic responsibilities from almost the same age her granddaughter is now.

"I became a little woman when I was seven, because I helped my mother to raise all of the kids after her older children started leaving their children here... I was helping my mother, because I was there looking after the kids, because I was stuck at home. People before didn't care like we do now. Now we make sure that the children go to school.

"I went to my grandmother's house for a while because my dad took me there. There I had to do everything: clean, wash dishes, pluck chickens... because I was young." This was a sad time for her: "I used to dream that they would come and get me, always making excuses for why they couldn't come and take me home. I felt bad. I was often ill. I had a lot of colds and fevers."

But, she adds: "Not everyone gets the opportunity – they chose me. There are many girls who fall by the wayside, as there are parents who in order to give a good life to one child, give a worse life to another. They made the mistake of taking me to another family. [My parents] couldn't give me what I wanted, but they made a major mistake. I am not going to do this with my children."



Estefani and her grandmother.

PLAN

Austria fetching water, 2011.



PLAN

There are complex links between poverty, girls' puberty and sexuality, and their education, as is evidenced by these women's experiences. Many parents who willingly send a daughter to school, remove her at puberty for fear of unwanted pregnancy or to marry her off early. Some 82 million girls who are now aged between 10 and 17 will be married before their eighteenth birthday.<sup>1</sup> This situation is reflected in the experiences of the mothers taking part in the study – regardless of level of education reached, the majority of the women stopped school when they either married or got pregnant. For those girls who become pregnant, the school environment becomes an unforgiving place, and pregnancy effectively ends their school career. At the same time, many parents taking part in the study still do not see an economic rationale for investing in their daughters' education, particularly beyond the primary years.

### WHY I FINISHED SCHOOL

Delphine, Huguette's mother in Benin, confirms: "I left school when I was 13 years old because I was expelled for non-payment of school fees. It was in 1999." Her aunt, who lived in France, had been supporting the family to pay school fees up until that point.

Tuong Vi's mother, Duong, in Vietnam,

says: "I finished at the ninth grade at the age of 17 or 18 because my mother had such a hard time to earn money for the family."

Justine is Judith's mother in Benin. She finished school at primary 2 and was tasked with the family's domestic work. "I used to do the domestic tasks alone. My mother was in charge of the food cooking and I would clean the house. I would also look after my younger brother."

In El Salvador, Hilda's mother Katerin went to secondary school up to Grade 7, but left when her boyfriend suggested it: "He was afraid I would betray him." They started living together when she was 15 years old and she soon had her first child, Hilda. By the age of 17 she had had her second daughter. Katerin has not considered returning to school.

The majority of the women who reported leaving school prematurely recall that the interruption to their formal education was the most important incident they experienced as girls. Through the women's life stories, we see how adolescence was such a critical time for them. This was when they were given more household responsibilities, which ultimately affected their educational prospects. Several of them, for example, were married at around the age of 14, and this also marked the point at which their formal education stopped.



Hilda and her mother, 2011.

NIKKI VAN DER GAAG



Cintia and her family.



Silvana, Cintia's mother in Brazil, recalls how she met her husband, and the circumstances of their wedding. "I met him at my grandmother's house, where I was raised. He was a good friend of my uncle. I was still an adolescent and didn't know anything – I was 14. I think it was something crazy, to get married."

She continues: "He decided to marry me because of the suffering he saw in me. He was very sorry for me, for my childhood. He saw how much I suffered, working to survive. When I was living there, he helped me a lot, buying food so I could eat. I think this is why he wanted to live with me."

These stories are quite different from their husbands' recollections of their adolescence, where men largely remembered a time of increased freedom and opportunities for work outside the home. In the Philippines, Girlie's father remembers how he "started going with my father to fish. We spent nights in the middle of the sea." Sokhea's father in Cambodia recalls: "Since I was a boy, I liked to follow my father's activities and ideas because my father was friendly and respected by many of the people in the village."

Oumou's father from Togo explains: "I had to take care of the sheep and the poultry. I also took the cows to the grazing land with my other brothers." Naream's father from Cambodia tells how, despite dropping out of school, he was able to fulfil some of his ambitions: "My father was my role model, because I wished to become a medical doctor when I grew up, the same as my father. My dream could not come true after I dropped out of school. Even though I could not achieve his vision, my first job was as a medical worker who treats the people in the village and I always succeeded in saving the lives of those patients. I had medical



knowledge which was transferred by my father but I did not have a formal degree recognised by the government."

When girls continue to attend school through their adolescence, their daily lives are reasonably similar to boys'. School attendance can be an important first step towards an experience of greater gender equality as it brings adolescent boys and girls together to spend their time similarly during a critical phase in their transition to adulthood.<sup>2</sup> Time-use data from several countries shows how school attendance for girls during their teens also provides them with protection from the heavy burden of domestic work.<sup>3</sup> For many girls, continuing with their formal education could have created a very different trajectory, perhaps one like Emily's.

Emily, Mikaela's mother in the Philippines, demonstrates what is possible for a young woman to achieve when she has access to several assets during adolescence – positive role models, educational opportunity and support from her family. Unlike most of the other mothers taking part in the study, Emily has had more formal education than her husband, Roy, who reached the second year of



the same course as she did. Emily trained as a pastor after completing a university degree in theology and post-graduate teacher training. She is the only mother in the study who has a university degree. Emily recalls being influenced at an early age. "My idol then was the woman who taught us bible study... I admired her from when I was about five years old. She sang well, and she was kind."

Emily's ambition was always to be a bible-school teacher and a pastor, and she achieved it. The family now lives in the small parsonage attached to Emily's church. Although Emily holds on to commonly held attitudes about the gender roles in her marriage – "Roy is the head of this family" – theirs is one of the few families in the study where the burden of domestic work appears to be shared and the power balance appears to be equitable.

### 3 Family life now

As the girls' mothers became young women and eventually left their childhood homes to get married and have families of their own, they continued to deal with gendered social pressures, for example expectations about paid versus unpaid work, which are inescapable.

Most of the women married young, and their role in marriage arrangements was largely passive. Albine's mother Noelle, in Benin, says: "He wanted us to get married; I agreed. He paid my dowry and we got married when I was 15 years old, according to the rules of the church and the civil code."

Fridos Is.'s mother in Togo explains: "It was on a proposal from my mother. She wanted me to get married so I could support her in her old age. Cola nuts and cloths were brought

Fridos Is. and her family.



and afterwards the religious marriage was celebrated."

The story of Lantana, Yasmine's mother in Togo, is similar: "It was on a proposal from my dad. But it is the behaviour of my partner that I liked. I accepted the proposal of my dad. They brought the dowry and then the cloths and our religious marriage was celebrated."

### SEX EDUCATION

Many of the women reported that they have had no reproductive and sexual health education. Some found out about menstruation from friends or older siblings, but most had had no preparation for this critical stage in their lives. In some of the countries taking part in the study – Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam – women (and men) have joined reproductive and sexual health education classes either in preparation for marriage or childbirth. The experience of Charolyn's mother, Samaria, from the Dominican Republic is common among the Dominican women: "When I was pregnant they gave me a chat telling me all the things that happen to a woman. Before that I had no information. My







Beretchissou and her family.

mother never spoke to me about it. When I was pregnant with the two girls was when they started to tell me."

The women who have taken part in classes are the only ones who reported that they discuss sexual and reproductive health with their partners, an important opportunity for women to have more control of their reproductive rights and to have more say in decision-making in their marriages. Beretchissou's mother Adia, in Togo, reports that she is given information about her sexual and reproductive health "when I go for pre-natal consultations with the staff of the health centre. I often talk with my husband about this."

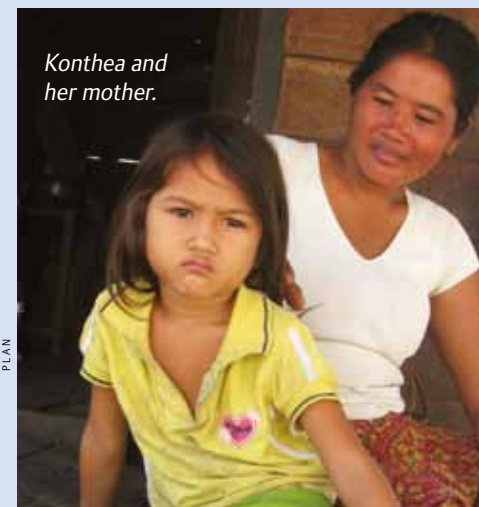
While the large majority of women agreed with the statement "the man is the head of the household", a significant proportion added a value statement, acknowledging that a women's role is changing in terms of household power relations and bargaining. When asked about decision-making in the home, most of the women said that while their husbands were responsible for making important decisions, they made some decisions jointly. This appeared to be a move away from their recollection of their parents' relationships, which were much more dominated by men. A small number of the women describe more equitable relationships, where household tasks are shared and decisions are made together. Kevyllen's mother, Keulle, in Brazil goes a step further and explains: "Here in our home it's different: I'm the head of the household, because I'm more decisive," but her view is uncommon.

Many of the women reported that their husbands do help care for younger children when their wives are not at home, and in some communities – in the Philippines and in Vietnam – men fetch water and occasionally cook. Some of the men interviewed last year acknowledged the importance of helping and supporting their wives. However, it is clear that the prime responsibility for domestic tasks remains girls' and women's work. Lorena's mother, Neidijane, in Brazil, explains: "Here at home, I'm the only one who does domestic chores. My husband can't do anything. I think he's not interested in learning."

Konthea's mother Sour, in Cambodia, says: "If I had a chance to choose, I would like to have two daughters and two sons. The purpose of having an equal number of children in my family would be that they have different tasks, such as girls could help in doing house chores while boys could help in doing farming tasks and other heavy work."

Rema is Bhea's mother in the Philippines and she explains how her six year-old daughter reflects what she sees around her: "It's really Bhea who tells me, 'Ma, when I grow up I'll be the one to wash the clothes, clean the house'; and her older brother, she says, will be the one who fetches water and helps his father on the farm."

While the women describe clearly defined household divisions of labour – and it is apparent that these male/female divisions are widely followed – what does seem to be slowly emerging is the recognition that school-age girls need extra time for homework, leisure and rest. Mercedes, Noelia's grandmother in the Dominican Republic, says: "I would like them always to remember what I wanted them to be. That they learn, that they study, that I never said: you don't go to school today



Konthea and her mother.

Brenam and her family.



because you have to wash the clothes, because you have to wash the dishes, or because you have to do something. No, I left them alone so that they could study."

## 4 The future

*"There is no difference [between boys and girls]. All are human beings and all have the same rights and duties."*

Brenam's mother, Bella, from Togo

As women who are mostly in their twenties and thirties, the mothers of the girls have themselves grown up in a time of rapid social change. On the whole, the women acknowledge that they are living in a time of change and that greater opportunities now exist for women and for girls. Many will have taken part in gender equality programmes of some sort, and may also have been exposed to these ideas through seminars, public-awareness campaigns and the media.

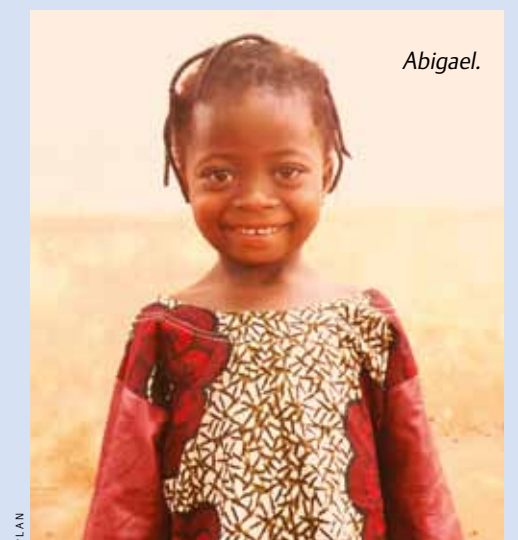
Brenam's mother, Bella, from Togo believes that: "There is no difference [between boys and girls]. All are human beings and all have the same rights and duties." At the same time, she says, "Everyone has tasks. Farm tasks for men and sale of 'tchouk' local beer, and housework for women." Her view is typical of the women and this is a critical issue emerging from the research – whether the women will reconcile their ideas of gender equality with their own notions of femininity and masculinity. To what extent will they be able to adapt their own attitudes and actions in the home in order to support their young daughters so that they can stay in school?

Given steady improvements in education in recent decades, the parents of today's girls are considerably more educated than their own parents were. Although their levels of education are relatively low, many of these women are the first cohort of women in their

families to have any formal education at all. This alone has a significant impact on the educational prospects of today's girls. In Brazil, for example, the educational attainment of mothers of school-aged children has more than doubled in the 22 years from 1977 to 1999, where this increase in parental schooling has been shown to account for a substantial proportion of the improvements in school enrolment over the same period.<sup>4</sup>

We are already seeing some of the benefits of girls' education across generations from the changing behaviour and attitudes within the families taking part in the study. The most striking responses overall are the women's overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards girls' education. Almost all of the women interviewed responded to the question "What are your hopes for your daughter's future?" by saying that they would hope for their daughters to be better educated than they were. Some went on to explain that in small ways they are disrupting the status quo in preparing their daughters for a better future. Juliet's mother Rose, in Uganda, explains: "I always think about their future. I have always encouraged them to go to school. I bought goats and chicken for the boys and bought plots of land for the girls, since the boys can always find land at their father's place."

Elise, Abigail's mother in Benin, explains: "What will be different with Abigail is that she will complete her studies, get a job before getting married. She shouldn't marry too early."



Abigail.



Six year-old Charolyn from the Dominican Republic is definitely picking up on the aspirations of her mother's generation. When asked what she wants to do when she grows up her confident response is, *"I want to go to university"*.

It is clear that the families taking part in the study are committed to girls' education. The majority of the families have little spare cash but they are willing to make the investment in their daughters' education and most report spending on their children's education – see chart (right). Estefani's grandmother, Austria, in the Dominican Republic explains: "I used to say that I wanted the best for my daughters. I would have done anything to be able to afford to educate my daughters."

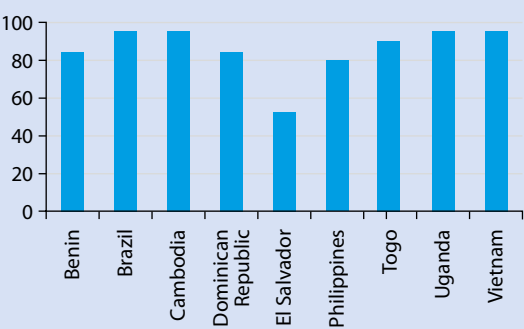
Needless to say, families still have to make complex and difficult decisions about their children's education. It can be argued that economic pressure is now greater, as the poorest families spend a larger proportion of their income on basic needs such as food and shelter than a generation ago.

As discussed in more detail in the main report, if education systems are to support development, gender equality and poverty reduction – in other words, to change society – what children are learning should give them the tools and skills that allow them to reach their full potential. The women acknowledge that the education girls (and boys) receive should be of the highest quality and be able to transform their lives. Maria's mother, Edna, from Brazil, believes that: "Freedom exists for boys and girls. The access of education is better and wider now, and these changes are good."



Charolyn and her drawing.

**Percentage of families reporting costs for sending children to school**



Many studies have shown how access to post-primary education, in particular, not only leads to learning outcomes but also to a change in attitudes and behaviour that will impact on the girl herself and her children. More educated mothers have more educated children as measured by years in school.<sup>5</sup>

As we have seen year-on-year in the study, the girls' parents have high ambitions for them, most of them expecting their daughters to complete secondary school. However, it is clear from their mothers' experiences that ambition is simply not enough in order for the girls to succeed. Parental, especially maternal, support is critical. Mercedes, Noelia's grandmother from the Dominican Republic, explains that things were quite different when she was a girl: "In the past they didn't bother to tell you [about aspirations] like they do today. [Today] people care about their children, because she tells me 'Mama, I want to be a doctor'. So you care because she likes it, and if she likes it, you do too. But, in my time, they didn't say anything to me."

This ambition is evident in the views of the girls themselves, who at age six are aspiring to be teachers, nurses and midwives. Their aspirations are in line with girls the world over. Recent surveys of girls in the final year of primary school in Tanzania and Nigeria revealed that 100 per cent aspired to complete secondary school and 88.5 per cent wanted to continue to higher education.<sup>6</sup> Tapenensi from Uganda wants to be a nursery teacher. She will need secondary education but at the moment she is not able to go school, "I stopped. Fees."

The women's responses to questions

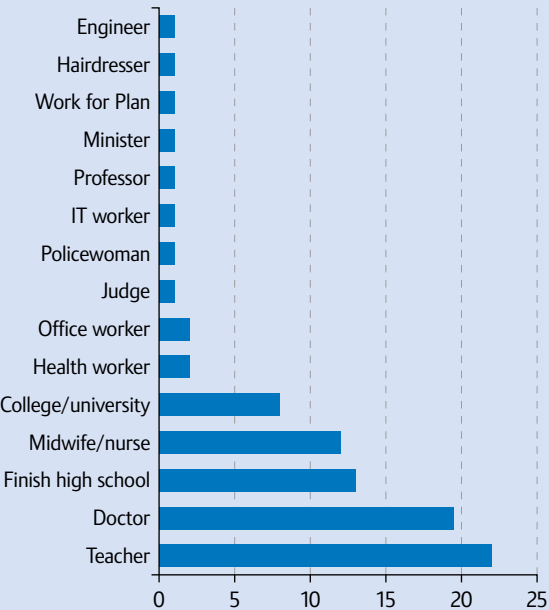
about their vision for the future make it clear that while they recognise that there are real possibilities for the lives of their daughters to be different from their own, most refer back to the practicalities of daily life and defer to the reality of their lives where women and girls occupy the domestic space, and boys and men the external space. This reflects their own experiences as girls and young women. They are emphatic in their responses about the realistic chances of success for a young woman today, citing reproductive and domestic responsibilities as the main barrier for young women. Julienne, Marcelle's mother in Benin, hints that she believes that there are simply lower expectations of girls: "A boy can complete his studies, whereas a girl can give up school."

Johanna's mother Josefina, in the Dominican Republic, sums up the general view: "We women would like to be successful in life, but we can't. Look now, I'd like to study, and what stops me? The three children. I can't leave them just like that, abandon them to go and study. I have to let them grow up first and then if I want to do something, I will do it. But men do go away and leave; nothing stops them."

Mercedes is Noelia's 53 year-old grandmother from the Dominican Republic. Her story exemplifies both the challenge and future possibilities for girls' education. Mercedes told us how her focused efforts to educate herself, as well as her son, daughters and granddaughter are paying off. She put herself through night school after having her own children. Her three children are now either in university or are about to be enrolled. She remembers how, even as a girl, she told herself: "When I have my children, I am not going to have ignorant children; my children are going to study... I always used to think about that. I sent my daughter to school at three years old – the one who is studying nursing – and I always wanted my children to learn."

She is clear that things are changing, that not everything will be different but her daughters and granddaughters, if well supported, will have opportunities she could only dream of. "Before, girls had more limitations and did not continue in school. Education has made men and women more equal. By studying, my daughters are able to get paid and put something towards a house. Before, men had more privileges. Now, this is changing."

**Family aspirations for cohort girls**



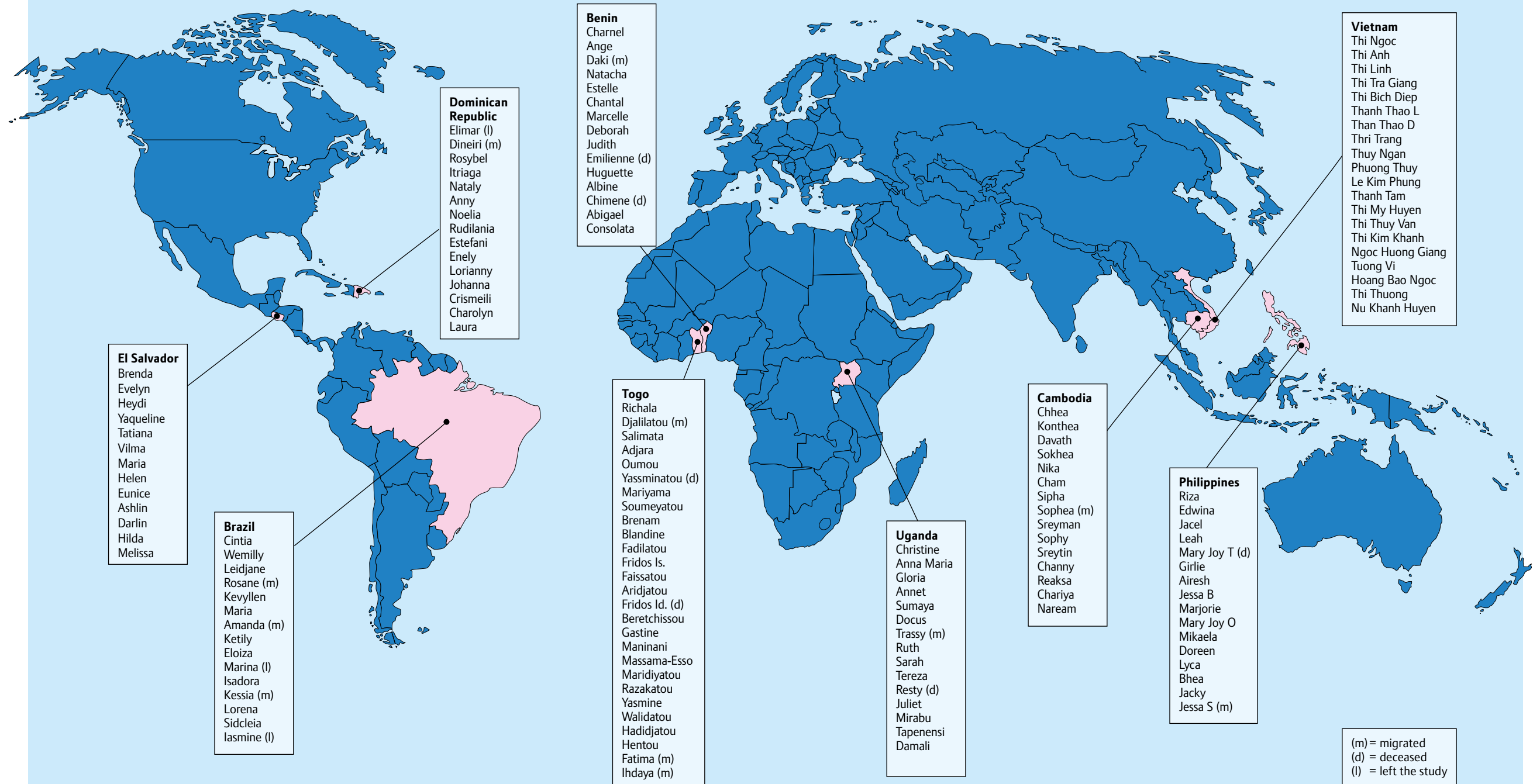
Across almost every one of the families with daughters in the cohort study, the recurring refrain "things are changing" is a reason for optimism. Mothers in particular want a different and better life for their girls and see education as being the route to this. Will their commitment be enough to overcome the combined obstacles of poverty and entrenched ideas of male and female roles? Are the changes of attitude coming fast enough and consistently enough to overcome generations of gender inequality? Can these six year-old girls realise their full potential in societies and families where their rights, especially to an education, are respected? As we continue to track the girls through their first decade of life, our optimism will be tested as poverty and discrimination undermine everybody's good intentions.



Noelia and her grandmother.

# Because We are Girls

'Real Choices, Real Lives' Cohort Study Map







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# Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign

Because I am a Girl is Plan's global campaign to promote girls' rights and lift millions of girls out of poverty through education and skill building. We aim to improve the lives of four million girls with access to school, skills, livelihood, participation and protection; 40 million girls and boys through our programme work; and 400 million children through policy change.

Across the world, girls face double discrimination due to their gender and age, leaving them at the bottom of the social ladder.

For example, research has shown that girls are more likely to suffer from malnutrition; be forced into an early marriage; be subject to violence or intimidation; be trafficked, sold or coerced into the sex trade; or become infected with HIV. Discrimination against girls and women is also one of the main root causes of child poverty.

Yet we know that investing in girls and young women has a disproportionately beneficial effect in alleviating poverty for

everyone: not only the girls themselves, but their families, communities and entire countries. Everyone benefits, including boys and men.

Plan believes that educated girls are empowered girls, who can transform their own lives and the lives of all around them. For this reason, the Because I am a Girl campaign will be geared towards equipping, enabling and engaging girls of all ages to acquire the assets, skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in life.

The 'State of the World's Girls' annual reports provide, and will provide year after year, tangible proof of the inequalities which still exist between boys and girls, and will support the campaign with specific girl-oriented evidence. The report will give concrete recommendations, for the campaign to take forward in partnership, to ensure that every girl gets at least nine years of quality education and is able to realise her full potential.

Join in and take action at: [becauseiamagirl.org](http://becauseiamagirl.org)



ALF BERG

## Introduction

This section provides evidence to support the analysis of the 2012 report in the form of references, examples of good practice, visual mapping of girls' rights data, clarifications over terminology used in the report, and further resources relevant to girls' rights and girls' education.

1 **The two maps** in this section chart the rate of adolescent female educational achievement levels globally, by focusing on the percentage of girls in the appropriate grade for their age, as well as comparative national school attendance rates. The maps also show a selection of the highest and lowest unemployment rates for females aged 15-24 across the world. These are important indicators of regional and national trends in adolescent girls' education, which provide a snapshot of the numbers of adolescent girls who are entering school late, falling behind, and having to repeat schooling in grades that are not appropriate for their age group. In addition, the maps give us a global overview of the high numbers of adolescent girls who should be in school, but are not. Lastly, by mapping the global rate of transition into employment for adolescent girls, we are able to show that in many parts of the world girls are not getting the education or recognition they need to obtain decent work.

2 Our selection of '**Promising Practice**' case studies provides detailed examples of some innovative and successful projects working for adolescent girls' education. The projects featured present a broad spectrum of interventions, from informal community-based programming to national level policy-wide approaches.



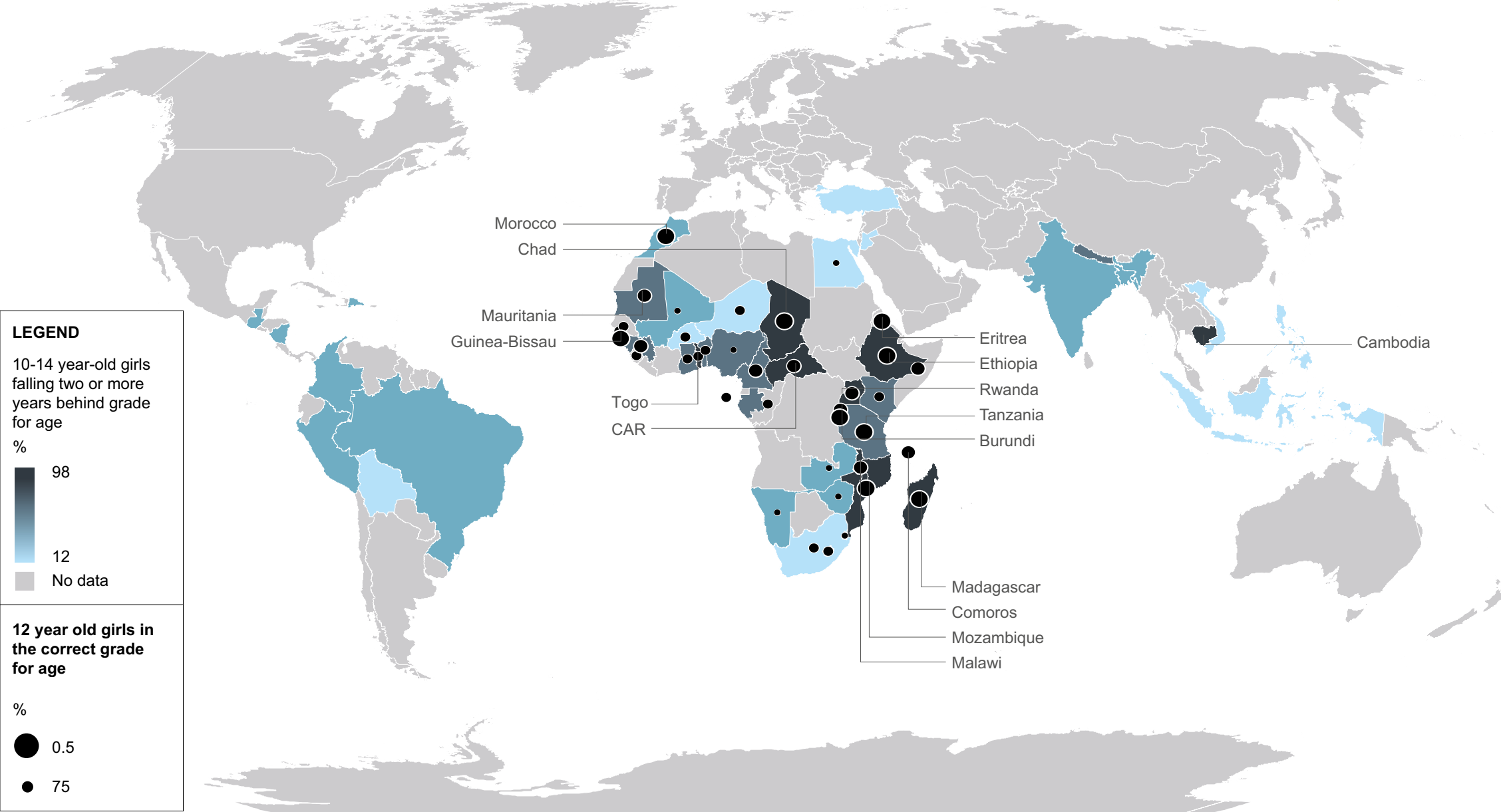
ROLAND GEISHEIMER

3 **The glossary** includes detailed explanations of gender-related and education-specific terms.

4 **The online resources** section provides a useful reference guide for information on organisations, campaigns, research and databases focusing on girls' rights and well-being.



Female adolescent educational achievement

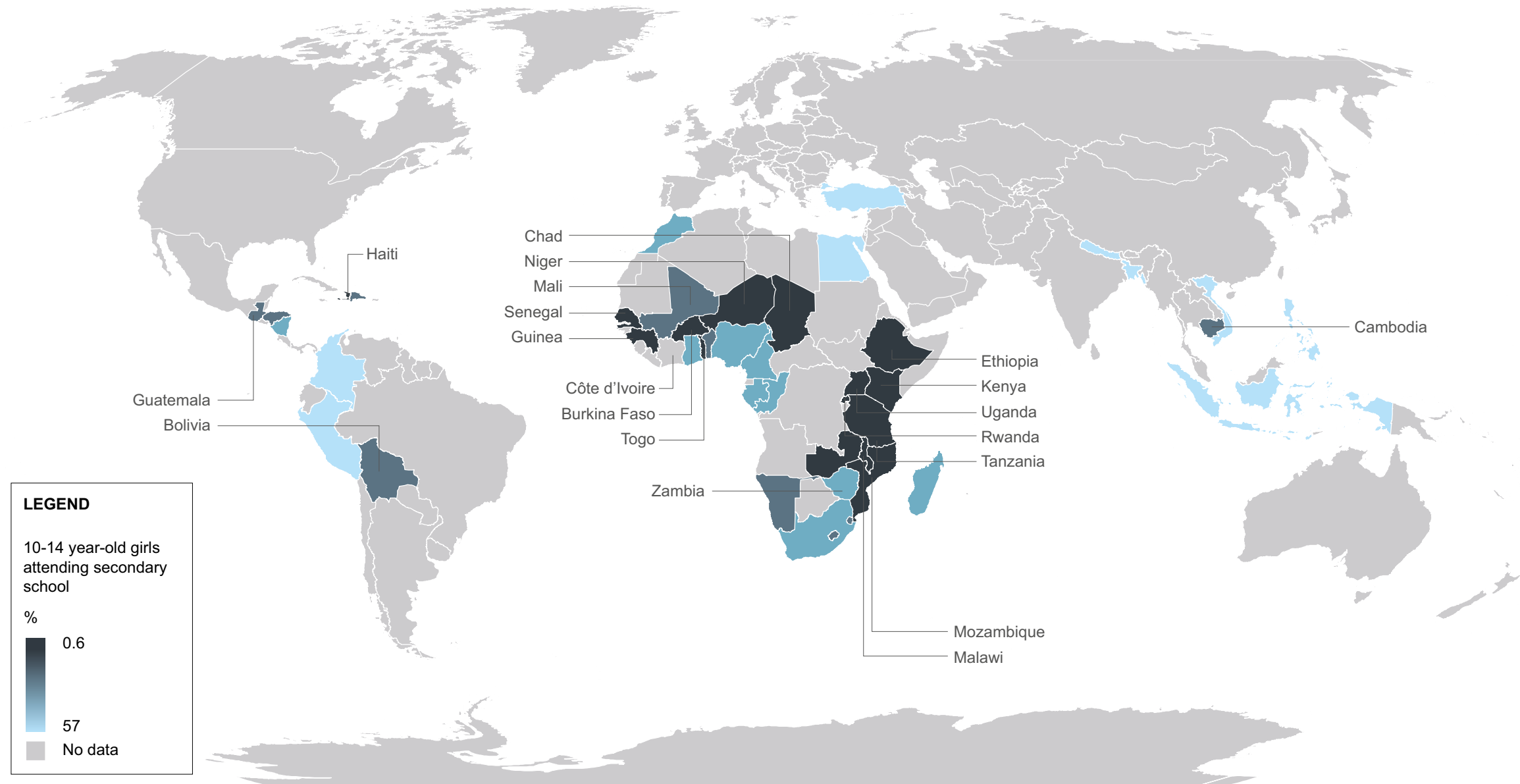


Lowest percentage of 12 year-old girls who are at the appropriate grade for age			
Country	%	Country	%
Chad	12.3	Burundi	20.2
Guinea-Bissau	12.5	Eritrea	21.1
Ethiopia	15.9	Tanzania	21.4
Mozambique	17.4	Morocco	22.3
Madagascar	18.2	Mauritania	26.3

Highest percentage of 10-14 year-old girls who are falling two or more years behind grade for age			
Country	%	Country	%
Mozambique	75.4	Ethiopia	58.5
Cambodia	69.8	Rwanda	56.3
Comoros	68.9	Chad	55.2
Central African Republic	67.4	Malawi	54.7
Togo	63.9	Madagascar	54.4

**Female adolescent educational achievement**  
Source: The data was compiled by Maplecroft using data obtained from two reports. For 10-14 year-old girls falling two or more years behind grade for age, data was obtained from the report entitled 'New Lessons: The Power of Educating Adolescent Girls' published by the Population Council and Coalition for Adolescent Girls. Data from a UNICEF Childinfo report titled "Adolescents and Education in Africa" was used for the percentage of 12 year-old girls in the correct grade for age.

# Female adolescent secondary school attendance



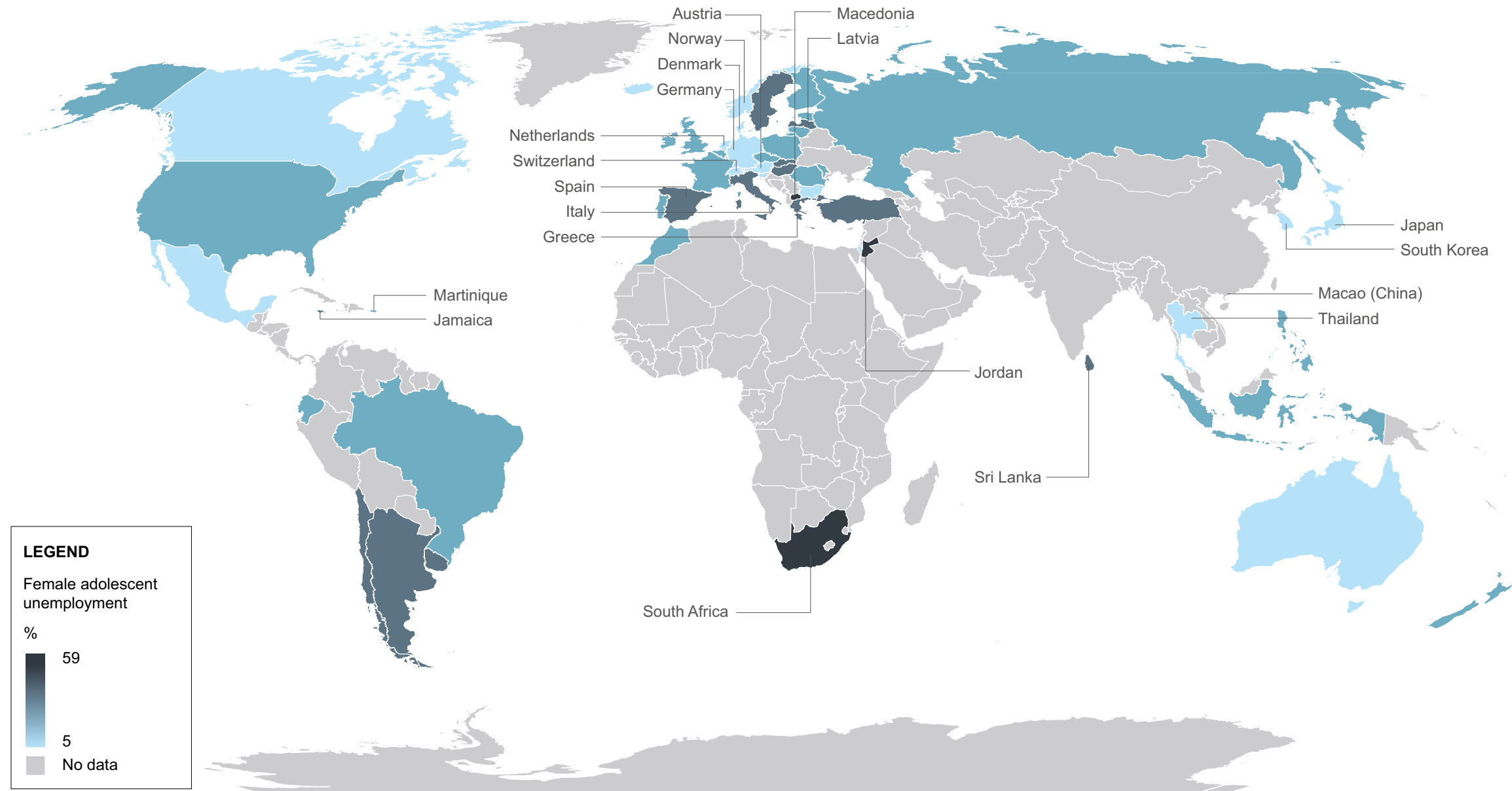
Lowest percentage of 10-14 year-old girls attending secondary school									
Country	%	Country	%	Country	%	Country	%	Country	%
Tanzania	0.6	Uganda	2.6	Zambia	3.7	Côte d'Ivoire	5.6		
Rwanda	0.8	Chad	2.9	Niger	3.8	Mali	6.2		
Mozambique	0.9	Ethiopia	2.9	Guinea	4.2	Cambodia	7.6		
Kenya	1.2	Burkina Faso	3.1	Haiti	4.7	Bolivia	7.7		
Malawi	1.6	Togo	3.2	Senegal	5.3	Guatemala	7.7		

## Girls attending school

Source: The data was compiled by Maplecroft using data obtained from the report 'New Lessons: The Power of Educating Adolescent Girls' published by the Population Council and Coalition for Adolescent Girls.



# Female adolescent unemployment



Highest unemployment rate among girls aged 15-24 years old			
Country	%	Country	%
Macedonia	58.54	Greece	33.91
Martinique	57.9	Jamaica	33.09
South Africa	52.51	Italy	28.69
Jordan	45.89	Sri Lanka	27.88
Spain	36.35	Latvia	27.87

Lowest unemployment rate among girls aged 15-24 years old			
Country	%	Country	%
Thailand	5.12	South Korea	8.51
Macao (China)	5.43	Switzerland	8.71
Netherlands	6.16	Austria	9.38
Norway	7.99	Germany	9.82
Japan	8.04	Denmark	9.87

## Female adolescent unemployment

Source: The data was compiled by Maplecroft using data obtained from the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

# Case Studies – Promising practice

## 1 Population Council: Abriendo Oportunidades, Guatemala<sup>1,2</sup>

### Background

Abriendo Oportunidades is a national empowerment programme that engages and focuses on meeting the needs of indigenous girls and young women in rural Guatemala – one of the most vulnerable and underserved groups.

The programme is driven by girls in their hard-to-reach communities and makes them the central engine in building individual capabilities and improving the social environment around them. Through a process that actively connects girls and adults at the community level, programme participants broaden their life and leadership skills and, by extension, strengthen their families and communities.

The programme is working to influence positively community attitudes about the value of girls and the importance of their education and of equal opportunities. As the girls gain confidence, skills and greater ambition for a better life, family and community perspectives toward girls' education have become more favourable and girls' education outcomes show signs of improvement.

The programme has been implemented by the Population Council and an evolving range of institutional partners since 2004. To date, Abriendo Oportunidades has worked with seven different Mayan ethnic groups, engaged more than 45 rural communities, and reached more than 4,000 indigenous girls.

### Key beneficiaries

- Rural indigenous Mayan girls aged 8-15 (divided into cohorts aged 8-12 and 13-15) and young female leaders aged 16-20 in Guatemala.



### Objectives

- To help break the poverty cycle and enable Guatemalan girls to reach their full potential.
- To increase Mayan girls' social support networks.
- To connect girls with positive female role models and mentors.
- To build a base of critical life and leadership skills.
- To provide hands-on professional training and experience for girl leaders.

### Methods

- Engage community leadership and influential adults (with a focus on mothers) to support rural girls and designate a safe public space for girls to meet, share and learn regularly.
  - Girl leaders are supported to form and run clubs and build supportive relationships with local authorities.
- Select, train and support young female leaders (mentors) ages 16-20 to lead community-based clubs for girls aged 8-15 (in two age cohorts).
- Deliver an annual programme through girls' clubs to build girls' knowledge and skills, expand social support and social capital, and increase access to information and support to improve their health, education and livelihood opportunities.
- Conduct parallel activities with mothers to build their capabilities and encourage their support for their daughters.
  - Workshops include self-esteem, life skills, developing aspirations and planning for the future, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS prevention.
  - Provide opportunities for girls to take on leadership positions within the clubs and community.
- In each annual girls' club cycle, new peer mentors/girl leaders are identified and trained; some older girls also apply for one-year paid professional internships with local institutions in the public and private sectors.

- Connect girls' clubs and programme graduates in national Guatemalan Indigenous Girls Resource and Empowerment Network (GIGREN), which serves as a platform for indigenous girls to advocate for their needs and rights at both the community and national level.

### Results

- As rural indigenous girls learn practical skills and take on leadership positions, families and communities are strengthened and girls' roles and status improve.
- 100 per cent of Abriendo girl leaders had completed the sixth grade, compared to 81.5 per cent of girls nationally.
- More Abriendo girls were in school at the close of the 2009-10 programme cycle (72 per cent), compared with the national average for indigenous girls (53 per cent for those aged 13-15 and 29 per cent among 16-17 year-olds).
- 97 per cent of Abriendo girl leaders remained childless during the programme cycle, compared with the 78.2 per cent national average for girls in their age range (15-19).
- 94 per cent of Abriendo girl leaders reported experiencing greater autonomy and feeling more comfortable expressing their opinions, and 84 per cent said their role at home had improved during the programme cycle.
- 88 per cent of girl leaders reported having a bank account and 44 per cent had obtained paid employment when the programme cycle finished.
- Programmes with common design elements have been implemented in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt and other countries.
- There is demand to replicate the Abriendo programme in Guatemala and a number of local and international NGOs have picked up common elements.



### Good practice and lessons learned

- Reaching vulnerable girls requires targeted, dedicated programmes that go where they are. These girls are unlikely to benefit from more conventional youth programmes.
- Girls need and appreciate regular, planned, safe and supportive opportunities to learn and share.
- The engagement of the community and girls themselves in the design, implementation and tracking of programme results is critical to ensuring programme appropriateness, effectiveness and sustainability.
- Influencing cultural and gender norms is most effective from within. By building and exercising their capabilities and expanding their vision and goals for their lives, girls are favourably shifting the environment around them.
- Social support and skill-building programmes can complement formal systems by providing practical information and capabilities to marginalised girls, which allow them to make more informed choices with regard to their health, education and well-being.

### Recommendations for the future

- Sustainability and scale of programmes like Abriendo Oportunidades require careful planning, increasing local and national engagement and ongoing support.
- The basic programme model has shown favourable results in an increasingly wide range of countries and cultural contexts, indicating its potential for wider expansion and replication. Programmes with common design elements have been implemented in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Egypt\*.
- The medium- and long-term results of a programme like Abriendo Oportunidades take time to manifest. As such, it is recommended that longitudinal tracking of programme graduates be planned and conducted.
- Planning for the technical and financial resources required for programme evaluation and long-term follow-up is vital.

\* See, for example, the Population Council 'Transitions To Adulthood' programmes.





## 2 Mobilink, UNESCO and Bunyad ‘SMS for Literacy’ Pakistan<sup>3,4,5</sup>

### Background

It is estimated that by 2015, Pakistan’s non-literate population will make up more than 55 million people.<sup>6</sup> Women and girls, especially those living in rural areas, are the most likely to be illiterate, with only 29 per cent of these girls and women being literate compared with 78 per cent of urban boys and men.<sup>7</sup> There are over four million out-of-school girls in Pakistan; however, even those girls who do manage to make it to school may subsequently suffer as they are unable to maintain their skills due to inaccessibility to learning materials, both because of distance and conservative attitudes towards the mobility of girls and women.<sup>8</sup> In the 2010 ‘Because I am a Girl’ report, ‘Digital and Urban Frontiers: Girls in a Changing Landscape’, we reported on the ‘SMS for Literacy’ programme in Pakistan, run by a partnership between Mobilink, UNESCO and a local NGO, Bunyad.<sup>9</sup> The project was initially designed to ensure girls and young women who had completed a basic literacy course could maintain and improve their skills through distance learning using mobile phones. Since the successful pilot in 2009, the project has been expanded to target 1,250 girls and young women and their family members. The current programme is run by UNESCO, Literacy & NFBE Department Government of the Punjab, Bunyad Foundation, Nokia, Mobilink, Agahi and Dhaka Ahsania Mission.

### Key beneficiaries

Girls and women aged 15-30 living in four districts in rural Pakistan, who had recently completed a basic literacy programme. The girls and young women are then expected to enrol their siblings and family members on the programme.

### Objectives

- To improve girls’ and women’s quality of life and independence by overcoming inaccessibility to learning materials using

- mobile phones to maintain literacy skills.
- To increase wider access to learning materials by encouraging the girls and women participating in the programme to enrol their siblings and family members.
- To motivate parents to send their daughters to school by engaging parents, especially mothers, in the programme.
- To challenge socio-cultural barriers to girls’ education, mobility and participation in technology.

### Methods

- Each girl and woman was given a low-cost mobile phone with pre-paid connection and enrolled at a Mobile-Based Post Literacy Centre.
- Bunyad trained teachers to help students practise reading and writing using mobile phones.<sup>10</sup>
- Mobilink set up a system for Bunyad to send SMS text messages in Urdu on relevant topics to the girls and young women. The girls responded to their teachers via SMS.
- Teachers carried out monthly assessments of the girls’ and young women’s learning outcomes.
- Participants were then encouraged to enrol their siblings and other family members in the programme, who would then go on to complete the same process.
- Girls, young women and family members could then buy their mobile phones at a low price.

### Results

- The 2009 pilot project conducted with 250 girls and young women was directly correlated to improvements in literacy. Before the project, 57 per cent of the girls and young women scored the lowest grade in a basic literacy test. After the project, this figure decreased to 11 per cent and girls scoring the highest grade increased from 28 per cent to more than 60 per cent.<sup>11</sup>
- The expanded project will maintain and improve 1,250 girls’ and young women’s literacy skills and that of their family members. Communities will be empowered to own and run Mobile Literacy Centres, making the programme more sustainable.

- The programme was both engaging and effective. The use of mobile phones appears to be far more effective in maintaining literacy than other print-based methods. In addition, there were no drop-outs from the Mobile Literacy Centres, showing that the girls were enthusiastic about mobile learning.
- Teachers reported that girls had more confidence, both due to their improved literacy skills and due to the physical security that mobile phone access made them feel.
- The programme managed to challenge embedded socio-cultural attitudes to girls’ education and, as a result, more parents sent their girls to school.

### Good practice and lessons learned

- Students reported that typing in Urdu using an English alphabet was sometimes difficult and time consuming.
- Family and community trust and participation have been key to the success of the programme. Despite initial resistance to their daughters owning mobile phones, families gradually began to support the programme, especially after they saw the educational nature of the messages sent and received. Partnership with organisations with strong community ties and inclusion of family members of the participants is therefore strongly recommended for similar programmes.

### Recommendations for the future

For sustainable expansion in the future it was agreed that there should ideally be no financial support from a donor. Instead, a learner should purchase the mobile handset with a loan/subsidy from the mobile manufacturer or service company. This would lead to increased sustainability of the project, as well as a sense of ownership on the part of the learners themselves.



## 3 Plan: Empowering girls through education<sup>12,13</sup>

### Background

By addressing and combating low levels of female literacy, Plan’s recently implemented ‘Empowering girls through education’ project in India’s northern state of Bikaner aims to support girls by helping them to realise their right to education. In order to complement the Indian Government’s National Development Goals (based on the Millennium Development Goals – MDGs), the project is designed to work with girls who have graduated from Plan primary school programmes, supporting their transition to secondary schools and providing access to skills training and job opportunities.

Bikaner is a district with low levels of literacy, with an average literacy rate of 57.5 per cent compared to the national average of 61.03 per cent. The figures are even lower when disaggregated by sex: the literacy rate for men is 70.78 per cent but only 42.55 per cent for women.<sup>14</sup>

The project has been running for six months and monitoring and evaluation is at a preliminary stage.

### Key beneficiaries

Adolescent girls from poor families who have previously participated in Plan primary school programmes.

### Objectives

To help girls to realise their right to a quality education, and ultimately lead to increased independence, earning potential, empowerment and dignity in the future.

- To help build girls’ confidence and knowledge through providing life skills, vocational training, linking girls with government schemes and providing support to girls for accessing quality education.
- The project aims to benefit 1,350 girls over two years, of which 450 will be supported in attaining secondary education.
- An additional 300 girls will be provided

with vocational skills and employment opportunities.

- To provide training to prepare 600 girls for government service over three years.

## Methods

- Plan spent time on establishing contacts with the community, consulting girls, identifying resource agencies, recruiting teachers and setting up camp facilities.
- An annual three-day 'Balika Sammelan' (adolescent girls' summit) to celebrate girls' empowerment was created. This involves 2,500 adolescent girls who are ex-students of 'Balika Shivirs' (residential camps for primary education). The 'Balika Sammelan' celebrates and marks the girls' achievements, understands their current situation and assesses current and future needs. It assists the girls to prioritise and prepare action plans based on these needs, and conducts a screening test to categorise girls into groups according to their aspirations, aptitudes and skills so that they may access training programmes.
- A residential school is provided to girls who have passed their 8th grade standard and aspire to continue to the 10th or 12th grade standard by providing academic and life skills training.
- Financial assistance is provided to cover the cost of examination fees and textbooks for girls from low-income backgrounds who were not able to participate in the residential school programme.
- The issues of household responsibilities placed upon the girls are addressed by linking them with various government social protection schemes so that they are able to devote more time to their education.
- Female teachers were recruited and trained to support the girls in a protective environment that provides information on child rights and life skill education.
- Vocational courses were taught covering topics such as tailoring, embroidery and computer skills. Institutional arrangements were made with government technical agencies to provide training to the girls. Participants are provided with certification after completing the course.
- Support is offered to the participants to

find jobs or to create enterprises using the skills developed through the vocational training.

- Girls are connected to opportunities within government agencies to provide courses, certification, and work within teaching, nursing, the police force and other professional courses.

## Progress to date

- Many of the girls have expressed their desire to pursue further studies, and many asked for vocational skills so that they could become socially and economically empowered.
- 27 girls have been enrolled in the residential school.
- 16 of the 27 girls are preparing for the 10th grade.
- 11 of the 27 girls are studying for the 12th grade.
- The Rajasthan Government syllabus has been followed by the girls in the residential camps. The learning competence of the girls is good and it is expected that at least 90 per cent of the girls will succeed in their examinations.
- Two groups of 50 girls have been selected to participate in the vocational training exercises.
- 50 girls from economically poor families have been provided with a scholarship to support their examination fees and the cost of course textbooks.



## Good practice and lessons learned

- Getting girls who have dropped out back into education is challenging, so efforts should be made to ensure girls continue their education without any break. In this programme, Plan works with girls who graduated from Plan primary school programmes. The girls then attend empowerment camps where future opportunities are clearly identified. Plan provides access to making these opportunities a reality through education programmes, vocational skills training, and connecting girls to job opportunities related to their training and education.
- By investing in the initial project implementation, Plan spent time establishing contacts within the community – this has led to project success

as the community has taken ownership and accepted responsibilities, such as identifying girl students for participation, propagating the idea of residential camps and empowerment programmes, and convincing parents to send their daughters there.

- Providing safe and supportive learning environments and access to information about education rights to girls and communities coupled with connecting girls to skills training and job opportunities helps lessen the chance of girls dropping out.

## Recommendations for the future

- Competent female residential schoolteachers are essential to provide both academic and life skills lessons. Capacity-building of teachers is a good way to ensure the teachers learn methods of effective teaching in a girl-friendly environment.
- Empowering girls to build their confidence and recognise their rights to education works best when coupled with opportunities. These opportunities include holistic measures such as supportive environments to complete education, and providing education and skills training.



## 4 Inclusive action: FAWE-TUSEME (Let Us Speak Out)<sup>15</sup>

### Background

The Forum for African Women Educationalists is a pan-African non-governmental organisation, founded in 1992, whose goal is to increase access to, improve retention in and enhance the quality of education for girls and women in Africa.

The TUSEME programme (TUSEME is a Swahili expression translated as "let us speak out") was initiated in Tanzania in 1996 in partnership with the University of Dar es Salaam. The programme was a reaction to concerns among educationalists, parents and social groups about the poor performance and drop-out rates of girls in secondary

schools. The programme is ongoing, and is designed to act as an empowerment platform for girls to speak out and express their views on issues affecting their academic and social development by using theatre-for-development techniques to address concerns hindering girls' social and academic capacity.

## Key beneficiaries

Girls and boys of secondary-school age, with a priority focus on girls.

## Objectives

- To empower girls and increase girls' participation in secondary school.
- To train girls to identify and understand the problems affecting them at school, to articulate these problems and take action to solve them.<sup>16</sup>
- To reduce school drop-out due to poor academic achievement, early pregnancy, sexual harassment and other causes of drop-out or poor academic performance based on other forms of gender discrimination.

## Methods

- School clubs are established which help girls to learn negotiation skills, how to speak out, self-confidence, decision-making and leadership skills, through the use of drama, song and creative arts.
- TUSEME clubs are student-centred structures which facilitate the implementation of activities towards the empowerment of girls. They also serve as a speaking-out forum for students to discuss issues related to their social and academic welfare.
- Students are trained to establish theatre clubs where they are able to translate the problems they have identified, along with solutions, into theatre performances, whilst also receiving some basic training in theatre production.
- A post-performance forum is held immediately after to discuss the issues highlighted. The audience is encouraged to discuss the issues, find solutions and propose strategies for action. The solutions are then transferred to a plan of action that each school will use as a guide to try to address the barriers to girls' education.



- Students receive life skills training whereby they acquire a set of skills to empower them to deal with gender-based impediments to their education and self-development. The training includes building self-confidence and self-esteem, speaking out, decision-making, assertiveness, negotiation, leadership and self-control.
- Following the training, the students are equipped with skills to engage and convince their school administration, teachers, other students and community members to take action to improve the social and academic situation for girls at schools.
- TUSEME clubs can also take the form of study clubs in some schools.

## Results

- Over 80,000 girls in 21 countries have benefited from the TUSEME programme since 1996.
- 51,061 girls in nine African countries benefited from TUSEME FAWE's Youth Empowerment model, putting them in a better position to fight gender bias, stereotyping and discrimination.<sup>17</sup>
- The programme has seen a direct improvement in girls' self-esteem and in their leadership, social and life skills.<sup>18</sup>
- By 2007, a total of 416 teachers were trained<sup>19</sup>, and attitudes towards girls' rights at school have improved and led to a significant reduction in sexual harassment.<sup>20</sup>
- In Rwanda alone, by 2012 there were TUSEME clubs operating in 54 schools, with 3,657 club members. Of these, 50.3 per cent are girls while 49.7 per cent are boys.<sup>21</sup>
- The project has led to boys adopting more gender-friendly attitudes towards girls' schooling and to abandon gender discriminatory attitudes and practices.<sup>22</sup>
- The Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Culture officially adopted the programme model in 1999 in order to mainstream TUSEME into the country's 1,890 secondary schools. In addition, the Kenyan education centre support programme has also incorporated it into its schools.<sup>23</sup>
- In some schools, the establishment and support of study groups helped improve the academic performance of TUSEME students.

- Other results included enhanced relations between headteachers, teachers and students; improved sexual maturation management; and improved teachers' attitudes towards girls.<sup>24</sup>
- Since its inception, the TUSEME model has been replicated across the African continent in countries such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- Importantly, implementing the TUSEME model has proved to be a very effective strategy for building confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem in girls. In addition, girls' ability to analyse situations, make correct decisions, and challenge the systems, decisions and situations that negatively affect their welfare has improved significantly.

## Good practice and lessons learned

FAWE Rwanda has reported that some of the lessons learned with the TUSEME process included:

- Strategies need to be put in place to combat high teacher turnover following TUSEME training.
- Lack of support or understanding from some headteachers resulted in limited support or backing from schools.
- More newsletters are needed in order to reach the required number of children and teachers.

## Recommendations for the future

- FAWE Rwanda called for increased capacity building for headteachers and new TUSEME club teachers in order to gain maximum impact and support from schools.<sup>25</sup>
- Increased communication around best practice models in order for newer clubs to learn from other more established clubs.<sup>26</sup>
- More TUSEME club-monitoring visits.<sup>27</sup>
- Increased community outreach activities in order to stimulate community involvement and support.<sup>28</sup>



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## Girls online

A list of links to websites, reports, research institutions, databases, practitioner blogs and agencies working on education initiatives with a particular focus on girls and young women.

### Business Sector

**The Girl Effect** is a shared initiative by the Nike Foundation and the NoVo Foundation to create opportunities for girls. The 'girl effect' shows how a girl's empowerment can impact the girl, her community and humanity at large; it also provides tools and information for private sector actors, NGOs, governments and policymakers on how to empower girls. **Visit the Girl Effect at:** [girleffect.org](http://girleffect.org)

**Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women** is an initiative that works to provide underserved women in developing countries with business and management education, and to expand entrepreneurial talent. Its goal is to provide 10,000 women with a business and management education over the next five years. '10,000 Women' works with development, NGO and educational actors. **More information on the initiative can be found at:** [10000women.org/index.html](http://10000women.org/index.html)

**Standard Chartered Bank – 'Goal':** works to empower girls in their communities through sports training and life skills education programmes. This initiative partners with non-governmental organisations working with girls in China, India, Jordan, Nigeria and Zambia. To find out more about Standard Chartered's MDG projects, **see here:** [goal-girls.com](http://goal-girls.com)

**United Nations Global Compact** is a policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their organisation with humane principles in the area of human rights, anti-corruption, labour and the environment. By implementing this, businesses can ensure that market and commerce benefit economies and societies everywhere. An important part of the programme is concerned with empowering women in the workplace. More information can be **found**

**here:** [unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human\\_rights/equality\\_means\\_business.html](http://unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/equality_means_business.html)

**World Economic Forum** runs a Women Leaders and Gender Parity Programme which strives to promote female leadership and close the gender gap. It produces a Global Gender Gap Report which includes a full ranking of 128 countries from both the developing and developed world. It also monitors the change in rank from previous years to map improvements in the gender gap. [weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap](http://weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap)

### Girls' Rights Organisations

**Camfed** is an organisation dedicated to improving access to education for girls in Africa. Using a community-based, holistic approach, Camfed provides long-term support, such as fees throughout a girl's schooling; offers business training and small grants to women; and aims to empower women through a partnership with Cama, an association of Camfed alumni and other African women, which encourages young African women to become leaders in their own communities. **Find more information at:** [camfed.org](http://camfed.org)

**Forum of African Women's Educationalists (FAWE)** is a pan-African NGO founded by five female ministers of education. It works to improve access and quality of education to girls in the region. It has national chapters in 34 African countries. **More information can be found at:** [fawe.org](http://fawe.org)

**Girls, Inc.** is a non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering girls. It provides educational opportunities to girls in the most vulnerable sections of society in the United States. **For more information, visit:** [girlsinc.org](http://girlsinc.org)

**Girls Learn International** is a US-based organisation which pairs American middle- and high-school chapters with schools in countries where girls have traditionally been denied education. It promotes cross-cultural awareness and understanding and trains girls to be leaders in the movement for positive social change. [girlslearn.net](http://girlslearn.net)

### Great Science for Girls

The Great Science for Girls: Extension Services for Gender Equity in Science through After School Programs aims to provide inquiry-based informal science learning programmes that will stimulate girls' curiosity, interest and persistence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and break down the barriers of gender stereotyping. The site offers information on curriculum planning, resources and research. [greatscienceforgirls.org/resources-research/effective-stem-practices](http://greatscienceforgirls.org/resources-research/effective-stem-practices)

**Ipas** is an organisation focused on increasing women's ability to assert their sexual and reproductive rights. It works in several areas, focusing on sexual violence and youth, including advocacy, research, and training health workers in safe abortion technique and technologies. **For more information, visit:** [ipas.org/Index.aspx](http://ipas.org/Index.aspx)

**Room to Read** focuses on literacy and gender equality in education. The organisation works in collaboration with communities and local governments across Asia and Africa to develop literacy skills and a habit of reading. Room to Read emphasises supporting girls to complete secondary school with the life skills they need to succeed at school and beyond. [roomtoread.org/page.aspx?pid=209](http://roomtoread.org/page.aspx?pid=209)

**Vital Voices** is a global partnership that aims to empower women worldwide. Working in partnership with organisations in the business sector, it works to train women leaders and entrepreneurs around the world who can then go back and train women in their own communities. [vitalvoices.org](http://vitalvoices.org)

**Womankind Worldwide** aims to promote women as a force for change in development. It works in 15 developing countries, funding projects tied to women's legal rights and self-empowerment. **Visit the website at:** [womankind.org.uk](http://womankind.org.uk)

**Women for Women International** is a global NGO that works with socially excluded women survivors of conflict, by providing them with financial aid, job training, rights awareness and leadership education. To learn more about the programmes and projects they run, **visit:** [womenforwomen.org](http://womenforwomen.org)

**The Population Council** is an international non-governmental organisation conducting research into population issues worldwide. It is merging its research areas into three headings: HIV and AIDS; Poverty, Gender and Youth; and Reproductive Health. Their publications and resources **can be found here:** [popcouncil.org/publications/index.asp](http://popcouncil.org/publications/index.asp)

### Campaigns

**She's The First** is a media action campaign established by young women to promote girls' education in areas where that right is not often an opportunity, by attracting donors to their online directory of schools with sponsorship programmes. [shethfirst.org/about/](http://shethfirst.org/about/)

**10x10** is a global movement for girls' education channelling film and social action to increase investment in girls by driving resources to girl-focused programmes already operating, by penetrating the public consciousness and creating a vast grassroots network. Building on their support, 10x10 advocates for governmental, global and institutional policy changes to empower adolescent girls. **Find out more about their film and work here:** [10x10act.org](http://10x10act.org)

**ActionAid (Stop Violence Against Girls in School)** is a multi-country initiative working to address violence against girls in schools within Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. The campaign aims to reduce violence against girls in schools by shaping policies and laws and ultimately empowering girls to challenge the culture of violence in and around schools, and increase girls' enrolment. General information on the Stop Violence Against Girls in School project can be **found at:** [actionaid.org/what-we-do/education/stop-violence-against-girls-schools](http://actionaid.org/what-we-do/education/stop-violence-against-girls-schools)

**Amnesty International (Stop Violence Against Women)** is a campaign which strives to end violence against women and girls in times of peace as well as war. Its main themes are the empowerment of women, violence against women perpetrated by the state and the implementation of existing laws on rape and sexual violence. **For more information, visit:** [amnesty.org/en/campaigns/stop-violence-against-women](http://amnesty.org/en/campaigns/stop-violence-against-women)





**Girl Up** is the United Nations Foundation awareness-raising campaign to harness girls' energy and enthusiasm as a powerful force for change. [girlup.org](http://girlup.org)

## Coalitions

**Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)** is an international organisation working for women's rights, gender equality and development. It works to build alliances and influence international institutions to advance women's issues. AWID provides current and up-to-date information on women's rights in the news as well as profiling recent research and information on a multitude of topics, themes and countries. **See:** [awid.org](http://awid.org)  
The AWID Forum is a global women's rights and development conference which brings together leaders and activists to inform and broaden understanding of gender equality. **Visit:** [forum.awid.org](http://forum.awid.org)

**The Coalition for Adolescent Girls** acts as a platform for more than 30 international organisations working to improve the lives of adolescent girls in the developing world who are trapped in cycles of poverty. **Check out:** [coalitionforadolescentgirls.org](http://coalitionforadolescentgirls.org)

**NGO Working Group on Girls' Rights** is an international network which aims to ensure domestic implementation of international standards relating to girls in all stages of their youth, as well as promote advocacy of girls' issues in international policy. **More information can be found at:** [girlsrights.org](http://girlsrights.org)

**Women in Development Europe (WIDE)** is an umbrella organisation of European women's organisations which monitors and influences economic and development policy from a feminist perspective. It produces a monthly e-newsletter on its activities and news relating to gender and development. **To sign up for the newsletter, follow this link:** [wide-network.org/blocks/join.jsp](http://wide-network.org/blocks/join.jsp)

**A Safe World for Women: The 2011 Campaign** focused on ending all forms of abuse of women and girls. It is an online organisation that brings together NGOs,

groups and individuals committed to a safer world. Their website contains useful information on the types of violence inflicted against women and girls. **Visit:** [asafeworldforwomen.org](http://asafeworldforwomen.org)

## Youth movements

**World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts** works worldwide to provide a non-formal education through which girls can gain life skills and self-development. It reaches approximately 10 million girls through 145 member organisations. **For more information, visit:** [wagggsworld.org/en/home](http://wagggsworld.org/en/home)

**YWCA** is a global network empowering women around the world to enact social and economic change. It works with 25 million women and girls in 22,000 communities. It works in four priority areas: peace with justice; human rights; women's health and HIV/AIDS; and sustainable development. **For more information, visit:** [worldywca.info](http://worldywca.info)

## Foundations

**The Cherie Blair Foundation** works to provide entrepreneurship opportunities and access to technology for women worldwide. It provides finance, networking and business development support on the premise that economically empowered women not only have greater control over their own lives and the lives of their children, but also signal a brighter future for their communities and economies. [cherieblairfoundation.org](http://cherieblairfoundation.org)

**The Nike Foundation** supports initiatives to engage, empower and invest in adolescent girls which they view as a key element to reducing poverty in developing countries. The Nike Foundation was part of the coalition to form The Girl Effect (see page 184). [nikeinc.com/pages/the-nike-foundation](http://nikeinc.com/pages/the-nike-foundation)

**Girls Action** runs innovative girls' empowerment programmes across Canada, investing in girls and young women at both a local and national level. The

programmes foster community leadership skills and inspire action to change the world. Many of the girls enrolled in the programmes are from remote, marginalised and urban communities. **Find out more at:** [girlsactionfoundation.ca/en](http://girlsactionfoundation.ca/en)

**UN Foundation** The Foundation's Women and Population section has been working to empower women and girls worldwide, on the premise that they are essential to eradicating poverty and achieving social justice. They place a particular focus on reproductive and sexual health and rights, as well as investing in, and advocating for, adolescent girls. **More information can be found at:** [unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/women-and-population/](http://unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/women-and-population/)

## Multi-Laterals

**World Bank** works closely with other development organisations towards improving girls' education. It finances projects in developing countries as well as providing technology and financial assistance to countries with high gender disparities in education. **Other excellent resources from the World Bank on girls' empowerment can be found at:** [go.worldbank.org/1L4BH3TG20](http://go.worldbank.org/1L4BH3TG20)

**Global Partnership for Education** is a multi-lateral partnership which aims to ensure access to a quality education for the 67 million children currently not at school. It brings together governments; bilateral, international and regional agencies; development banks; private sector partners, and local and global civil society groups to mobilise and coordinate resources to achieve this goal. [globalpartnership.org](http://globalpartnership.org)



## Partnerships

**Girl Hub** is a collaboration between the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Nike Foundation. Girl Hub aims to form a global network of girls' experts and advocates and link them with development programmes and policymakers to promote girls' rights, and work to include girls in policy design and implementation. [girlhub.org/about/](http://girlhub.org/about/)

**iKNOW Politics** is an international knowledge network of women in politics from around the world who share experiences, access resources and advisory services, and network and collaborate on issues of interest. The organisation is made up of five partners: UNDP, UNIFEM, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. More information can be **found here:** [iknowpolitics.org/node/221](http://iknowpolitics.org/node/221)

**World Bank Adolescent Girls Initiative** hopes to improve girls' employment prospects tomorrow with training and education today. It works in partnership with the governments of Australia, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and private sector firms including Cisco, Standard Chartered Bank and Goldman Sachs. The initiative also offers incentives to employers to hire and train girls. **For more information, visit:** [go.worldbank.org/I5PX4JETM0](http://go.worldbank.org/I5PX4JETM0)

## Research

**Asia Pacific Women's Watch** is a regional network of women's organisations. It works to improve women's rights by working with other NGOs, national governments and the UN. **More information can be found at:** [apww-slwngef.org/](http://apww-slwngef.org/)

**Girls Count** is a global research series of reports focused on adolescent girls' empowerment. Previous reports have included 'Girls count: a global investment and action agenda', 'New lessons: the power of educating adolescent girls', 'Start with a girl: a new agenda for global health', 'Girls speak: a new voice in global development' and 'Girls grow: a vital force in rural economies'. The reports are produced by the Coalition for Adolescent Girls and a number of changing partners including the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the Population Council, the Center for Global Development and the International Center for Research on Women. **To learn more about the report series, visit:** [coalitionforadolescentgirls.org](http://coalitionforadolescentgirls.org)

**Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)** is a global network of children's organisations which coordinates and promotes information on child rights. It has a membership of 2,000 organisations, and its search facilities can be narrowed down by region or theme with extensive information concerning children's legal rights. **For more information concerning child rights mechanisms, see:** [crin.org/docs/CRINmechs.pdf](http://crin.org/docs/CRINmechs.pdf)

**International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)** is an organisation which works on research, technical support for capacity building and advocacy. Its research focus includes: adolescence, HIV/AIDS, food security and nutrition, economic development, reproductive health and violence against women. Regarding girls, it works towards improving sexual and reproductive rights and combating child marriage. **Its many publications on the subject can be found at:** [icrw.org/publications](http://icrw.org/publications)

**International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP)** Asia Pacific works to promote domestic implementation of international human rights standards. It focuses on the CEDAW, facilitating a flow of information from the international to the domestic, ensuring that women worldwide are aware of their rights. **More information can be found at:** [iwrap-ap.org](http://iwrap-ap.org)

**World Economic Forum:** Since 2006, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report series has been capturing and measuring the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress over time. The reports introduced an index which benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, education, health and political-based criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions, between men and women, between income groups and over time. **For more information, visit:** [weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap](http://weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap)

**Young Lives** is an international longitudinal study of childhood poverty, following 12,000 children in Peru, India, Vietnam and Ethiopia over 15 years. Young Lives is a collaborative research project funded by the Department

for International Development (UKAID) and coordinated by the University of Oxford in collaboration with research and policy partners in the four countries. **For more information on Young Lives, take a look at:** [younglives.org.uk](http://younglives.org.uk)  
A report by Young Lives on Poverty and Gender Inequalities was used as a background paper for the development of the 2011 'Because I am a Girl' report. **Check it out here:** [younglives.org.uk/files/policy-papers/yl\\_pp3\\_poverty-and-gender-inequalities](http://younglives.org.uk/files/policy-papers/yl_pp3_poverty-and-gender-inequalities)

## Resources and Databases

**Right to Education Project** aims to promote social mobilisation and legal accountability, focusing on the legal challenges to the right to education. The site offers resources on issues regarding gender and the right to education. [right-to-education.org/node/241](http://right-to-education.org/node/241)  
Additionally, the tools and resources section, which provides information, links and reports can be **found here:** [right-to-education.org/node/249](http://right-to-education.org/node/249)

**Wikigender** is a pilot project initiated by the OECD, which is dedicated to indexing and sharing terms and information on gender issues, including girls' empowerment. **For more information, visit:** [wikigender.org](http://wikigender.org)

**Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children** produces action-oriented research in order to support local, national and international communities in their work against violence against women and children. The Centre's research and publications can be **found here:** [crvawc.ca](http://crvawc.ca)

**DevInfo** is a powerful database combining three databases to review the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Of particular interest is its 'Facts. You decide' page which shows statistics on each of the MDGs. **It can be found here:** [devinfo.org/di\\_facts.html](http://devinfo.org/di_facts.html)

**Ed Stats** The World Bank offers educational statistics resources providing a comprehensive data and analysis source for key topics in education. [worldbank.org/education/edstats](http://worldbank.org/education/edstats)

**Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB)** represents a new tool for researchers and policymakers to determine and analyse obstacles to women's economic development. It covers a total of 160 countries and comprises an array of 60 indicators on gender discrimination. The database has been compiled from various sources and combines in a systematic and coherent fashion the current empirical evidence that exists on the socio-economic status of women. [bit.ly/KZzUSt](http://bit.ly/KZzUSt)  
Another of their projects is the **SIGI** (Social Institutions and Gender Index), a composite measure of gender discrimination based on social institutions in 102 non-OECD countries. Users may build their own gender index by changing the priority of the social institutions in the SIGI. [genderindex.org](http://genderindex.org)

**Girls Discovered** is a comprehensive, interactive resource of data relating to the welfare, health, education and opportunities of girls worldwide. It enables users to choose from over 200 datasets and view, compare and analyse their data on maps or download it as a spreadsheet. [girlsdiscovered.org/create\\_your\\_own\\_map/](http://girlsdiscovered.org/create_your_own_map/)



**Sexual Violence Prevention Network** uses a social justice and health framework, in order to raise awareness and share information with the ultimate goal of ending sexual violence. Its objective is to foster a network of researchers, policymakers, activists and donors to address the problem of sexual violence. To see a list of resources available, **visit:** [svri.org](http://svri.org)

**UNESCO Institute for Statistics** is an online database with global statistics on education, science and technology, culture and communication for more than 200 countries and territories. It includes a specific section on gender and education which monitors the progress of girls and the educational attainment levels of women. It creates new indicators to provide policy-relevant information at national and international levels. [uis.unesco.org](http://uis.unesco.org)

**WomenWatch** provides information and resources on gender equality and female empowerment. **The girl child is one of its critical areas of concern.** It is a useful source of information as it provides clear and easy access to the various UN conventions, bodies and activities relating to gender in a user-friendly way. **Information specifically related to the girl child can be found at:** [un.org/womenwatch/directory/the\\_girl\\_child\\_3012.htm](http://un.org/womenwatch/directory/the_girl_child_3012.htm)

**The WomanStats Project** provides extensive and comprehensive information on the status of women in the world. The Project facilitates understanding the linkage between the situation of women and the security of nation-states, and highlights qualitative and quantitative information on over 310 indicators of women's status in 174 countries. **For more information, visit:** [womanstats.org/index.htm](http://womanstats.org/index.htm)

**World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education:** UNESCO's global atlas of gender equality in education charts worldwide data trends concerning gender and education with broader social, economic and political factors. **To read more, visit:** [uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/gender-atlas-2012-web2-en.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/gender-atlas-2012-web2-en.pdf)

**Young Feminist Wire** is an exciting new online community for young feminist activism, which showcases the work of young feminists, brings them together to enhance their effectiveness, and offers resources. [yfa.awid.org](http://yfa.awid.org)



## UN Initiatives

**Gender and HIV/AIDS web portal** has been set up by UN Women in collaboration with UNAIDS in order to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. **For further information, see:** [genderandaids.org](http://genderandaids.org)

**Say NO to Violence** is presented by UN Women, and records what individuals, governments and organisations are doing to end violence against women worldwide and count the actions taken towards that goal. They provide free resources and publications to **download at:** [saynotoviolence.org/about-say-no](http://saynotoviolence.org/about-say-no)

**Stop Rape Now** is a UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, uniting the work of 13 UN entities with the goal of ending sexual violence in conflict. It aims to improve coordination and accountability, amplify programming and advocacy, and support national efforts to prevent sexual violence and respond effectively to the needs of survivors. **For more information, visit:** [stoprapenow.org](http://stoprapenow.org)

**The E4 conference**, held in April-May 2010, aimed to promote partnerships for girls' education against the obstacles that violence, poverty, climate change, health and educational quality can pose. The 'Dakar Declaration on accelerating Girls' Education and Gender Equality' was unanimously adopted by the participants at the conference. [ungei.org/index\\_2527.html](http://ungei.org/index_2527.html)

**UN Programme on Youth** is the UN's focus centre on youth. It produces a biannual World Youth Report. One of its areas of concern is girls and young women. **Information regarding its work on girls and young women can be found at:** [social.un.org/index/Youth/WorldProgrammeofActionforYouth/Girlsandyoungwomen.aspx](http://social.un.org/index/Youth/WorldProgrammeofActionforYouth/Girlsandyoungwomen.aspx)

**End Poverty 2015: The United Nations Millennium Campaign** aims to support and promote awareness of the MDGs. The campaign produces publications which summarise the data and achievements of

the MDGs so far, and there is a specific section dedicated to their gender/women's empowerment publications. **Information can be found at:** [endpoverty2015.org](http://endpoverty2015.org)

**Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence Against Women and Girls** is presented by UN Women and acts as a one-stop online centre which encourages and supports evidence-based programming to design, implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives more efficiently and effectively to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. The website provides step-by-step programming guidance and expert advice, including working with men and boys. **For more information, see:** [endvawnow.org](http://endvawnow.org)

**Women Watch** was first established as a joint UN project in 1997 to provide an internet space for global gender equality issues and to support implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. It is now managed by a taskforce of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, led by UN Women, and acts as a central gateway to information and resources on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the United Nations system. **For more information, visit:** [un.org/womenwatch](http://un.org/womenwatch)

**United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI)** is a global initiative that partners higher education institutions with the United Nations in order to promote the universally accepted principles of human rights, literacy, sustainability and conflict resolution. **Visit:** [outreach.un.org/unai/](http://outreach.un.org/unai/)

**United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** seeks to mobilise the educational resources of the world to help create a more sustainable future. It focuses on 12 key areas, including gender equality, indigenous knowledge, disaster risk-reduction, sustainable urbanisation and climate change. **For more information, see:** [unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/](http://unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/)



## UN Agencies

**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** focuses on child development, education and gender equality, HIV/AIDS, child protection and policy advocacy. **Of particular interest to girls** is the 2007 'State of the World's Children' Report: 'Women and Children: the Double Dividend of Gender Equality', the 2009 report: 'Maternal and Newborn Health', the 2010 report: 'Child Rights', the 2011 report: 'Adolescence – An Age of Opportunity', and the 2012 report: 'Children in an Urban World'. You can access all of these publications here: [unicef.org/sowc/](http://unicef.org/sowc/)

**UN Commission on the Status of Women** is a commission of the Economic and Social Council dedicated to gender equality and the advancement of women. The 54th session of the commission, which reviewed the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and its contribution towards the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals, can be found here: [un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html](http://un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html)

**UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)** was created in July 2010 to accelerate the UN goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women has merged together the roles of DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI and UNIFEM and works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women, and equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. UN Women seeks to support inter-governmental bodies to formulate policies, global standards and norms, to help member states to implement these standards (through technical and financial support) and to forge effective partnerships with civil society. In addition, UN Women holds the entire UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress. **For more information, see their website:** [unwomen.org](http://unwomen.org)

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)** publishes an annual global monitoring report on the state of the world's education, Education For All (EFA). The EFA movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. Commitments are made to gender equality in education. The 2003/2004 EFA global monitoring report, which focused on girls and education, can be **found here:** [unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/](http://unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/) Additional information on UNESCO and Education for All can be **found at:** [portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=30870&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30870&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is the UN's development organisation and works on the ground in 166 countries. Its yearly Human Development Report monitors development at national, regional and international levels, and can be found at: [hdr.undp.org/en/reports/](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/). Of particular interest: its Human Development Index (HDI) measures a country's development by considering education, life expectancy and income, but it also produces indices specific to gender: the Gender Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Index, which can be **found at:** [hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/gdi\\_gem/](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/gdi_gem/)

**United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)** aims to ensure that by 2015 the gender gap in primary and secondary education will have narrowed and all children complete primary education. Its 'Gender Achievement and Prospects' in education (GAP) projects works to assess progress towards MDG 2 (universal primary education by 2015) and identify obstacles and innovations. The GAP Report can be **found at:** [ungei.org/gap/pdfs/unicef\\_gap\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://ungei.org/gap/pdfs/unicef_gap_low_res.pdf)

**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** uses population data to ensure that every man, woman and child has the right to a healthy life. It produces a yearly 'State of the World's Population' report, several of which have focused on gender. 2006 focused on 'Women and International Migration'. [unfpa.org/upload/lib\\_pub\\_file/650\\_filename\\_sowp06-en.pdf](http://unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/650_filename_sowp06-en.pdf)

# Glossary

**Adolescent Fertility Rate:** The number of births per 1,000 women aged 15-19.<sup>1</sup>

**Assets:** Anything of material value or usefulness that is owned by a person. Can include human assets (e.g. skills and knowledge), financial assets (e.g. cash), physical assets (e.g. land ownership), and social assets (e.g. relations of trust).<sup>2</sup>

**Basic Education:** Refers to instruction at the first or foundation level, on which subsequent learning can be based; it encompasses early childhood and primary (or elementary) education for children, as well as education in literacy, general knowledge and life skills for youth and adults; it may also extend into secondary education in some countries.<sup>3</sup>

**Basic Learning Needs:** Refer to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for people to survive, to improve the quality of their lives, and to continue learning.<sup>4</sup>

**Compulsory Education:** The age range during which children and young people are legally obliged to attend school.<sup>5</sup>

**Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):** The first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights – for children. Adopted in 1989, the Convention sets out these rights in 54 Articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.<sup>6</sup> The CRC refers to an adolescent girl's right to survival and development, protection from exploitation and abuse, and her right to participate and express views on

matters that concern her life, as her capacity for making responsible choices evolves between the period of adolescence and adulthood.<sup>7</sup>

**Early and Forced Marriage:** Early marriage is any form of marriage that takes place before a child is 18 years old. Most early marriages are arranged and based on the consent of parents.<sup>8</sup> Forced marriage is any marriage conducted without the full consent of both parties and where duress is a factor. Early marriages often include some element of force.<sup>9</sup>

**Education For All:** The Education for All (EFA) movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. At the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000), 164 governments pledged to achieve EFA and identified six goals to be met by 2015. Governments, development agencies, civil society and the private sector are working together to reach the EFA goals.<sup>10</sup>

**Empowerment:** Can be interpreted as freedom of choice and action to shape one's life, including the control over resources, decisions and institutions necessary to do so.<sup>11</sup> The lack of power is one of the main barriers that prevent girls and women from realising their rights and escaping cycles of poverty. This can be overcome by a strategy of empowerment. Gender-based empowerment involves building girls' assets (social, economic, political and personal), strengthening girls' ability to make choices about their future, and developing girls' sense of self-worth and their belief in their own ability to control their lives.<sup>12</sup>

**Enrolment:** Number of pupils or students enrolled at a given level of education, regardless of age. See also Gross Enrolment Ratio and Net Enrolment Ratio.<sup>13</sup>

**Entrance Age (official):** Age at which pupils or students would enter a given stage of education assuming they had started out at the official entrance age for the lowest



level of education, had studied full time throughout and had progressed through the system without repeating or skipping a grade.<sup>14</sup> In some countries, children enter the education system later than the official age of entry, meaning they will be older than the other students in class and might also drop out sooner.

**Female Genital Cutting; Female Genital Mutilation; Female Circumcision:** The cutting, or partial or total removal, of the external female genitalia for cultural, religious or other non-medical reasons. It is usually performed on girls between the ages of four and 10 and results in the cutting or removal of the tissues around the vagina that give women pleasurable sexual feelings.<sup>15</sup>

**Gender:** The concept of gender refers to the norms, expectations and beliefs about the roles, relations and values attributed to girls and boys, women and men. These norms are socially constructed, they are neither invariable nor are they biologically determined and they change over time.<sup>16</sup> They are learned from families and friends, in schools and communities, and from the media, government and religious organisations.<sup>17</sup>

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** Gender-based violence refers to physical, sexual, psychological and sometimes economic violence inflicted on a person because of being male or female. Girls and women are most frequently the targets of gender-based violence, but it also affects boys and men, especially those who do not fit dominant male stereotypes of behaviour or appearance.<sup>18</sup> GBV occurs in many forms, including but not limited to intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence, sexual violence, and femicide or the killing of women because of their gender by males. The frequency and severity of GBV varies across countries and continents, but the negative impact it has on individuals and on families is universal and has direct links to health problems.<sup>19</sup>

**Gender Discrimination:** Gender discrimination describes the situation in which people are treated differently simply because they are male or female, rather

than on the basis of their individual skills or capabilities. For example, social exclusion, inability to participate in decision-making processes, and restricted access to and control of services and resources are common results of discrimination. When this discrimination is part of the social order it is called systemic gender discrimination. For instance, in some communities, families routinely choose to provide education for their sons but keep their daughters at home to help with domestic work. Systemic discrimination has social and political roots and needs to be addressed at many different levels of programming.<sup>20</sup>

**Gender Equality:** Gender equality means that women and men, girls and boys enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. Gender equality does not mean that men and women are the same, but rather that they have different but related needs and priorities which are recognised and equally valued. Women and men's relative positions in society are based on standards that, while not fixed, tend to advantage men and boys and disadvantage women and girls. Consequently, they are affected in different ways by policies and programmes. A gender equality approach is about understanding these relative differences, appreciating that they are not rigid but can be changed, and then designing policies, programmes and services with these differences in mind. Gender equality can then be measured in terms of equality of results, meaning gender equality is concerned with arriving at equal outcomes rather than giving identical treatment. Ultimately, promoting gender equality means transforming the power relations between women and men, girls and boys in order to create a more just society for all.<sup>21</sup> Gender equality is not a 'women's issue' but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.





**Gender Equity:** Fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. A gender equity approach ensures equitable access to, and control of, the resources and benefits of development through targeted measures.<sup>22</sup> This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equal in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.<sup>23</sup> In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women and girls.<sup>24</sup> Scholarships for girls are one example of an equity approach that contributes to all children, boys and girls, accessing school and equally benefiting from education opportunities. Increased gender equity is only one part of a strategy that contributes to gender equality.<sup>25</sup>

**Gender Justice:** Gender justice refers to the ending of inequalities between women and men that result in women's and girls' subordination to men and boys, in both the informal and formal sectors.<sup>26</sup> It implies that girls and boys, men and women have equal access to and control over resources, the ability to make choices in their lives, as well as access to provisions to redress inequalities, as needed. A commitment to gender justice means taking a position against gender discrimination, exclusion and gender-based violence. It focuses on the responsibility to hold duty bearers accountable to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, particularly of girls and women.<sup>27</sup>

**Gender Mainstreaming:** This is a strategy for promoting gender equality which ensures that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender (e.g. achieving gender equality) are central to all activities. Gender mainstreaming can be applied to many activities, such as policy development, research, advocacy, resource allocation and development and monitoring of programmes.<sup>28</sup>

**Gender Neutral Approach:** Where gender is not considered relevant to the outcome and gender norms, roles and relations are not affected (worsened or improved).

**Gender Norms:** Socially constructed beliefs regarding men and women's behaviour which are 'assigned' in accordance with their biological sex. These norms govern our actions and choices and may lead to gender stereotyping.

**Gender Parity Index (GPI):** The ratio of the number of female students enrolled at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education to the number of male students in each level.<sup>29</sup> A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 means a disparity in favour of boys; a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of girls.<sup>30</sup>

**Gender Pay Gap:** The gender pay gap refers to the difference between men's pay and women's pay as a percentage of men's pay.<sup>31</sup>

**Gender Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes are socially constructed and unquestioned beliefs about the different characteristics, roles and relations of women and men that are seen as true and unchangeable.<sup>32</sup> Gender stereotypes determine the gender roles that males and females play in society by influencing what is considered masculine and feminine. At the same time, they reinforce gender inequality by portraying these views and beliefs about women's and men's roles as biologically or culturally true. They are reproduced and re-enforced through processes such as the education and upbringing of girls and boys, as well as the influence of media. In many societies, girls are taught to be responsive, emotional, subservient and indecisive; while boys learn to be assertive, fearless and independent. Gender stereotyping occurs when such characteristics are persistently attributed to the roles and identities of males and females in society. It shapes people's attitudes, behaviours and decisions and locks girls and boys into behavioural patterns that prevent them from developing to their full potential and realising their rights. Gender stereotyping can lead to the social exclusion of those who do not fit the stereotype.<sup>33</sup>

**Gender Transformative Approach:** A policy or programme approach which assumes that gender equality is central to achieving

positive development outcomes and transforming unequal power relations.<sup>34</sup>

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** refers to the gross market value of all officially recognised goods and services produced within a country in a given time period.<sup>35</sup>

**Gross Enrolment Ratio:** refers to the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education.<sup>36</sup>

**Gross National Income (GNI):** This comprises the total value of goods and services produced by the domestic economy of a country, measured within a given period of time, usually a year (a similar value is Gross National Product (GNP)).<sup>37</sup>

**Intersectional Discrimination:** The idea of intersectionality refers to the interaction between two or more forms of discrimination or systems of subordination. It highlights the ways in which racism, patriarchy, economic disadvantages and other discriminatory systems contribute to create layers of inequality.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, it addresses the way that specific acts and policies create intersecting burdens that contribute actively to create a dynamic of disempowerment.<sup>39</sup>

**Literacy Rate:** The percentage of population of a given age range who can both read and write, with understanding, a short simple statement on their everyday life.<sup>40</sup>



**Maternal Mortality:** refers to the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.<sup>41</sup>

**Minimally Invasive Education:** A pedagogic method that uses the learning environment to generate an adequate level of motivation to induce learning in groups of children, with minimal, or no, intervention by a teacher.<sup>42</sup>

**Net Attendance Ratio:** Number of pupils in the official age group for a given level of education who attend school in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.<sup>43</sup>

**Net Enrolment Ratio:** Number of pupils in the official age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.<sup>44</sup>

**Net Intake Ratio in Primary Education:** Number of pupils at the official school entrance age who are new entrants to the first grade of primary education, expressed as a percentage of the children of official admission age to primary education.<sup>45</sup>

**Out-of-School Children:** Children in the official school-age range who are not enrolled in school.<sup>46</sup>

**Patriarchy:** Refers to historical power imbalances and cultural practices and systems that confer power and offer men and boys more social and material benefits than women and girls.<sup>47</sup>

**Public Expenditure on Education:** Total public finance devoted to education by local, regional and national governments, including municipalities. Household contributions are normally excluded. Public expenditure on education includes both capital and current expenditure. Capital (public) expenditure includes expenditure for construction, renovation and major repairs of buildings and the purchase of heavy equipment or vehicles. Current (public) expenditure includes expenditure for goods and services consumed within the current year and which would have to be renewed if there were a need for prolongation the following year. It includes expenditure on staff salaries and benefits; contracted or purchased services; other resources, including books and teaching materials; welfare services; and other current expenditures such as furniture and equipment, minor repairs, fuel, telecommunications, travel, insurance and rents.<sup>48</sup>

**School Age Population:** Population of the age group which officially corresponds to the

relevant level of education, whether or not enrolled in school.<sup>49</sup>

**School Life Expectancy:** Number of years a child is expected to remain at school or university, including years spent on repetition. It is the sum of the age-specific enrolment ratios of primary, secondary, post-secondary, non-tertiary and tertiary education.<sup>50</sup>

**Secondary Education:** Includes two levels: lower secondary education (ISCED Level 2), generally designed to continue the basic programmes of the primary level. Teaching at lower secondary level is typically more subject focused, requiring more specialised teachers for each subject area. The end of this level often coincides with the end of compulsory education. Upper secondary education (ISCED Level 3) is the final stage of secondary education in most countries. At this level, instruction is often organised more along subject lines than at ISCED Level 2 and teachers typically need to have a higher or more subject-specific qualification than at ISCED Level 2.<sup>51</sup>

**Sex:** Refers to the biological characteristics, which define humans as male or female. This should not be confused with gender, which is a social attribution.<sup>52</sup>

**Technical and Vocational Education:** Designed mainly to prepare pupils for direct entry into a particular occupation or trade (or class of occupations or trades).<sup>53</sup>

**Tertiary or Higher Education:** Includes two stages: the first stage of tertiary education, ISCED Level 5, includes programmes with an educational content more advanced than those offered at ISCED Levels 3 and 4. This first stage of tertiary education is composed of ISCED Level 5A, which includes largely theoretically based programmes intended to provide sufficient qualifications for gaining entry to advanced research programmes and professions with high skills requirements; and ISCED 5B, which includes programmes generally more practical/technical/ occupationally specific than ISCED 5A. The second stage of tertiary education, ISCED Level 6, is reserved for tertiary programmes

leading to the award of an advanced research qualification. The programmes are devoted to advanced study and original research.<sup>54</sup>

**The Feminisation of Poverty:** Is used to describe incidences where women have a higher rate of poverty than men, where their poverty is more severe than that of men, and where there is a trend of greater poverty among women, particularly associated with rising rates of female-headed households.<sup>55</sup>

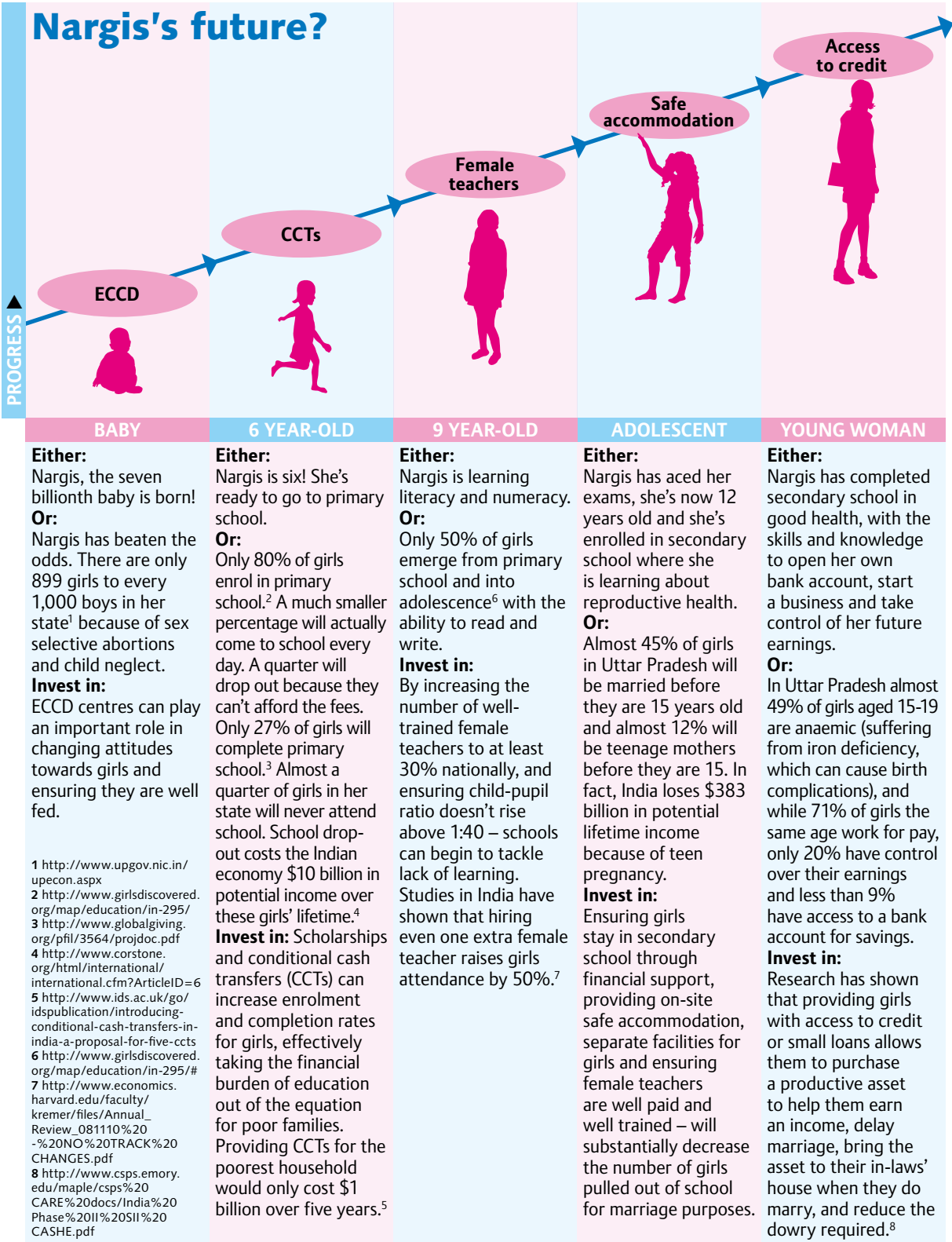
**Transformative Education:** The study of transformational learning emerged with the work of Jack Mezirow in relation to adult learning specifically.<sup>56</sup> Transformational learning is defined as inducing more far-reaching change in the learner than other forms of learning, especially learning experiences which shape the learner and produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift, which affects the learner's subsequent experiences.<sup>57</sup>

**Transition Rate to Secondary Education:** Number of pupils admitted to the first grade of secondary education in a given year, expressed as a percentage of the number of pupils enrolled in the final grade of primary education in the previous year.<sup>58</sup>

**Types of Empowerment:** Empowerment can be understood in terms of four distinct types of power relations:

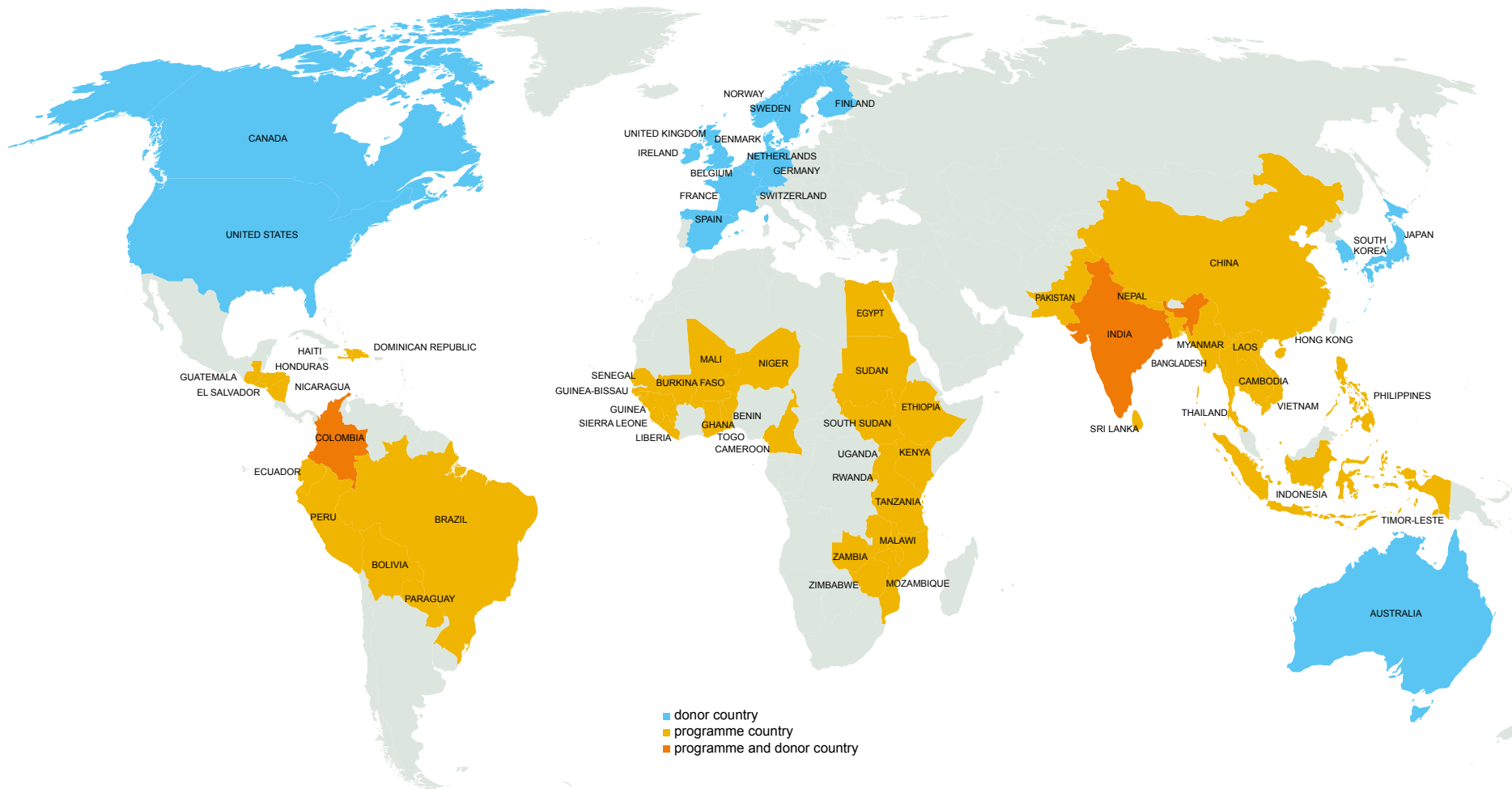
- **Power over:** the ability to coerce and influence the actions and thoughts of the powerless.
- **Power to:** the capacity to act, to organise and change existing hierarchies.
- **Power with:** increased strength from collective action, social mobilisation and alliance-building.
- **Power from within:** increased individual consciousness, self-dignity and awareness.

**Universal Primary Education:** Millennium Development Goal 2 (to achieve Universal Primary Education) is enshrined in Target 2A, which aims to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.<sup>59</sup>





# Where Plan works



■ donor country  
■ programme country  
■ programme and donor country

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# About Plan International



Plan is one of the oldest and largest international development agencies in the world. Founded in 1937 to provide relief to children caught up in the Spanish Civil War, we celebrate our 75th anniversary in 2012. We work in 68 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania and the Americas. Plan directly supports more than 1.5 million children and their families, and indirectly supports an estimated further nine million people who live in communities that are working with Plan. We make long-term commitments to children in poverty and assist as many children as possible, by working in partnerships and alliance with them, their families, communities, civil society and government, building productive relationships and enabling their voices to be heard and recognised in issues that affect them. Plan is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations.

**Plan has a vision:** a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. Today, hundreds of millions of children remain without their rights. We believe this is totally unacceptable. Our strategy explains how Plan is going to address those wrongs and work towards enabling every child to have rights and opportunities.

Plan's strategy to 2015 has **one goal:** to **reach** as many children as possible, particularly those who are **excluded** or **marginalised**, with **high-quality programmes** that deliver **long-lasting benefits**.

Getting there will not be easy but we know it can be done. It will require focus, dedication and attention to detail. It also requires us to build on what we do best, and not be afraid to modernise less effective practices. The strategy focuses, therefore, on areas that will have the biggest impact in driving us towards our **one goal**.

## We will:

- Increase the number of individual and institutional supporters from existing and new fundraising countries;
- Improve our policies, systems and processes;
- Collaborate more strategically with other organisations.

There is also a bigger ambition to take into account. In the process of delivering this strategy, we are determined to become **one Plan**, a more effective, efficient and collaborative organisation whose individual parts are all striving towards our **one goal**.

[plan-international.org](http://plan-international.org)



OLLIVIER GIRARD