Strategies for Acceleration of the Girl-Child Education in Northern Nigeria

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Introduction

The number of children in schools in the developing world has increased markedly over the last two decades, but because of inadequate infrastructure, shortsighted national education policies, and small education budgets, more than 400 million children are still not in school. Two thirds of them are girls. Yet the education of girls is one of the most important tools in breaking the cycle of poverty and the abuse of children's rights. Let us look at some pointers and indicators:

- Of the nearly one billion illiterate adults, two-thirds are women living in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East (Friedman, 1992)
- In more than 29 countries, less than 30 percent of women are literate. In Morocco, 56 percent of girls aged five to 14 are illiterate (Friedman, 1992). The female literacy rate as a percentage of the male literacy rate is 28 percent in Sudan, 39 percent in Somalia, 46 percent in Cambodia and 75 percent in Guatemala (UNICEF, 1994).
- In Mali, 84 percent of girls have never attended school; of those who attend, 60 percent drop out in the primary grades (Friedman,1992)
- In Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal fewer than 30 percent of girls aged six to 15 are enrolled in school (Carr, 1994)
- Younger girls and boys are likely to have similar primary school enrollment rates; by age 16, fewer girls then boys are in school in nearly every country in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Near East. In Yemen, only 14 percent of girls 16-20 attend school compared to 61 percent of their male peers (Carr, 1994)
- Female literacy in Pakistan improves about 5 percent per decade, at which rate it will take 60 years to raise the literacy rate of teenage women age 15 to 19 to 70 percent (Sathar et al, 1988).
- Gender bias pervades school texts. In Moroccan primary school texts, the majority of pictures depict women cooking, mothering, cleaning, marketing, fetching water and milking cows. In 53 texts examined, women appeared dressed traditionally 40 times but in work clothes only four (Friedman, 1992).

Focusing on girls' educational achievements and career aspirations allows society to ensure women economic security, a better quality of life, and more career choices. As a result, the need for social welfare will decrease, since most families in poverty are headed by women with inadequate education. Thus, targeting more equitable educational techniques will not only improve the lives of individual women, but will also advance the community as a whole as having that many more worthwhile contributors.

The Jomtien Conference (1990) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) triggered unprecedented dialogue on gender issues within these national education ministries and with nongovernmental stakeholders in education. For instance, at Jomtien participants made a global commitment to **ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation** (Article 3, WCEFA).

Every country, organization and agency dedicated itself to achieving this goal. Getting girls into school and ensuring that they benefited from the experience in a supportive, enabling environment was identified as critical to achieving education for all. This created a global profile which helped create space for girls and women in development agendas and in the media. National ownership of gender education issues is increasingly displacing foreign-forced gender agendas. More gender-equity targets are being integrated into externally and locally funded education programs. Dynamic dialogue has also become the catalyst for significant policy change: *Education for All* master plans in Nigeria's Universal Basic Education program (UBE).

At Jomtien participants faced the reality that the gender gap in primary school enrolment ratios had not diminished despite a significant expansion of education in the least developed countries[1]. After girls entered school, they often dropped out earlier than boys. Circumstances needed to be more favourable to permit girls' retention within the system. Schools had to be cheaper, better and closer to home to attain universal access for girls, especially in the poorest countries and the regions of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. While other regions had reached universal access or were close to it at the primary level, in many countries differentials between girls and boys still persisted at the secondary and tertiary levels in many countries. Further, the data from higher educational levels in almost all regions revealed that girls studied mathematics and science and entered the more technological careers at far lower rates than boys.

Beyond issues of access and subject choice, the school experience itself was significantly different for girls than for boys. The hidden curriculum in teaching materials, notably textbooks, and the attitudes of teachers, administrators, and other pupils conveyed the message to girls that they were inferior to boys and should have lower aspirations for themselves. There was a strong suspicion that these negative attitudes and experiences were being reflected in the generally low attainment and achievement levels for girls as compared to boys. These and other factors led participants to the conclusion that many education systems are systematically biased against girls.

Some populations were more likely to have low schooling rates. For example, poorer communities, those isolated by geographic or cultural barriers, or those who were part of religious or ethnic minorities were much more likely to enrol fewer children, especially girls. Governments and societies were excluding significant portions of their population. Participants at Jomtien adopted a Framework for Action as the

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[1] King, E. & A. Hill 1993 .

guiding document to achieve education for girls and all excluded populations by the end of the decade.

The Environment of Discouragement
Economic, social, and cultural issues make girls' school attendance a complex decision for parents. Parents fail to enroll girls for many reasons. They may not send girls to school because they consider the benefits of education for girls to be limited and the cost of fees, uniforms, and supplies to be too great a drain on the family budget. They may keep girls at home to help with domestic work. If a school is far away, parents may fear for their daughters' safety. Even when parents do send a daughter to school, she may have difficulty succeeding in a system where the majority of teachers are male, male students are favored, and classroom dynamics require a spirit of competition with which she often has little experience.

Educating girls requires addressing the complex mix of obstacles keeping girls out of school. Designers of girls' education programs strive to reduce barriers for girls while ensuring that initiatives do not negatively affect boys. Let us see how the trend has affected girls' schooling.

Qualitative research conducted in classrooms reveals common patterns and characteristics of girls' learning environments, which include teachers' interaction with students, their attitudes and beliefs about female and male

The education of women in particular is seen as providing the key to securing intergenerational transfers of knowledge, and providing the substance of long-term gender equality and social change. Thus gender equity in access to health and education occupies a central place in the global policy discourse on human and social development. Gains made in women's education as a result of global advocacy and donor pressure have been significant, in some cases; however, more often than not they are fragile, vulnerable to changes in economic and social environments, and still struggling to catch up with male rates of enrolment and achievement. Achievements are particularly visible in the primary education sector; whereas in the secondary and tertiary sectors, there are still huge gaps, especially in the countries of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Thus the .gender gap. persists, despite a well-developed and accepted body of scholarship on the factors that constrain female education achievement relative to that of men, and despite the prediction of high rates of return to state and household investment in primary education.

Although huge advances have been made in education attainment globally, particularly in the last 35 years (Colclough, 1997), there are enormous regional and interregional differences in achievement, particularly by the yardstick of universal basic education attainment. Despite the prevailing wisdom about the multifaceted importance of education, progress toward universal education in many poor regions of the world, notably South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa has been very slow. In parts of Africa the growth of primary enrolments fell below the rate of growth of the population between 1981 and 1991 (Colclough, 1997). In South Asia progress is positive though slow, and requires acceleration (World Bank, 1995:37). The contradictions and tensions between the recognition of the urgency of universal education, on one hand, and the deleterious impact of economic policies, on the other, are increasingly highlighted in literature from and about these two regions.

Enrolment Growth

Net enrolment ratios have grown overall, and girls' enrolment ratios have grown substantially over the past decade. As Table 1 indicates, girls' enrolment has grown more than boys' in all regions of the developing world, particularly in East Asia and the Arab States. ***However, the growth has not been 'accelerated' and girls are still less likely to be in school than boys.***

Table 1 Percentage Growth in Net Enrolment Ratios, 1990 – 2000, by Gender				
	Primary		Secondary	
	M	F	M	F
Developing Countries	2.7	5.6	13.4	24.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.2	5.9	13.9	16.8
Arab States	*-1.1*	6.0	10.2	24.8
Latin America/Caribbean	7.5	7.0	16.6	16.8
East Asia	0.9	3.4	12.4	38.9
South Asia	4.8	13.4	7.4	18.5

The review is based on data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. The data is based on projections after 1998 as computed in Hyde, K. A. L. and Miske, S (2002),

In the Arab States, there appears to have been a contraction in the net enrolment rates of boys at the primary level at the same time as there has been an increase at the secondary level. The reasons for this are unknown and it should be a cause for concern. Girls' enrolment levels at primary level have increased at above average rates and there has been significant growth for females at secondary level within the region.

In all regions, the secondary level has grown more strongly than the primary. Without a more in-depth analysis, it is impossible to state precisely the reasons for this. The expansion of the more expensive secondary level may indicate that the more affluent members of society are disproportionately enrolling their children in secondary school. Another explanation could be that the different starting levels are the reason for the higher growth rates at secondary level; the primary level would be more constrained by ceiling effects. Since the primary level enrolment is higher to start with, an increase of a given size would form a smaller proportion of the enrolment .

When a girls' education initiative seeks to provide special advantages to girls, parents and teachers often intervene to ensure that boys share these benefits. In Malawi, school fees were waived for girls as part of a comprehensive educational reform. Male students in one village staged a strike, and parents refused to pay their sons' fees. The Malawi government thereafter abolished fees for all students. A girls' initiative raised awareness about an educational issue and all students benefited. As in Guinea, boys' enrollment in Malawi ultimately increased even more than girls' enrollment did.

But more than enrollment improves. One girl- focused project in Guatemala resulted in lower dropout rates and higher promotion rates for both boys and girls. Apparently, making parents aware of girls' education made them focus their attention on boys' education as well. They increased their support as much for their sons' schooling as for their daughters'. The benefits of a girls' initiative were naturally and equitably broadened to boys.

Better Teachers, Better Schools

Girls and boys in the same classroom do not receive the same education. In developing countries, in particular, boys are taught to be assertive. They demand and receive more attention from teachers. Girls, in contrast, are socialized to behave more passively and are easily ignored by teachers. When teachers use methods that encourage standing and shouting, boys learn better. Because boys appear to be more responsive, teachers perceive them as more interested and smarter. They give boys more attention and positive reinforcement. In addition, educational materials typically show many strong role models for boys but few or weak role models for girls. This differential valuing of girls' and boys' performance creates a cycle that partially explains differences between girls' and boys' school success. For girls to succeed in school, they need methods that encourage active learning and reward them for their effort.

Guatemala's *Nueva Escuela Unitaria* program of one- room, multi- grade community schools provides empirical evidence of instructional approaches that are positive for both girls and boys. USAID/ Guatemala's Better Education Strengthening Project supported a demonstration project of 200 Nueva Escuela Unitaria schools that used collaborative learning, peer teaching, and self- instructional guides — all methodologies that successfully address differences in girls' and boys' learning styles.

These active-learning methods prompt children to work alone or in small groups of peers. Working with children their own age, girls do not feel intimidated and become active learners. Gender-neutral materials, girl-positive teacher behavior, and bilingual education were also incorporated in Nueva Escuela Unitaria schools. Project results suggest that overall classroom quality- the combination of teaching quality, methodology, and materials- is most important for improving achievement, enrollment, and retention for both boys and girls.

In learning how to instruct girls, teachers become better educators. When they adopt active-learning methods, they begin to expand their teaching styles and methods to meet the needs of all students. They come to realize that children learn in many different ways. They increase their awareness of gender differences and let go of stereotypical responses to students. They become aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, and habits as teachers. As a result, they become more effective in working with all children.

Increased Resources at National and Local Levels.

There is no evidence that boys have ever lost out as a result of a girls' education program. On the contrary, when resources are invested in girls' education, resources increase for boys, too. In Guatemala, Morocco, and Guinea, USAID's Girls' Education Activity has emphasized mobilizing national and community leaders to spearhead girls' education campaigns. In Guatemala, three private sector foundations have supported large girls' education projects. In Morocco, a bank is focusing on ways to improve girls' education. National leaders, not only from the private sector but also from government, the media, and the religious community, have initiated projects using their own resources and have advocated for increases in the national primary education budget that benefit all children. The involvement of national leaders has provided a model for local action.

Girls' education initiatives often rely on community participation to mobilize demand for girls' education and to help open and manage schools. To form school committees or parent-teacher associations in communities where parents have little formal education, capacity building on educational issues and management is essential. School committees may need training in basic organizational concepts such as the roles of officers, conduct of effective meetings, conflict resolution, and bookkeeping. When committee members learn these skills, community management of schools can improve school quality and efficiency, teaching accountability, student participation, and the communities themselves.

Community leaders can organize infrastructure projects such as building roads to make schools more accessible, installing water systems to reduce girls' water carrying duties, and constructing latrines to make schools more sanitary and provide privacy for girls. These types of projects not only support education for both girls and boys, but they also benefit the community as a whole. School access roads make walking easier for all, water systems reduce everyone's water- carrying burden, and school latrines serve as a model of improved hygiene practice for the whole community.

Communities that promote and manage education profit from the involvement. As shown in the chart on page 3, the most typical benefit is civic experience. School management committees give local citizens the opportunity to take part in democracy in action. By working on a school committee, members gain experience in organization and advocacy they can then use to address other development issues.

The Benefits of Educating Girls

Social and Private Benefits
Econometric research studies underscore the benefits of educating girls (Cadwell 1979, 1986; Cochrane 1979; King & Hill, 1991). Social benefits alone provide an enormous incentive to developing countries to educate girls. Educated women marry at an older age, have fewer children, and pursue better prenatal and neonatal care, thus reducing the infant mortality rate. Educated women have increased opportunities for income generation and productivity in both formal and informal farm and nonfarm sectors; an improved standard of living; and improved hygiene, nutrition, and overall health care, all factors that improve infant survival and children's well-being (Browne & Barrett, 1991; King and Hill, 1991; Shapiro & Tambashe, 1994). Finally, educated women's daughters are as much as 40 percent more likely to enroll in school. (Miske (1997)

In contrast, the private rate of return for educating girls (individual benefits such as the ability to obtain better jobs) lags behind the social returns (benefits to society such as reduced infant mortality and higher economic growth rates), and correlates closely with a country's overall level of development. The social returns for educating girls appear to be nearly twice as large in Africa and Latin America as in industrially advanced, high-income countries (King and Hill, 1991). Nevertheless, improved macroeconomic growth can lead to new demands and opportunities for formal education —and an educated populace, in turn, contributes to the improved social and economic development of a nation.

Efforts to Address the Gender Gap

Attempts to address the inequity between boys and girls in terms of educational access, participation, and retention is not for want of effort by many education ministries. Ministries, donors, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have designed initiatives that target girls' access to education. Supply- and demandside strategies, such as scholarship programs, fee waivers, and better linkages between the school program and work place opportunities, address both the direct and indirect costs of schooling. Nontraditional approaches, such as flexible scheduling for the daily program of studies and for the academic calendar attempt to increase girls' participation in school. (For a more thorough discussion of strategies to enhance girls' schooling opportunities see Tietjen, 1991 or Odaga and Heneveld, 1995.)

In addition to changes in trends enrolment and dropout rates, gender parity indices, and other indicators of quantitative change over the past decade, key aspects of the discourse on girls' education have also shifted.

International awareness of girls' education as an issue has increased significantly. Educators, politicians, donors, and others--especially from countries with significant gender differentials--are now much more likely to cite gender specific data on enrolment, dropout, and achievement. Some countries have only recently begun to disaggregate data by gender and only a small minority of countries submitting EFA reports did not mention some aspect(s) of gender and education (e.g., gender parity in early childhood development, enrolment, repetition, completion, women teachers, women's literacy rates, gender-sensitive curriculum development).

Emphasis has also shifted from documenting barriers to engaging in **advocacy and action.** Practical aspects of girls' education issues have evolved from problem identification to moving into action. As a basis for advocacy and as a means of documenting girls' education issues early in the decade, it was often important for actors to 'discover' barriers and constraints to girls' education and to present the information to national or regional workshops of policy makers. But the key issues rapidly turned into questions of programming and implementation: What strategies could be adopted? How could they be monitored and evaluated for impact?

The formation of **networks and partnerships** developed widely over the decade, as awareness has grown of the complexity of the issues and the importance of networks for women's empowerment and for basic questions of democracy and freedom. Partnerships between organisations promoting girls' schooling and those promoting literacy for adult women, education on legal rights, economic empowerment, environmental protection and democracy are critical to those networks.

Educators now have a **deeper understanding of the barriers to girls' education**. Earlier conventional wisdom assumed that parents did not send daughters to school because parents felt girls were not worth educating. It is now obvious that relatively modest incentives have been sufficient to transform girls' enrolment rates. Tuition waivers in Malawi and organizing community schools with respected women teachers for girls in Balochistan, Pakistan are examples of this. We now know that if parents believe that schools are appropriate, safe, and of good quality, they usually will send the girls to schools willingly.

Finally the agenda has shifted from one of "making girls better mothers" to **an agenda that encourages the autonomy and empowerment of women and girls.** As Ramirez[2] suggests, the discourse has moved from extolling the virtues of education in making girls better mothers, to asserting girls' and women's rights to education as their due as citizens of nation states to be on a par with fellow male citizens, to demanding education in areas and for purposes that will empower and liberate them; for example, in controlling their fertility.

Lessons Learned

Efforts of the past decade have taught the world community a significant amount about how--and how not--to expand and improve education for girls. For example, funding expensive pilot projects that a country will never be able to afford to take to scale does not work. Many other efforts are successful. Lessons learned since 1990 about educating girls are here grouped into six areas:[3] political will, leadership, supportive fora, new partnerships, using a systemic approach, and conducting careful research and collecting reliable data to support action.

Political Will

Girls' education is more than an educational issue; it is deeply influenced by poverty, tradition, habit, legal systems, and discrimination, among other things. Political will is required, not just to educate girls, but also to eliminate those non-education obstacles. Lessons the past decade taught about policies, programs, and planning will be crucial to providing equitable education for all in the decade ahead.

Gender-specific policies that target girls are necessary. Coherent policies (such as raising the legal marriage age) and programs are required that do not assume girls' education simply improves as other aspects of primary education improve. A general expansion of primary schools will initially attract both girls and boys, but a certain proportion of girls will remain out of school unless specific barriers are overcome. Simply expanding primary education without specific regard to the factors affecting girls is insufficient to increase girls' enrolment[4]. Policies and programs that national and community leaders develop to achieve education goals for girls contribute to the crucial process of building consensus around the importance of girls' education at all levels of society.

Political commitment at senior levels from those who make policies and decisions is necessary to move girls' education forward. Policy development and reform needs to take place at a central and senior level. It is vital that any policy changes be made within the context of planning and development of the educational system as a whole. Girls' education policies cannot be left outside the Ministry of Education or to a newly formed and disconnected unit or project implementation unit. The education of girls needs to be an integral part of the management of the national educational system. Examples of this include the Ugandan government's adopted a National Strategy and Plan of Action for Girls' Education in 1998, and Burkina Faso's

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[2] Francisco O. Ramirez, 1997, "Progress, Justice and Gender Equity: World Models and Cross National Trends" , Stanford University.

[3] Mary J. Pigozzi 1999 "Educating the Girl Child: Best Foot Forward?" UN Chronicle Volume XXXVI, Number 2, pp 39-41.

[4] Centre for Development Information and Evaluation, USAID, 1999. More, But Not Yet Better: USAID's Programs and Policies to Improve Girls' Education. USAID Evaluation Highlights No. 64.

"National Plan for Girls' Education (1994-2000)." This plan aims to ensure access to schooling for all children, improve educational quality, increase community participation in education, and improve capacity building at the national level.

As countries in every region develop future plans to ensure education for all within the next 10 to 15 years, this set of questions may guide discussions for future planning:

- Is the policy environment appropriate or are changes needed?
- Have the right populations been targeted?
- What barriers to implementation still exist?
- Have problems been properly identified?
- Are the proposed solutions being monitored and evaluated?

Leadership

Active, pragmatic leaders who are able and willing to negotiate and compromise in the best interests of girls' education both facilitate and lead the way to improvements in girls' education. Women's strong leadership is particularly important. Leadership takes many forms; some are strong advocates, other quiet reformers. Regardless, the examples of leaders, in government, religion, civil society, NGOs, education, and the law, for example, provide extraordinary legitimacy for girls' education.

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is one example of an organizational network that captures the synergy of ideas, the influence, and the power of women leaders working to promote the best interests of girls' education. Five African women Ministers of Education founded the Federation of African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in 1992. The organization now has 30 full members (serving Ministers or Vice Chancellors), 30 associate members (former Ministers or Vice Chancellors) and 28 male associate members (male Ministers of Education). To facilitate national and grassroots work, national chapters, at various stages of development, are present in more than 30 countries. FAWE has pressed forward on an agenda of policy change and advocacy; it also has a program that gives awards for innovation.

In addition to leadership at international, national and district levels, the leadership of pupils, parents, teachers, community members, school management and administration is also essential to the improvement of girls' education. Linked as girls' education is with established patterns of discrimination against women and girls, leaders at all levels need to work to mobilize the entire range of stakeholders around the key educational issues for girls. These stakeholders will together help form a new set of standards and values which affirm that girls' have the right to basic education, and that the community has an obligation to provide it in an environment that is supportive and enabling. Time and again utilizing stakeholders, especially the community, to analyse the situation and intervene in girls' education has proved very fruitful in expanding educational opportunities for girls.

Supportive Fora

Conferences, workshops, newsletters and networks that promote girls' education provide the supportive fora necessary to keep the issues alive and visible to the public eye. These media also facilitate the sharing of new research and experiences, whether

successes or failures. One example of this is Zimbabwe's "The New Generation" newsletter that targets schools and equal opportunities for males and females and reaches more than one-third of all primary and secondary schools. Zimbabwe also held gender sensitization workshops throughout the country for 1200 school heads and 840 members of school development committees and associations.

In addition to the international conferences described above, regional, national, and local conferences and workshops also push forward the agenda for girls' education. In August 1999 UNICEF's South Asia Regional Office facilitated a strategy meeting on gender and violence against women and girls. Over 50 participants from the region attended. The event took them in clear directions for redesigning their work. One result from a follow-up meeting was the Indian government's commitment to continue to continue support for girl's education and activities to reduce maternal mortality.

Continuing to raise awareness about girls' education is central to sustaining its impact. Gender sensitization cannot be viewed as a one-time workshop event. Deepening individual, collective, and institutional awareness of girls' issues requires long-term, thoughtful analysis and reflection. Policies and program need to emphasize ongoing awareness education on girls' education at all levels. This is especially important for key actors in gender and education issues to ensure that they understand and can communicate the rationale of girls' education. Program activities need to ensure a gender perspective that points out the need to integrate gender analysis into the beginning stages of program development. This will help to increase knowledge and to change attitudes, practices, and behaviour towards girls' education at all levels.

New Partnerships
The only way in which all five of these key areas (political will, leadership, supportive fora, systemic approach, research and reliable data) have been adequately pulled together in a coherent way that facilitates the kinds of change necessary to get all girls into a basic education of good quality is through extended and expanded partnerships. These new and creative partnerships that have brought the necessary dynamism into education systems, defined broadly, and enabled them to expand and reach out to include girls. In the 1990s partnerships developed between unlikely entities: corporations, non-governmental organisations, communities, teacher organisations, governments, students, and international organisations. Partners have sometimes had to evolve new modes of functioning together but this has promoted innovation.

Developing partnerships across sectors is helping to remove obstacles to girls' education. Water, hygiene, and sanitation, income generating activities, health and nutrition services, and integrating life skills education into school curricula (including HIV/AIDS prevention education) are some of the areas being linked to girls' education programs. For example, in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, and Benin education is linked with income generating projects. South Africa and Burkina Faso have created links with early childhood care and development programs. Cape Verde and Ethiopia have integrated water and sanitation project activities, both important considerations for attracting pupils to and keeping them in school.

Strategies for Accelerating Girls' Education — Systemic Approach

A long-term, coherent approach, incorporating all aspects of the education system *and beyond*, is the best option for making a difference. It is clear that to address issues of quality, equivalence, and demand in ways that can be sustained, it is essential to take a **systemic approach** to reforms so that girls are no longer excluded. Guinea, collaborating with donor partners, took this approach to education reform in the 1990s.

Overall, it is clear that to overcome gender bias and discrimination it is essential to change education systems rather than to work on the margins. This has been an extremely positive lesson learned in girls' education. This approach has shown that quality and access are inextricably linked. Thus, many actions in support of girls' education have addressed quality, resulting in demonstrable improvements for boys as well as for girls. In fact, in some cases quality improvements for girls' education have actually increased the gender gap!

A review of a decade of USAID work in girls' education[5] around the world concluded that in order to make a difference, strategies are needed that will differentially or specifically promote the schooling of girls. These strategies do not stand alone. They are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, they change both characteristics and dynamics of the system and thus contribute to systemic change.

- ❑ Locating schools near girls
- ❑ Staffing schools with female teachers
- ❑ Girl-friendly regulations
- ❑ Strengthening community ownership and participation
- ❑ Reducing schooling costs.

Locating schools near girls addresses concerns about girls' safety and their availability for domestic chores. This also brings the community closer to schools and makes it possible for them to support the schools--as well as their daughters--in various ways. Staffing schools with female teachers also addresses safety issues and can provide girls with role models of a career they can pursue through their own education. Marshalling the political will at all levels to leverage resources that will support these strategies will move the agenda of girls' education forward dramatically.

Increasing the proportion of women teachers, which often means staffing a school with at least one female teacher, has two main effects on girls' schooling. First, the presence of women teachers helps to promote the perception of a safer and more protected school environment for girls. Second, women teachers provide visible, immediate role models of educated women for girls attending school.

Increasing the proportion of female teachers in primary schools has a positive impact on female enrolments, as Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and other countries have seen. In order to augment their numbers, however, recruitment policies for teachers may need to be revised. Some options include reserving a proportion of places in teacher training colleges for girls; decentralizing recruitment of local females, and revising administrative policies that affect serving female teachers. Systematic assessment of

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[5] More, But Not Yet Better.

the impact of these policies would be useful information for designing future initiatives. In countries such as Afghanistan where extreme fundamentalist religious policies have pushed girls out of school, creative alternatives are needed. In Afghanistan UNICEF informally supports unemployed female teachers who have set up schools in their homes where up to 60 percent of the students are female.

While the teaching force in some countries--especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa--are dominated by male teachers, countries in Central Europe, Latin America, and other areas report a predominantly female teaching force. The latter case may represent inequity and lower pay for women teachers, especially at the primary level, and must be addressed. In either scenario the concern is expressed that children should see and have teachers of their same sex as role models. However, to date there is no evidence of parents forbidding sons to enroll in coeducational schools with all women teachers, whereas parents do keep their daughters out of school if no female teachers are present. Perceptions and reassurances of safety are critical for girls, and the presence of women teachers in a male-dominated teaching force--women teachers who value girls and boys equally--must take high priority.

Enforcing girl-friendly regulations ensure that schools are safe, respectful places for girls. Policies made at the national level, regulations for an entire school, and teacher-made rules for a classroom can all contribute to a school that is friendly to girls. Regulations might include returning girls to their rightful place in school following a pregnancy, constructing adequate latrine facilities for males and females, appointing girls to school leadership positions, or dismissing male teachers or students who have sexually harassed female students. These regulations *and their enforcement* are necessary to make a difference in the lives and academic experiences of girls. The safety and security of girls was a major theme in the African Conference on the Empowerment of Women through Functional Literacy and Education, and needs to continue as a major theme in education plans of the next decade.

Strengthening Community Ownership and Participation. Community and family empowerment and participation in school management and other activities are key to ensuring that girls enroll, attend, and stay in school. Family and community participation contribute to the processes of decentralization and the institutionalization of community involvement in education. This, in turn, increases program/project quality and sustainability. For example, in the family a mother's support of her daughter's education is a key factor in girl attending and staying in school. In disadvantaged communities, members have contributed significantly to girls' education by providing school funds; management; and land, time, and labour for constructing schools and classrooms.

Community ownership of schools, (management, control, financing and organisation) is an important building block in promoting the educational participation of girls, particularly among populations that have traditionally had low female participation rates. Raising community awareness and responsibility for addressing some of the barriers to education has had impressive results in places like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Mali. Discussions of community involvement is not a panacea, however; communities must be empowered in deed. Adequate human, financial and administrative resources are needed to enable communities to fulfill their roles, as is a

clear division of responsibility between communities and local and central governments.

Once communities are empowered to create and manage schools near their homes, with teachers they can trust and a curriculum they believe in, resistance to sending girls to school and keeping them there past puberty appears to melt away.

Cost Reduction. In 1991/2 Malawi, with the support of USAID, introduced tuition waivers for non-repeating girls in primary school. Although the sums involved were small, about US$5 a year per child in rural areas and US$9 in urban areas, the waivers made a big difference. The money lost through fees was made available to the central Ministry of Education as a lump sum grant from USAID.

Malawi had historically experienced a persistent gender gap to the advantage of boys. The year the waivers were introduced, girls were a majority in Standard 1 (51 percent)[6] and girls' net enrolment in primary was 60 percent compared to boys at 57 percent. Two years later, the government introduced free primary education for all and abolished the requirement that school children wear uniforms. The response from boys restored the gender gap, but levels of enrolment for both genders has risen tremendously and Malawi is now close to universal primary enrolment.

Benin introduced a bill that exempted girls in rural areas from paying school fees in 1993. While this is reported to have improved girls' enrolment rates in rural areas, there was also some negative impact since no revenue was available from other sources to replace the lost funds. An unequivocal benefit of any cost reduction initiative, however, is that lowered schooling costs can eliminate the necessity of parents having to choose which child, if any, will go to school.

The six lessons discussed above provide an important framework for the fundamental aspect of systemic change: what goes on in the classroom.

Child-friendly learning environment. The quality of education can be improved for all children and sustained over time through the creation of a child-friendly learning environment for girls and boys. This includes using participatory teaching and learning strategies, and making use of locally available resources/materials. Programs in South Asia are placing priority on the quality of education with programs implementing concepts such as Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning, joyful learning, and child friendly schools. Over 16,000 schools in Bangladesh are implementing the Bangladeshi Directorate of Primary Education's Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL). In 1999 IDEAL worked to build local level management and planning, launch a communication campaign, monitor school quality, conduct studies and adjust the curriculum to be gender sensitive. The formative evaluation has revealed that local level planning has mobilized local funds to provide an average of US $500 per school. In addition, teachers trained in Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning (MWTL) have shown that using a number of teaching methods (group work, role-playing, singing) is positive and effective.

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[6] Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. 1993. <u>Basic Education Statistics: Malawi 1993</u> , Tables 3 & 4.

Once in school, girls and boys need to learn something meaningful. Issues of **learning and achievement** are complex but essential to address. They include the content of the curriculum and the capacity of the school system to implement it; the teaching processes and methods used to convey this content; strategies for assessing learning gains and achievement, whether through continuous assessment or final examinations; and concomitant implications for training and recruitment into the teaching service.

These issues are being addressed within a wider socio-political context that often contributes to the emergence of workable solutions. With a global push towards democracy and the encouragement towards greater decentralization of political power with the implicit emergence of greater local autonomy and accountability, getting more girls to school no longer seems an intractable problem. As the officers at the community level with the greatest knowledge of the barriers are now increasingly being granted the authority to address them, remarkable innovative solutions evolve almost routinely. In sub-Saharan Africa, a number of government sponsored alternative education programs (COPE in Uganda, PAGE in Zambia and Dina schools in Madagascar) are providing basic education outside the formal system in a manner that recognizes and accommodates local realities. The Bangladesh Rural Action Committee (BRAC) remains one of the most remarkable efforts in successfully providing schooling opportunities for girls outside the formal school system.

Summary and Conclusions: The benefits of educating girls
The fundamental right of girls to education is recognised in a range of international agreements. Education for girls is also a hugely effective means of achieving a wide variety of other development goals. It is widely accepted that increasing the number of girls in school, and so increasing the number of literate adult women, has a positive effect on both economic growth and social well-being. High female school enrolment is associated with:

- *Longer life expectancy for both women and men*
  Female life expectancy in the Indian state of Kerala, where 86% of women are literate, is 73 years, compared with 45 years in Uttar Pradesh, where less than 25% of women can read.
- *Lower infant mortality*
  A child in Uttar Pradesh is seven times more likely than a child in Kerala to die in his or her first year.
- *Lower maternal mortality*
  Although average incomes in Pakistan are higher than in Vietnam, the maternal mortality rate is twice as high. This appears to be linked to the much higher female school completion rates in Vietnam.

What is preventing girls from receiving basic education?
Poverty, both at state and household level, is a major factor, but so too are cultural and social constraints that interact with poverty to set up barriers to girls' education. A useful way to look at these different dimensions of the problem is to divide them into supply-side and demand-side factors.

Supply-side factors
- *Shortage of places and poor physical infrastructure:*

Shortages of school places, the remoteness of rural schools and poor physical infrastructure are major problems in many developing countries. Such deficiencies are often due to lack of resources, especially in highly indebted countries. Zambia, for instance, spent four times as much on debt servicing than education between 1993-1996. Misplaced government priorities also play a part; in Pakistan, the government spends 27% of its budget on defence and only 4% on primary education. Girls tend to suffer more than boys do from such deficiencies. Girls are often disadvantaged because of well-founded concerns about their physical security (as in some parts of Ethiopia). The poor quality of school facilities in the developing world also militates against girls' attendance.

In societies which ascribe great importance to female "modesty", as in South Asia, something as simple as a lack of toilet facilities can make school environments inhospitable to girls and deter parents from sending their daughters to school.

- *Poor quality of education*:
  The quality of the education offered in developing countries is often very poor. This is particularly so for girls, with curricula and textbooks frequently reinforcing limiting and demeaning stereotypes about women's roles. Studies show that girls often have to spend more school-time than boys doing non-educational "house-keeping" tasks. Where there is little educational benefit to be gained, it is not surprising if poverty-stricken parents decide it is not worth incurring the costs of sending a girl to school.

- *Lack of female teachers*:
  Studies in sub-Saharan Africa by FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists) show that the lack of female teachers as role models is discouraging to girls and can prevent them from doing well at school. According to an Oxfam-funded study, in Pakistan, only 35% of teachers are women, despite the necessity of having female teachers to ensure higher enrolment and completion rates for girls.

Demand-side factors

- *Cultural and social attitudes:*
  In many developing countries, a woman's role is still defined in terms of marriage and child rearing, and girls' education is seen as less important than boys'. Other cultural features also have a strong effect on girls' education. For instance, in India, a woman moves into her husband's household on marriage, so it is her husband's family rather than her birth family that reaps the rewards of her education. In both South and East Asia parents look to sons to take care of them in old age, which is another incentive for parents to educate sons rather than daughters.

- *Direct costs :*
  User fees are a strong disincentive to sending girls to school. Even where there are no such fees, parents may still have to bear the cost of uniforms, books and lunches. Where parents see little benefit from girls' education, these costs are more likely to deter them from sending their daughters to school than their sons. In this way, household poverty combines with cultural and social attitudes to keep girls out of school.

- *Indirect costs* :

Poor families are often dependent on their children's labour for household survival. For instance, a 1994 study of poor rural families in northern Ghana found that girls were often the sole breadwinners in their extended families, and had to juggle the conflicting demands of work and school. In many societies girls are taught from a very young age to look after smaller siblings and help with housework. If their mothers need to work outside the home, it is older girls, rather than their brothers, who tend to be kept out of school.

Questions and Answers

Why is girls' education so important?

- Every girl has the right to education.
- Educated girls are empowered — they have a greater voice in family and community affairs, and are more likely to become involved in democratic processes.
- Educated mothers are more likely to send all their children, both boys and girls, to school.
- Educated mothers are more likely to have fewer and healthier children — child mortality rates drop with higher levels of female education.
- Educated girls are more likely to marry and have children at a later age.
- Educated girls have healthier pregnancies resulting in reduction in maternal mortality.
- Educated girls are more likely to live longer.
- Educated girls are more likely to campaign against harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation.
- Providing education for girls is a deterrent to child labor and commercial sexual exploitation.
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Why are millions of girls out of school?

- Societal attitudes — a girl's place is in the home and not the classroom.
- Costs — in situations of extreme poverty, strategic decisions are made to send sons to school and not daughters, because of the direct and indirect costs.
- Walking long distances to school can be particularly hazardous for girls and will discourage parents from advocating school attendance for their daughters.
- The learning environment is often "unfriendly" to girls. They lack female role models, and there is often a gender bias in the curricula, teaching methodologies, textbooks, and materials.
- Lack of adequate sanitation facilities may lead to boys and girls sharing the same facilities, which is unacceptable to many parents. School is seen as a place of promiscuity.
- If they become pregnant, girls are often no longer allowed to stay in school.
- They are too poor, hungry, or sick to attend school.
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What can be done?

- Focus on the benefits of education for girls.

- Encourage changes in attitudes toward education of girls through local sensitization campaigns, where applicable.
- Provide more qualified female teachers and in-service training for existing staff.
- Focus on a gender sensitive, relevant curriculum.
- Focus on safe and convenient locations for schools.
- Provide separate and adequate sanitation facilities for girls and boys.

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