Economic Dimensions of Gender Problems in Nigeria: Challenges and Solutions

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Introduction

One of the basic principles behind a just society is equality in access to opportunities. While defining what consists of equality of opportunities is notoriously difficult, there is general agreement that access to education constitutes one of the most important. Nevertheless, it is obvious that equal access to even basic education is not universal in many countries and huge differences exist in educational attainment both within and across countries.

The level of education is a fundamental factor in a country's economic development. There is ample evidence that a highly educated labor force is one of the key factors to promoting economic growth. Low levels of education are highly correlated as well with poverty. For instance, it has been contended that lack of adequate education levels has been one of the most important factors contributing to the persistency of high levels of poverty in Latin America (Londoño, 1996).

Just as important as the overall level of education in a country is its distribution between its residents. In most countries, the level of schooling for females is lower than that for males.

Furthermore, the gender gap in education is higher in developing countries than in more developed countries. Women's education has been demonstrated to have substantial positive external effects apart from their beneficial effects on the woman herself. Besides generating private returns from labor market participation, women's education has strong impacts on numerous other variables as well, such as their children's health and mortality, as well as their own fertility and reproductive health. A large literature exists which has demonstrated that social returns to investing in women's education outweigh the social returns to investing in men's education (Schultz, 1993, King and Hill, 1993).

Other studies have shown that it is important not just to improve overall education levels men and women but to ***reduce*** gender gaps between men and women as well. There is some evidence that gender inequality in education is associated with reductions in GDP per-capita as well as other indicators of development such as life expectancy and infant mortality (King and Hill, 1993). The implication of this is that the benefits of increasing female education are more than just an increase in income or in productivity. If equality in educational attainment between the sexes is not achieved, improvements in social indicators can only be achieved at much higher levels of economic growth.

The current development policy emphasis on human resource development in general, and female education in particular, is couched largely in terms of economic efficiency and social welfare arguments. The rationale for investment in education tends to be based on economic arguments about rates of return and efficient allocation of resources, using neo-classical models of household decision-making, where rational, maximizing investment and consumption decisions are made on the basis of quantifiable costs and benefits.

An extension of this argument, but still from a mainstream economic perspective, is that investment in education provides social benefits which are not captured by individuals or households, and which therefore justify state subsidies to education. This argument is used particularly to justify greater subsidies to female education, since, it is held that social benefits to female education (e.g. reduced fertility, improved health etc.) are greater than those to male education. (Herz et al, 1993; King and Hill, 1991).

The Political Economy of Gender Disparity in Education

There are numerous factors which underlie both the continued existence of a gender gap in education and also its variation between countries and regions. These include ***historical***, ***economic*** (both macro- and micro-), and ***socio-cultural*** factors, as well as factors related to ***educational policy*** and the nature of ***school provision***.

Although discussed separately, these factors cannot be easily categorized into independent variables, since the nature of educational provision will be largely determined by historical and macro-economic factors, micro-economic decisions will respond to wider economic conditions, and socio-cultural norms, or at least the extent of adherence to these, are susceptible to change under economic pressures.

Historical factors

Nigeria has experienced direct colonial rule for over 60 years which had a major impact on the Nigerian society, not least through the creation of new education systems. The effect of this may have been the provision of education for elite groups, whilst excluding lower classes, and the majority of women, for example, thus creating a legacy of educational differentials. Indeed, the National Policy on Education itself acknowledges class disparities when it states that a portion of the system, the Senior Secondary School, is for those *able* and *willing* to continue their education, while for the vast majority, it was expected that the Junior Secondary School segment, with its heavy focus on vocational education, would be the terminal of their education. The vocational orientation of the Junior Secondary School was expected to provide the graduates with a series of life-long skills that would enable them to survive non-white collar labor market.

Further, the relative educational privilege Southern Nigeria over Northern Nigeria can be partly explained by colonial policies. On the other hand, colonial intervention or missionary activity may have been instrumental in creating wider access to modern education, even if it has marginalized a significant form of other education in some areas.

In the Northern part of the country, as numerous studies have shown (e.g. Bray 1981), where ever parents have only an opportunity to educate their children, the boys always get the first chance, at the expense of the girls. This is tied with the perceived economic advantage of educating boys who are expected to be future bread earners, while girls will inevitably get married and thus are seen as economic risks if educated.

Education and macro-economic indicators

Schultz (1991), using cross-national data, finds that the income elasticity of girls education is higher than that of boys. However, when the relationship between per capita gross national income and enrolment ratios is explored through regression analysis, for a range of countries, including some in Asia, although positive, the association is not strong. The same applies also for gender parity and per capita income. Herz et al (1991: 10) concluded that:

> Firstly, neither high levels of per capita GNI [gross national income] nor economic growth ensures improved female enrolment with gender parity. Higher female enrolment and gender parity do not occur automatically as development proceeds. So waiting for per capita GNI to grow enough to .fix. the gender gap in education and raise female enrolment is not a promising strategy for most poor countries. Second, several countries with low per capita income and limited economic growth achieved remarkable improvements in female education with gender parity. In these countries, deliberate public policy choices evidently made a difference, and it was not simply a matter of increasing public spending on education.

Other standard macro-level indicators of development, such as the level of urbanization, are also not good predictors of gender parity in education, particularly at low levels of urbanization, where there is great variation in enrolment ratios.

High population growth rates are often associated with low levels of educational provision, and particularly lack of gender parity. Low levels of education of women are often associated with high fertility. The corollary to this is that higher levels of education, especially for women, may reduce fertility. At the same time, high population growth rates undermine educational provision because they reduce the amount of available expenditure per child.

Employment, unemployment, wages and returns to education

Other economic issues relating to employment have been raised to explain continuing gender differentials in education, such as low levels of female participation in the labor force, high female unemployment rates, and wage discrimination faced by women, leading to low returns to educational investment. There is a clear positive relationship between participation in education and probability of being in the labor force, for women.

However, countries with high female participation in education also tend to have high rates of female labor force participation. Consequently, it is unclear as to what impact participation in the labor market has on participation in education, though one might assume it motivates both women and their parents to increase investment in education. (Tilak, 1989). Wage discrimination according to gender is a feature of labor markets world-wide, to varying degrees.

This acts against female participation in education in two ways: by reducing the possibilities for women of supporting their own education through earnings and by lowering the returns to educational investment for women and/or their families.

However, the relationship between wage discrimination and participation in education is not clear-cut. (Khan, 1989). The less it is perceived that education will lead to increased future earnings, the less likely women are to continue in school. The reverse effect, whereby wage discrimination forces women to get more education to increase their earnings relative to men, is apparently not prevalent. (Tilak, 1989).

Unemployment may tend to put downward pressure on female participation in education in the short term, as girls and/or women are pushed back into a .secondary earner role under recessionary conditions and girls are taken out of education as a result. Boys may also be removed from school to earn income, but are less likely to be substituted for female labor in the home.

Increased unemployment may also lower investment in education in the longer term, since it will decrease the perceived likelihood of returns being realized in the form of earnings. However, it may, at the same time, reduce the opportunity costs of education and thus encourage greater participation — this is more likely to be true of boys, than girls, however. Where there are gender differentials in unemployment at particular levels of education, such that women's unemployment is higher, this will clearly reduce the expected returns to female education. (Tilak, 1989).

Intra-household resource allocation

There has been considerable work done, from an economic perspective, on household decisions about investment in children's education, as part of a wider literature on the economics of the family and the household. Some of this work (e.g. Folbre, 1985, on the Philippines; Greenhalgh, 1985, on Taiwan) highlights the importance of remittances or inter-generational transfers of income from children to parents, and also, gender differentials in allocation of resources such as food, health care and education, to children The broad argument advanced from a neo-classical economic perspective is that parents invest less in daughters because they expect lower returns (either because daughters will get lower paid jobs, spend less time in the labor force, and/or because they will leave the family and get married), or because their tastes and attitudes, which are given, prejudice them against female education. However, this assumes that parents make joint decisions and have the same interests in their children's. education - which may not be the case.

Alternative analyses, based on bargaining power approaches to the household, have stressed the need to look at gender relations within the household as a factor in determining how resources are allocated. Whilst it is often argued that parents will not realize the benefits from educating daughters, in fact, parents may be able to access earnings of young female members of the household more easily, at least in the short-term before they marry and have children. This is clear from the fact that most of the children hawking in large urban and semi-urban clusters in Northern Nigeria are girls.

In the patriarchal family structure, daughters' incomes may be more easily appropriated by the household, or daughters may feel more obliged to meet

expectations to provide income to the household. It is well documented that men retain a larger portion of their income for own consumption than women (e.g. Bruce, 1988).

Household characteristics

Various household characteristics, such as level of education of parents, occupation of parents, family size and income group, have been put forward to explain variations in female enrolment. Education studies show that as parents level of education increases, so does the likelihood of female enrolment, but there are variation in studies as to whether mothers or fathers education has the greatest impact on daughter's education.

One study in Lahore, Pakistan, found that fathers education had a much greater influence over daughters' than sons' schooling. Mothers education was less important, except in upper middle class families (Khan, 1991). Elsewhere, studies have shown that mothers' education level has a major effect on attitudes to daughters' education and in some cases, a significant impact on education of both sons and daughters (*Ibid*.; Tilak, 1991; Herz *et al*, 1991). In some cases, mothers' education affects daughters' but not sons' (Tilak, 1991). The literacy rate of the community as a whole, as well as within particular households, has a significant impact on female participation rates in education, suggesting a demonstration effect within communities, even socially very conservative ones (Khan, 1991: 193).

Literacy (especially of women) was also found to be a significant predictor of both total enrolment and gender parity, at the national level (Herz et al, 1991), lending analytical weight to the saying: ***When you educate the women, you educate the nation***..

Occupation

Similarly, parents in white collar occupations are more likely to support daughters' education than those in blue collar occupations (Tilak, 1991). It is not clear how mothers' occupation, separately, might influence daughters', since most such studies focus on the occupation of head of household (presumed to be male). Where mothers are working, they may be more motivated to send daughters to school, because they perceive the connection between education and increased earnings and, possibly, because they can financially assist in supporting their daughters' education.

Income

At the micro-level, poverty may be critical in decisions on female education. Income (or other measures of wealth, such as land-holding) has more affect on girls than on boys education. In higher income strata, girls are considerably more likely to be enrolled in school than in low income groups. This may reflect a strategy favoring boys where parents cannot finance all children to attend school, and also higher opportunity costs of girls' labor in poorer households (Tilak, 1991: 226-7). Opportunity costs of child labor may be particularly hard for low income households to bear - in poorer households, girls are less likely to attend school, since their labor is more essential to the household, where mothers are more likely to be working.

The percentage of direct costs of education in average household income varies across countries but is similar for boys and girls, reaching as much as ten percent of household income (Herz *et al*, 1991). Poorer households in particular will find it

harder to meet the direct costs, as these will represent a higher proportion of household income. Data on the proportion of household expenditure spent on education do not, however, reveal the division of responsibility within the household for paying for schooling costs for different children. If, for example, mothers are generally responsible for school fees, then there is little basis for assessing affordability on total household income.

Socio-cultural factors

Religious, ethnic and other socio-cultural factors are not static constraints on female education, but interplay with other factors, and are susceptible to change.

Religion

The evidence on the impact of religion on girls' enrolment is inconclusive, suggesting that it is too simplistic to associate low participation of girls with particular religious affiliations. There does appear to be a link, for example, the predominance of Islam with low female enrolment and wide gender gaps in education. Religious practice varies considerably between different countries and communities and class, income and other factors mediate the impact of religious attitudes. In Kano, Nigeria, for instance, one of the strategies taken by the government was to establish a series of Islamiyya schools — that integrated religious and secular studies which makes it easier to accept a more balanced world view.

Age at marriage and marital systems

Marriage, particularly early marriage, may affect girls' educational achievement. Single women tend to have higher educational levels than married women, but the trade off is not simple; there may be common causes of both, rather than a clear causal link. (Tilak, 1991: 236).

There is also a wide range of singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) by sub-region and country. Benin, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Niger have the lowest SMAM. Data on women (which dates to the early 1980s in many cases) indicate that their SMAM is below 20 years of age in the following African countries: Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone and Uganda. Other countries in the world with a SMAM for women of below 20 years are: Bangladesh, Cuba, India, Oman, Nepal and Yemen. The sub-region of West Africa has the highest levels of marriage among women aged 15-19; Southern Africa has the lowest levels, and Northern Africa has had significant reductions in adolescent marriages, with Morocco showing one of the sharpest declines.

In most countries, the legal minimum age at marriage, and actual average age at marriage, are lower for women than for men. Early marriage thus probably acts as more of a deterrent to female than to male education.

School related factors

The extent, quality and nature of available schooling can have a considerable influence over educational enrolment patterns, including by gender. In many instances, the ways in which schooling is delivered limits girls' access or performance. The quality of educational provision tends to affect attendance and

performance. This may have a particular impact on girls, where, for example, there is a general tendency for teachers in large classes to pay less attention to girls.

Types of school

In some Asian countries, e.g. Malaysia, girls have much higher enrolment ratios in religious schools than boys. This may be because parents feel that such schools inculcate moral values which are not taught in state schools (Tilak, 1991). Sex-segregated schools may also be preferred by parents for girls, and there is some evidence that girls, although not boys, perform better in these than in co-educational schools. (*Ibid.*)

Similarly, when the Kano State Government introduced Girls Arabic and Girls Islamiyya secondary schools in the early 1980s, girls's education tremendously improved in the State because parents now see a form of education they can readily identify with, and which prepares a girl for both a career in and out of the house. There are currently about 24 girls-only Arabic/Islamiyya secondary schools in the State.

Distance and location of school facilities

Distance of school facilities is used as a conventional measure of the adequacy of supply of school places (Khan, 1991). It is often argued that the greater the distance of the school, the more the gender gap in participation will be increased, because, for example, of parents concern about girls' safety, or moral reputation (particularly in communities where female seclusion is the norm).

Fall off of attendance tends to occur especially as girls approach puberty, when family honor in some predominantly Muslim societies becomes linked to concerns over daughters' sexual modesty. Transport availability is a bigger issue for female students than male and may introduce other hidden costs of female education. Similarly, the need to provide girls' with suitable clothing, where questions of moral reputation and seclusion are at stake, can prove a disincentive to female education.

Where separate schools are the norm, shortage of places and distance of female facilities may be a particular issue. However, costs of duplicating facilities may be prohibitive and may lead to second rate institutions for girls. Distance is more of a problem at secondary level, partly for reasons given above, and partly because facilities tend to be further away; moreover, enrolment at primary level may be affected if there is no nearby secondary school, or if the primary school facility is not complete.

In fact, the evidence is not clear as to whether it is distance *per se,* or other factors, such as lack of separate facilities such as toilets, lack of walls around schools, lack of provision for transport, or other barriers are really responsible for lowering female attendance. Some studies have shown that relatively short distances reduce female attendance, it is worry about females crossing a major river or road, or simply being exposed to public scrutiny, which prevents attendance (BRIDGE, 1994). Issues of social, rather than simply physical, distance, may be constraints on attendance, e.g. where schools are located in large urban clusters in which village children may not be able to enter. Thus sometimes the gender bias is sanctioned by the government through insufficient provision of gender-specific schools, especially for girls. This

makes education more difficult for poor rural peasant parents who cannot afford to send their daughters to large urban schools.

Curriculum bias and relevance
Curricula may project stereotyped and limited role models/representations of girls and women. Gender-based conditioning which influences choices about subject areas in secondary and higher education and about employment, begins early on. Culturally conditioned perceptions of girls and the hidden curriculum in schools influence their educational and vocational aspirations, their subject choices and their options for further study and employment (Jayaweera, 1987: 465).

Another aspect of the curriculum is its perceived relevance, both by parents and by students, and the impact of this on attendance. This is a tricky area, since parents' perceptions of what subjects are appropriate and relevant for girls may be quite limiting. Parents tend to have an instrumental attitude towards education, seeing it principally as a route to employment, or transferring skills and values which will make girls better wives and mothers (Jayaweera, 1987). Rural families particularly, may favor traditional skills such as childcare, cooking and handicrafts for girls (Khan, 1991: 191). Where increased local participation in school financing and management is being promoted, this may be leading to increased conservatism about appropriate curricula for girls.

Female teachers
Low representation of female teachers is thought to be a constraint on improving access of girls to education and quality of girls' education, due to (a) parental worries about contact of adolescent girls with male teachers, particularly in highly sex-segregated societies; (b) conversely, the lack of attention given by male teachers to female students; and (c) the need for female teachers as a role model for girls. Those countries with a low representation of female teachers also tend to have low enrolment ratios of females in schools, and low gender parity, e.g. Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea.

Gender Mainstreaming
In the light of these economic dimensions of gender problems in Nigeria, what are the challenges and solutions? This is the direct sphere of a series of strategies in gender mainstreaming.

The strategy of mainstreaming of gender equality has been advocated since the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing 1995. It is an institutional strategy for sustainable integration of gender equality perspectives and strategies for organizations and institutions.

Gender mainstreaming has a double meaning, as it is a ***strategy*** and a **process of agenda setting** and change at different levels within organizations and institutions. It is both a ***technical*** and a ***political*** process which requires shifts in organizational cultures and ways of thinking, as well as in the goals, structures and resource allocations of organizations. It requires changes at different levels within institutions and organizations, paying attention to equality between women and men in agenda setting, policy making, planning, budgeting, implementation, evaluation and thus in all decision making procedures.

Mainstreaming requires that a gender analysis is carried out before the important decisions on goals, strategies and resource allocations are made. Gender mainstreaming is thus not an objective in itself. It is a means to achieve gender equality by combining the strategy of integration with a process of changing the actual content, direction and ways of working at organizational and institutional levels. In the context of a human development agenda, gender mainstreaming implies enlarging the choices for women, especially poor women. This implies negotiating new relationships between people and negotiating new kinds of institutions, norms and rules that support egalitarian and just relationships between women and men, especially through:

- Establishing supportive legal, economic, and social institutions, including equality of rights.
- Fostering income growth and economic development, because the evidence indicates that these help promote gender equality in the long term.
- Undertaking active measures to promote gender equality in the command of resources and political voice.

The Challenges — Policy and Programs: Successes and Failures

Three promising types of measures to increase girls' education have been identified, i.e. ***increasing the economic returns of educating girls*** (through economic policies); ***lowering the costs to parents of educating girls***; and ***providing direct incentives***. (IBRD, 1991). Identifying appropriate policies depends on the context.

In poor agrarian societies, direct and opportunity costs, as well as socio-cultural factors, pose severe constraints and the gender gap is wide, as in much of South Asia. In these countries, progress in education requires policies addressing a number of constraints simultaneously, through economic, as well as educational approaches. At the same time, severe budgetary constraints mean that there is little if any additional expenditure available for education (Herz *et al*, 1991: 32). In the countries under transition in East Asia (China, Laos, Vietnam), there is a need to ensure that past progress in extending education and lowering gender inequalities are not sacrificed in the drive towards liberalization.

In middle income countries, the constraints on female education are less severe, particularly at primary level. Attention needs to be focused on secondary and tertiary education, and on widening fields of study and labor market opportunities for women.

Economic policies

Policies to improve girls' access to education, reduce gender gaps and increase the quality of girls' education are not restricted to the education sector. Macro-economic and employment policies can directly impact on the returns to girls' education in terms of the possibilities of their labor market participation, self-employment and returns to economic activity.

Macro-economic policies may cause distortions which create biases against women's economic activities, where, for example, women are concentrated in sectors which are discriminated against by pricing structures, availability of credit, access to markets

etc. Such distortions may limit women's ability to realize the returns of educational investment in increased productivity or income.

In poor agrarian societies, where women have a very limited range of opportunities, policies which increase women's access to labor markets and improve their productivity and earnings will be particularly important. As well as measures to assist women in increasing productivity and earnings, measures are also needed to offset the increase in opportunity costs of girls' household labor arising through increased female labor force participation and wages, e.g. through improved childcare provision, water supply provision

Better information and analysis is required about the potential interactions between macro-economic policies, employment policies and educational investments, in overcoming constraints to female education.

Public expenditure and educational financing

Where investments are currently low, as in the case in Nigeria today, increased education expenditure is a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition for expanding enrolment and tackling the gender gap. To this extent, a reorientation of government (and donor) expenditure priorities may be required. However, there is considerable variation in the efficiency of education systems, which mediates the effectiveness of increasing public expenditure. Additionally, more money alone will not necessarily overcome gender-based constraints, without some restructuring of service delivery systems and simultaneous action in other areas.

Decentralization of school management and financing has some positive aspects in introducing more flexibility in systems, enabling local solutions to gender constraints to be found. However, whilst such measures may allow increased flexibility which works in favor of increased girls' enrolment and also more rapid expansion of education provision, there may also be negative quality and equity impacts, such that those areas most in need of investment to improve the quality of education are those least able to afford to finance it (Colclough with Lewin, 1993).

Education policies

A wide variety of measures have been tried, within the education sector, to address gender constraints in education. These include: ***awareness campaigns***; ***recruitment of female teachers***; ***protection of girls' privacy*** (sanitation facilities etc.); ***separate schools for girls of equal quality to boys schools***; more flexible schedules; retention of pregnant girls and mothers; child care provision; and special scholarships and other direct incentives. (IBRD, 1991).

Other educational measures are not gender specific, but may help girls more than boys where parents are reluctant to send daughters to school, for example, smaller, closer schools; improved quality of schooling; reduction of direct costs of education for all children; deepening community involvement; making school compulsory. The most successful projects involve a package of measures and need to specifically include measures to reduce costs to parents. Increasing the internal efficiency of education can offset subsidies required for improved provision, and special incentives for girls (*Ibid.*).

Legislative measures
Legislation which makes education compulsory up to a certain age can be useful in promoting enrolment generally and particularly, enrolment of females (Colclough with Lewin, 1993). Nigeria belongs to the cluster of countries that have a long history of compulsory education at primary level and/or of legislation providing for equal access to education by sex. However, enforcing compulsory education in a situation of inadequate supply of school places, may be counterproductive.

Awareness campaigns
Parental literacy, especially mothers' literacy is related to improved educational opportunity of children, and particularly for girls. Awareness and enrolment campaigns linked to adult literacy or other non-formal education for adults may be particularly successful. The importance of conveying the practical benefits of female education to parents has been stressed (Montgomery, 1993). The involvement of community and/or religious leaders in promoting female education may be another potentially successful strategy (BRIDGE, 1994).

Little is known about the impact of such campaigns. Attitudinal change is difficult to assess or relate directly to interventions rather than other factors; moreover, during and immediately following campaigns, schools and campaign organizers are likely to inflate their enrolment figures more than usual (Montgomery, 1993).

Incentives and subsidies to female education
Subsidies to girls' education are justified on both efficiency (externalities) and equity grounds. Incentives are necessary to overcome the direct and opportunity costs of female education, where these may be higher than those for boys and/or where parents tend to favor educating boys in a situation of scarce resources.

Numerous approaches to providing special incentives or subsidies to encourage girls to attend school could include: exemption from fees; subsidies for uniforms and textbooks, scholarships; and school feeding and health programs, *inter alia*. Such policies have been implemented in India, for example, and also Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Secondary Education Scholarship Programme, which started in 1977, gave over 18,000 scholarships in grades 6-10 to cover secondary tuition and succeeded in expanding enrolments ratios of girls from 27 percent to 43 percent of the eligible population in the project area (it is not clear how this compares to increases in non-project areas) and in reducing drop-out of females, as well as having spin off benefits at primary level. However, it was also found that:

> The decision to limit funding to a target group of girls from "poor" families ... proved unwise as: a) the chosen indicator of poverty was too low; b) administrative costs increased and school places were left empty because of problems identifying suitable candidates and c) community support deteriorated when some girls were excluded.. (Herz et al, 1991: 44).

Recruiting female teachers
Increasing the proportion of female teachers, particularly at primary and secondary levels, is another major strategy which has been tried in order to reduce gender inequality in education. Various measures have been tried. Quotas for entry into teacher training and/or teaching jobs are one approach. However, in some cases,

quotas can become ceilings such that women's recruitment does not advance beyond a certain level, particularly if they are set too low (BRIDGE, 1994). It also may give the appearance of having dealt with the problem, when in fact quotas are not filled. In come countries, female representation in teaching is very high — e.g. Philippines. However, above a certain level, increased representation of female teachers is liable to create a ghettoized profession, particularly at primary level. Thus, increased representation of female teachers should not be seen as a wholly positive development.

Experience from elsewhere shows that, in the context of structural adjustment programs, or more generally, restrictions on public expenditure, teachers real salaries may have been progressively eroded due to rising inflation, such that they either abandon the profession or take up other jobs or income earning activities concurrently. (BRIDGE, 1993). Where there are pressures of this kind, training of new recruits to the profession will be of limited benefit unless they can be retained through improved pay and conditions, or other incentives. Such problems may be particularly pertinent to those Asian economies undergoing currently transition to the market (China, Laos, Vietnam), where private sector opportunities may be increasingly attractive relative to working in a low wage public sector.

Lowering the entry qualifications for women is another form of positive discrimination which could increase female representation in the profession, particularly where recruitment from local communities is being encouraged, often linked to the creation of community based facilities. Many such programs have been implemented, often taking in girls at post- primary level and enrolling them in teacher training courses at secondary level (Herz et al, 1991: 50). Adequate training and support, and possibilities for further training and promotion should be given in such instances, however, to ensure that a second class tier of female educators is not created.

Financial and other incentives may be required to encourage teachers to relocated to rural areas, e.g. provision of housing, relocation expenses, transportation etc. However, on their own, these will be insufficient. Allowing regular home leaves and creating networks of support may also be necessary. Encouraging re-entry of women into teaching after long breaks from the labor force may be another way of increasing female representation.

More of these specific strategies of gender mainstreaming are listed in the Appendix to this presentation.

Summary

Several factors are known to adversely affect girls' school enrollment, persistence and achievement. Different combinations of these factors work together in different countries and regions to limit girls' educational opportunities. Amongst them are:

- **Poverty:** Poverty is very possibly the foremost factor limiting girls' educational opportunities. Households confront two types of costs in sending their girls to school - direct costs and opportunity costs. Direct costs include things such as tuition fees, the cost of purchasing textbooks, writing supplies, book bags, uniforms and other classroom needs, transportation fees, and miscellaneous school fees. Often, direct costs must be covered by families at one time, at the beginning of the school year, and impose a significant "once-off" cost. For families with more children, these direct costs may equal, or even exceed, the family's total monthly income. Even where education is nominally "free" and where no tuition fees are levied, the costs of textbooks and other supplies is often quite significant. Opportunity costs are the costs incurred by a household when they release a girl from the household and agricultural chores she performs. In most countries, girls perform significantly more household and agricultural work than boys, cleaning the house and preparing the food, caring for younger siblings, the elderly and the sick, performing key agricultural tasks and processing the crops. When a girl attends school, the household must find other means of getting this work done, and this imposes costs on the family. Many country studies have shown that households' inability to cover the direct and indirect costs of education are the overriding reason why girls are not in school.
- **Low quality and relevance of education:** Research shows that school quality has an especially important impact on girls' enrollment and persistence rates. The higher costs typically associated with girls' education, and the more limited formal employment opportunities usually available to female school leavers, means parents will more readily pull their girls out of school if they believe that the quality and relevance of schooling is limited.
- **Limited access and inadequate infrastructure:** Parents, concerned about the physical safety of their girl children, will not enroll them in school if they must travel long distances to school. Provision of smaller satellite schools located closer to communities have often been very successful in increasing girls' enrollment and retention rates. In some cultures, single sex schools need to be provided for adolescent girls. In many countries, provision of girls' latrines and water points in the school are also important in ensuring girls' continuation in school.
- **Socio-cultural factors:** In some countries, socio-cultural norms conflict with girls' educational opportunities. Initiation rites, early marriage and seclusionary practices are often at odds with schooling.
- **Limited income generation opportunities:** Parental and student perceptions of the economic returns they can expect from their investment in education also affects their willingness to enter and continue on in school. Social customs, market conditions, labor laws, and employer attitudes influence women's employment opportunities more markedly than men's. In poorer, rural areas, employment opportunities for women are likely to be very limited and it is seldom culturally acceptable for women to migrate in search of employment. In urban areas, the customary exclusion of women from certain

professions, restrictions on women's employment imposed by labor laws, and discriminatory wage structures hold the returns to female education down. These factors undoubtedly diminish parents' willingness to invest in girls' education and are disincentives to girls to persist in school.

- **An inadequate or unsupportive policy environment:** Despite efforts to achieve universal primary education, many countries lack a comprehensive strategy to address girls' education. Many policies and practices governing admissions requirements, time-table scheduling, treatment of girls in schools, access of pregnant or married women to school, etc. are barriers which hinder girls' school enrollment and persistence.

Based on current practice, six general themes emerge as critical environmental factors for facilitating successful implementation of good technical approaches in support of girls' education - to getting a "jump start" in support of education for all girls:

- ***Political will.*** Recognizing the value of political will is not new, but there is a better understanding of what this involves. Political will cannot be a one-time thing; it has to be reflected in coherent policies that are implemented to support their education. It requires tenacity at the highest levels. There is another aspect of political will that is critical and that is the building of a national consensus for girls' education. Consensus must be more than verbal agreement, however; it includes social mobilization and involvement of all aspects of society, including but not limited to parents and communities.
- ***Leadership.*** There are several aspects of leadership that have proved to be especially important in assuring education for all girls. Moving the education agenda forward requires more than politicians with the political will. They also have to be extremely pragmatic, knowing when to compromise and negotiate in order to build alliances on a common agenda. This requires flexibility that is combined with good judgment in terms of understanding what compromises are the least likely to have negative outcomes for girls, paying special attention to unintended consequences. Strong female leaders have had a particularly large impact on building and maintaining political will in support of girls' education.
- ***Supportive fora.*** Advocacy is essential to sharing key information, building partnerships and maintaining political will. A key element in building advocacy has been the full range of fora that have kept attention on the need for affirmative action in support of girls' education. This includes international conferences, working groups, informal networks, newsletters and organizations that are specifically dedicated to girls' education, such as the Forum of African Women Educationalists. These serve as a very visible "conscience" to those who are not continuously working in support of every girl's right to an education.
- ***New partnerships.*** One area where girls' education has made important and new contributions has been in building new and different kinds of partnerships in order to have the commitment and support that is necessary for their education. Agencies have been brought into partnerships in new ways and have been more willing to change the "terms" of partnerships to make them more egalitarian. The search for financial resources that may be hard to find for girls' education has resulted in partnerships of "unlike" organizations and agencies, including non-governmental organizations, teachers' organizations

and communities. Such partnerships may have been complicated, but have also enriched dialogue and contributed to innovation.

- Within girls' education, two kinds of partnerships are noted as critical in enabling this education to move ahead: networking and mentoring. Through these partnerships, leaders, and women in particular, have found "spaces" for encouragement and sharing ideas.

Another series of strategies that could be adopted to ***move forward*** any gender mainstreaming strategies would have to take into consideration the following factors:

1. Concerns about girls' education and gender parity within the context of Education for All (EFA) would have to begin with a clear articulation of what is meant by ***Education***. It is clear by now that there are various spectra of education; at which spectrum should we begin to focus gender mainstreaming strategies? If gender parity is brought to the front burner, what should be the focus and emphasis of any education strategies — are we aiming at ***basic*** literacy, ***life-long skills*** acquisition, or ***career***-drawing strategies? So far EFA has been contextualized within conventional meanings of education, and alternative forms of education such as indigenous knowledge practices in education domain do not seem to be made part of the EFA matrix. We need to re-focus attention on the varieties of availabilities of education to ensure effective gender mainstreaming.
2. There is a need to move away from theoretical diagnosis, towards a more pragmatic prognosis. So far most of the discussions on gender parity and mainstreaming tended to focus attention on the ***causes*** of gender disparity, but little evidence emerges on concrete strategies that would address the issue more effectively, except suggestions and more suggestions. In this regard, we can borrow from the World Bank's approach in handling the Nigerian Primary Education Project, whose component included Client Consultations, as a result of which communities identified specific measures that would encourage the enrolment and retention of children in primary schools. Part of the series of packages aimed at addressing the problem was the provision of matching grants and counterpart funding to communities that have demonstrated strong capacity and initiative in addressing the issues of quality of primary schools, with World Bank assistance coming to further strengthen that capacity. This approach could be adopted in gender mainstreaming, by wide-spread client consultation on ***specific measures*** the community feel would address the problem; then various interventions by development partners and government agencies would be created to address the problem.
3. There is also a need to move away from "official" statistics, which in Nigeria are never reliable, to a ***definitive baseline*** on the nature of the problem of gender mainstreaming and the impact of the various variables identified as impediments. A series of statistics might be provided by ministry officials to show the number of girl schools and thus demonstrate commitment to enrolment and retention of girls; but there is no baseline on various economic indices that impact on gender

mainstreaming or are indeed impediments. Unless we have this baseline, effective planning of solutions would be quite difficult.

4. We need to negotiate the biggest barrier of all — the National Policy on Education. In my view, it should be scrapped completely. The Federal Government may wish to provide certain benchmarks, and let the individual states device their own benchmarks, based on their indigenous knowledge practices or indigenous realities to carve out implementation policies that suit their communities. Most of the problems of gender parity are the problems of the National Policy on Education. For instance, a curriculum perceived to be gender-biased, is directly hewn from the specifications of the National Policy on Education; teachers do not have the capacity or power to change the curriculum and as such will continue to implement a gender-biased curriculum. For instance, the United States does not operate a National Policy on Education, and this does not damage its educational implementation; counties and states have the power to determine policies based on their indigenous needs.
5. The examples of the strategies given in the Appendix are departures from conventional provisions, towards a more experimental and deconstructivist policies of achieving gender mainstreaming. There is therefore a need to focus on communities and their various initiatives on gender mainstreaming (even if by helping them to identify these strategies from their daily activities), and then re-package these initiatives into specific programs aimed at gender parity. This will help in providing a sharper focus on the ***education*** component of ***Education*** for All strategies.

Appendix

Outcomes of Specific Gender Mainstreaming Strategies

Guatemala: Basic Education Strengthening Project (1989- 1997)

Components Targeted to Girls

- National leaders mobilized.
- Teachers, community members, and education officials received gender training.
- Gender-sensitive instructional materials and curriculum guides developed.
- Self-instructional guides developed to help girls catch up after missing school.
- Gender-sensitive curriculum planning instituted.
- Flexible school calendar, compatible with girls' domestic responsibilities, adopted.
- 200 one-room, one-teacher, community schools established.
- Three incentive packages tested: scholarships, community outreach, and motivational classroom materials.

Benefits to Boys

- Classrooms without bias encouraged participation of all students, not just the assertive ones. More heterogeneous participation created more dynamic classrooms.
- Gender-sensitive materials and training benefited all students by showing realistic role models.
- Boys in Nueva Escuela Unitaria schools had better attendance than boys in control group schools.
- Scholarships, paid as monthly stipends to parents, could be used for any family expense and thus benefited boys as much as their sisters.

Short-Term Development Benefits

- Private sector provided funding for education.
- Through gender training, community members learned about changing roles and expectations for men and women.
- Government implemented a five-year scholarship program for girls, benefiting girls and schools.

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Guinea: Ministry of Pre-University Education: Educational Reform (1990- 2000)

Components Targeted to Girls

- National Equity Committee, an intraministerial working group, advocated increasing knowledge and awareness of girls' education.
- National social marketing campaign conducted.
- Pilot campaign raised community awareness.
- Latrines constructed.
- Female teachers recruited.
- Standard of one book to one student ratio established.
- Tracking of student achievement initiated.

- Liberalized pregnancy policy established.

Benefits to Boys

- Parents gave increased priority to education for all children.
- Boy's enrollment increased from 40 to 66 percent.
- Boys performed better on both 2nd and 7th grade standardized exams than they did prior to girl-focused educational changes.
- Latrines provided for boys.
- Boys exposed to female teachers as contemporary female role models.
- More boys given their own books, rather than having to share with another student.

Short-Term Development Benefits

- Community exposed to new ideas about women's roles and the need for girls' education.
- School latrines demonstrated practice of good hygiene.
- Teachers provided exposure to modern female role models.
- Pregnant girls allowed to continue in school.

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Mali: "Village Schools" of the Basic Education Expansion Program (1989- 1998)

Components Targeted to Girls

- School calendar and schedule adapted to conform to local agricultural seasons.
- Curriculum designed to be relevant to rural life and customs.
- Local language used for instruction.
- Schools required 50/ 50 attendance of girls and boys.
- Management committees established to oversee school construction and management and teacher payment.

Benefits to Boys

- Boys in village schools performed better on language tests than boys in government schools.
- Boys in village schools had lower dropout rates than boys in government schools.

Short-Term Development Benefits

- Community members gained experience in civic roles as members of the school committee.

Bangladesh: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee Non- formal Primary Education Program (1982- 1992)

Components Targeted to Girls

- Community-based, multi-grade schools run by nongovernmental organizations established.
- Schools located in communities through use of rented rooms equipped with trunks to hold materials.
- Female teachers recruited and trained.
- Parent committees established and trained.

Benefits to Boys

- Parents preferred the program's girls' schools to the government schools because they were closer, were free, and used physical punishment infrequently. Substantial numbers of boys were enrolled.

Short-Term Development Benefits

- Community members participated in school decisions. Parents believe they will be able to form future committees.
- Standards of cleanliness and hygiene provided a model for the community.

Long-Term Development Benefits of All Projects

- Educated girls will have lower birthrates.
- Girls and their families will be healthier.
- Girls will have more employment opportunities.
- For each year of education, girls will have increased earning power.
- Women's earnings will be used for health and education expenses.
- Girls will participate more broadly in civic affairs.
- Educated girls will become better educators of the next generation.

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