

# GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION

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## Women and Girl's Education Policy Brief

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***There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls***

(Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General)

***Education, particularly that of girls, has many profound impacts on the development of a country. It is key to individual opportunity and national growth and the dignity of self reliance ... No country has lifted itself out of poverty without educating its people ... Education is therefore one of the best investments the world can make.***

(Shriti Vadera 2007, former International Development Minister, UK)

### Women and girls' education: introduction

Across the world, 69 million children do not go to primary school. 54% are girls. Once in school, girls are faced with numerous challenges and are more likely than boys to stop attending before they complete primary education. Girls also have significantly less chance of progressing to secondary school in many parts of the world. Of the 759 million adults lacking literacy skills, two-thirds are women – a share that has actually increased slightly over the last decade. Poor and marginalised women and girls are disproportionately affected, with factors such as ethnicity, disability and location dramatically worsening a girl's chance of entering and completing school. These facts highlight a scandalous denial of human rights.

### Nigeria

Nigeria has 8.2 million children of primary school age that do not go to school; this is the highest number for any country in the world. Many things prevent children from going to school – and gender is a very significant factor. 68% of boys enrol in primary school compared to 58% of girls. When the effect of gender is combined with wealth, location and ethnicity then the impact is exacerbated. The extent of this becomes clear by considering the average number of years that different groups of children spend in school. Overall, the average amount of time that a child in Nigeria spends in schooling is six and a half years. Wealthy boys and girls who live in urban areas spend an average of ten years in school – compared with just three years for poor females living in rural areas. Over half of those marginalised from education are Hausa speakers – a group that makes up only one-fifth of the total population. When all of these things are combined together the most disadvantaged group of all becomes apparent: Hausa girls who come from poor families and live in rural areas each spend an average of less than six months in school.

This briefing explains what happens when girls get the opportunity to have good quality education, and how it affects both their individual life chances and capacity to contribute to economic and social development. It also highlights the factors that keep girls marginalised, and what can be done to get more girls in the classroom and learning the skills that can

transform their lives. It also highlights effective measures to give second chance learning to women who have missed out.

- **Girls who go to school have higher self-esteem and are less likely to suffer violence and be vulnerable to exploitation.**<sup>1</sup>
- Women who have been to school are more able to resist violence and abuse.<sup>2</sup>
- Educating girls and reducing the gender gap promotes democracy.<sup>3</sup>
- Increased female education both empowers individual women and also, through their increased agency, acts 'to improve the well-being of their children and help transform society itself'.<sup>4</sup>

#### Country examples

In **Pakistan** 73% of boys enrol compared to only 57% of girls.<sup>5</sup> In **Malawi** only 18% of children who enrol in school manage to complete primary education. Boys have a much higher chance of completing their schooling than girls. Of those that enrol, 22.3% of boys complete primary compared to 13.8% of girls.<sup>6</sup> In **Burundi** 37.8% of children that enrol manage to complete primary education. Once again, boys have a much greater chance with 44.9% of them completing compared to 27.3% of girls.<sup>7</sup>

#### Literacy reduces gender inequality

Literacy increases women's participation in both private and public spheres, in household decision-making, community affairs and as active citizens in national life. Adult literacy programmes have a dramatic impact on women's self-esteem, empowering them to unlock economic, social, cultural and political resources<sup>8</sup>.

#### Education enables girls and women to improve their livelihoods

Widespread research demonstrates that investing in girls' education is an effective route to ensuring both long term economic growth and sustainable social development.<sup>9 10</sup> One extra year of primary school boosts a girl's eventual wages by 10-20%.<sup>11</sup> Women and girls also make good use of the money they earn, reinvesting 90% into their families compared to only 30-40% for men.<sup>12</sup> Increasing women's education also increases national growth, a 1%

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/mdg/maternal.html>

<sup>2</sup> Sen, P. 1999. Enhancing women's choices in responding to domestic violence in Calcutta: a comparison of employment and education. *European Journal of Development Research* 11, 2 p.65–86.

<sup>3</sup> Barro 1999. Determinants of democracy. *Journal of Political Economy* 107, 6 p.158–83.

<sup>4</sup> Herz and Sperling, 2004 p.5. What works in girls' education – evidence and policies from the developing world. Council on foreign relations.

<sup>5</sup> GMR 2010

<sup>6</sup> GMR 2010

<sup>7</sup> GMR 2010

<sup>8</sup> Pant, R 2005. The Social Benefits of Literacy. Background Paper for the Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Dollar, D., and Gatti, R., 1999. Gender Equality, Income and Growth: Are good times good for women? World Bank Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series No.1 Washington DC

<sup>10</sup> See: <http://www.girleffect.org/>

<sup>11</sup> Psacharaopoulos and Patrinos 2002, *Returns to Investment in Education: A Further Update*. Policy Research Working Paper 2881, Washington DC: World Bank

<sup>12</sup> Fortson, C., 2003. *Women's Rights Vital For Developing World*. Yale News Daily

increase in the number of women with secondary education can increase a country's annual per capital income growth by an average of 0.3 percentage points.<sup>13</sup>

Recent research from PLAN estimates the economic cost incurred when girls are not educated to the same standard as boys: 'The economic cost to 65 low and middle income and transitional countries of failing to educate girls to the same standard as boys as a staggering USD 92 billion each year. This is just less than the USD 103bn annual overseas development aid budget of the developed world.'<sup>14</sup>

Having assessed data from over 100 countries over a period of three decades, another comprehensive study concluded that societies that do not invest in girls pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income.<sup>15 16</sup>

### Education protects girls against Female Genital Mutilation

The children of educated mothers are well protected against Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). Women who have had the chance to go to school are less likely to have circumcised daughters compared to those with no schooling:

- In the Ivory Coast, girls are five times less likely to undergo FGM/C if their mothers have gone to school.<sup>17</sup>
- In Tanzania, girls are three and a half times less likely to undergo FGM/C if their mothers have gone to school.<sup>18</sup>
- In Kenya, girls are two and a half times less likely to undergo FGM/C if their mothers have gone to school.<sup>19</sup>

Circumcision levels are also generally higher among women with less education, indicating that circumcised girls are also likely to grow up with lower levels of education attainment.<sup>20</sup>

### Education protects girls against HIV

Children who complete primary education are less than half as likely to be infected with HIV compared with those who have not attended school.<sup>21</sup> For a girl in Africa the impact of education is even greater – completing basic education makes her three times less likely to contract HIV.<sup>22</sup> Girls who go to school become sexually active later and are more likely to require their partners to use condoms.<sup>23</sup> All of these things mean that if every child across the world received basic education 700,000 cases of HIV could be prevented each year.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> PLAN 2008. *Paying the price: The economic cost of failing to educate girls*, PLAN: Children in Focus

<sup>14</sup> PLAN (2008). *Paying the price: The economic cost of failing to educate girls*, PLAN: Children in Focus

<sup>15</sup> Dollar, D., and Gatti, R., 1999. Gender Equality, Income and Growth: Are good times good for women? World Bank Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series No.1 Washington DC

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.girleffect.org/>

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF 2005a Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting - a statistical exploration

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/FGM-C\\_final\\_10\\_October.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/FGM-C_final_10_October.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> ibid

<sup>19</sup> ibid

<sup>20</sup> ibid

<sup>21</sup> Global Aids Alliance Education and HIV/AIDS factsheet [http://www.globalaidsalliance.org/page/-/PDFs/Education\\_factsheet\\_new.pdf](http://www.globalaidsalliance.org/page/-/PDFs/Education_factsheet_new.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://camfed.org/>

<sup>23</sup> Teach a Child, Transform a Nation (2004) <http://www.un-ngls.org/orf/cso/TeachV1.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Global Campaign for Education

- Among 15-18 year old girls in Zimbabwe, those who are enrolled in school are more than five times less likely to have HIV than those who have dropped out.<sup>25</sup>
- Research conducted in Swaziland found that 70% of out-of-school youths were sexually active whereas only 30% of in-school youths were sexually active<sup>26</sup>
- A study in Zambia established that HIV spreads twice as fast among girls who have not been to school.<sup>27</sup>

### Education makes motherhood safer

Getting a girl into school has a positive impact throughout the course of her life and transforms the opportunities available to her. Compared to someone denied access to education, a woman who has gone to school has more control over her reproductive life. She is more likely to use contraception and is therefore able to space her pregnancies at healthy intervals.<sup>28</sup> Education also affects fertility rates: women with seven or more years of schooling have between two and four fewer children than women who have not been to school.<sup>29 30 31</sup> Conversely, missing one year of primary education increases the total fertility of a woman by between 0.3 and 0.5 children.<sup>32 33</sup>

A mother's education also has significant impact on the life chances of her children. Research across developing countries has demonstrated consistently that infant and child health suffers because of a mother's lack of education.<sup>34 35</sup> Educated women have lower incidences of low birth-weight babies, infant death, infant malnutrition, and drastically higher chances of surviving childbirth themselves.<sup>36</sup> The correlation between parental education and child mortality has been extensively documented. 'In almost all countries, child-death rates are inversely related to the level of maternal education'.<sup>37</sup>

The more educated the mother, the healthier she and her child are likely to be. Children whose mothers who have completed basic education:

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<sup>25</sup> Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

<sup>26</sup> Whiteside *et al.* (2003) What is driving the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Swaziland? Durban: South Africa, Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division, University of Natal.

<sup>27</sup> Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2000. Education 'vaccine' against HIV/AIDS. *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 3, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Abu-Ghaida and Klasen (2004) The Costs of Missing the Millennium Development Goal on Gender Equity, *World Development*, 32 (7), 1075-1107.

<sup>29</sup> World Bank (1993) *World Development Report*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>30</sup> Colclough and Lewin (1993) *Educating All the Children: Strategies for Primary Schooling in the South*.

<sup>31</sup> Summers (1994) *Investing in All the People: Educating Women in Developing Countries*. Seminar Paper 45.

<sup>32</sup> Abu-Ghaida and Klasen (2004) The Costs of Missing the Millennium Development Goal on Gender Equity, *World Development*, 32 (7), 1075-1107.

<sup>33</sup> Schultz (1997) Demand for Children in Low Income Countries. In *Handbook of Population and Family Economics*.

<sup>34</sup> Bicego and Boerma (1993), Maternal Education and Child Survival: A Comparative Study of Survey Data from 17 Countries, *Social Science and Medicine* 36, 9, 1207-27.

<sup>35</sup> Save The Children (2005) State of the world's mothers

<sup>36</sup> Smith and Haddad (2000). *Overcoming Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries: Past Achievement and Future Choices*, Discussion Paper No.30, International Food Policy Research Institute

<sup>37</sup> Watkins (2001) Oxfam Education Report. Oxford: Oxfam

- Are 40% more likely to survive childhood compared to those whose mothers have not been to school.<sup>38</sup>
- Are more than twice as likely to go to school compared to the children of mothers who have not been to school.<sup>39</sup>
- Are 50% more likely to be immunised than the children of mothers who have not been to school.<sup>40</sup>

Uneducated mothers are also less likely to seek medical care during pregnancy. They are also less likely to use the simple and inexpensive measures during labour and immediately after childbirth that can reduce the transmission of HIV from mother to child by more than 50%.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, women with some secondary schooling are three times more likely than uneducated women to know that HIV can be transmitted from mother to child.<sup>42</sup>

### Education reduces early marriage

Education is a key to preventing child marriage. Studies across the developing world conclude that women with seven or more years of schooling get married an average of five years later than women with no schooling.<sup>43 44 45</sup>

- In Senegal 20% of girls who have attended school are married by the age of 18, compared to 36% of girls with no schooling.<sup>46</sup>
- In Nicaragua, 16% of girls who have attended school get married before they are 18 compared to 45% of girls with no schooling.<sup>47</sup>
- In Mozambique, 10% of girls who have attended school get married before they are 18 compared to 60% of girls with no schooling.<sup>48</sup>

### Education increases agricultural productivity & combats malnutrition

Girls' education is a powerful tool in eliminating needless hunger. Gains in girls' education have had a significant impact on reducing malnutrition across the globe.

- Children who go to school are less susceptible to malnutrition and disease. A 63-country study found that more productive farming due to increased female education accounted for 43% of the reduction in malnutrition achieved between 1970 and 1995.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> UNICEF <http://www.unicef.org/mdg/gender.html>

<sup>41</sup> Vandemoortele and Delamonica (2000). Education Vaccine Against HIV/AIDS, *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 3, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Teach a Child, Transform a Nation (2004) <http://www.un-ngls.org/orf/cso/TeachV1.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> World Bank (1993) *World Development Report*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>44</sup> Colclough and Lewin 1993. *Educating All the Children: Strategies for Primary Schooling in the South*.

<sup>45</sup> Summers 1994. *Investing in All the People: Educating Women in Developing Countries*. Seminar Paper 45.

<sup>46</sup> UNICEF 2005. Early marriage: a harmful traditional practice – a statistical exploration.

<sup>47</sup> International Center for Research on Women, 2007. Too Young to Wed: Education & Action Toward Ending Child Marriage. [http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006\\_cmtoolkit/cm\\_all.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006_cmtoolkit/cm_all.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Smith and Haddad 1999. Explaining Child Malnutrition in Developing Countries: a cross country analysis. International Food Policy research Institute (IFPRI). Food Consumption and Nutrition Division Discussion Paper 60.

### How to get more girls into school

A wide range of factors prevent girls from accessing education and threatens their continued participation in school. Boys face many similar challenges but it is girls that are especially vulnerable. The research outlined above provides a compelling case for prioritising girls' education when considering the overall national economic and social benefits. However, in order to be effective, the decision to educate girls has to be taken at the level of individual families and this is more challenging to communicate and operationalise.

**Address household poverty.** Household poverty keeps many girls at home, out of school. If a family is poor then children are more likely to have to work – and girls are the most likely to have to do this. This can involve domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning, working in fields or looking after animals. In addition, many girls cannot attend school because of sickness in their family. When parents become sick and unable to work, especially because of HIV/AIDS, the burden of family work falls on children. Many children, particularly girls, have to drop out of school early and take on responsibilities such as preparing food and caring for younger siblings. Measures like stipends and school feeding programmes have been proven to encourage families to send their girl-children to school and improve completion rates<sup>50</sup>.

**Build and equip more schools and reduce distance between school and home.** In many rural regions, the most significant issue preventing children from attending is simply one of distance between home and school. Children have to walk many miles each day and extreme weather conditions often make this impossible. The walk to school can also be dangerous. Children are vulnerable to abuse and many parents prevent children, especially girls, from going to school because of fears for their safety.<sup>51</sup> One approach to tackling this challenge has been seen in Burkina Faso, where a network of 'satellite schools' have been established for the first three grades of primary school. These schools allow the youngest children to receive education close to their villages and then transition into established schools that are further away once they are older. In Egypt in the 1980's constructing new schools in rural areas boosted girls' enrolments by 60% and boys' enrolments by 19%.

**Hire women teachers.** The presence of a female teacher can help girls and parents feel more confident in sending their daughters to school. In addition to protecting girls from potential abuse, having female teachers provides girls with role models.<sup>52</sup> Increasing the number of female teachers has also been shown to increase enrolment.<sup>53</sup>

**Make education free and compulsory.** 'Making education free and compulsory is the keystone of any national plan to eliminate gender disparity in education and achieve universal education. Faced with an economically driven choice between sending sons or daughters to school, poor families often send their sons.'<sup>54</sup> With the introduction of free

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<sup>50</sup> World Bank/UNFP 2009. **Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector.**

<sup>51</sup> Rugh, 2000. Starting now: strategies for helping girls complete primary." SAGE Project. Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development.

<sup>52</sup> Herz and Sperling, 2004 p.67. What works in girls' education – evidence and policies from the developing world. Council on foreign relations.

<sup>53</sup> Nilsson 2003. Education for All: Teacher Demand and Supply in Africa. Education International Working Paper No. 12. Brussels: Education International.

<sup>54</sup> UNICEF 2004 p.1. Strategies for girls' education

primary education in Uganda, total girls' enrolments went from 63% to 83%. Enrolment among the poorest fifth of girls increased from 46% to 82%'.<sup>55</sup>

**Acknowledge indirect fees.** Even when education is theoretically free, there are often considerable indirect fees. These can include fees to 'parent-teacher associations, charged to parents for having their children attend school. These indirect fees can also include such things as paying for escorts for girls to get to school, supplementing teacher salaries, or finding secure housing for female teachers to stay in rural communities to teach girls.'<sup>56</sup>

**Provide basic supplies.** A study from Peru documents an intervention where simply providing textbooks raised girls' enrolments by 30%. 'When free textbooks were supplied to primary schools, controlling for other influences, girls were 30% more likely to enrol, but no effect was recorded for boys' enrolments'.<sup>57</sup>

**Eliminate gender bias from textbooks.** The effort to get girls to go to school is helped by eliminating gender bias from textbooks and learning material.<sup>58</sup>

**Teach in the local language.** When the language of instruction is not the same as the mother tongue then girls are often disadvantaged. This is because they are less likely to be exposed to social environments outside their immediate family.<sup>59</sup>

**Allow young mothers to come back to school.** Girls who become pregnant are often prevented from going back to school after the birth of their child. There is need for policy change to re-admit girls, alongside challenging the stigma and associated bullying which also prevents girls from coming back to school.<sup>60</sup>

**Protect from abuse in school.** Although education protects girls, this is not always the case. Schools can be a site of abuse and violence and often this is sexual. If a school is thought to be a site of physical and/or sexual violence then parents will be reluctant to send children to school, and they will be reluctant to attend<sup>61</sup>

**Provide a national policy framework.** Local initiatives to get girls into school work best when they are part of a government national policy framework that recognises the challenges that girls face in getting into and staying in school.

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<sup>55</sup> Herz and Sperling, 2004 p.9. What works in girls' education – evidence and policies from the developing world. Council on foreign relations.

<sup>56</sup> Herz and Sperling, 2004 p.67. What works in girls' education – evidence and policies from the developing world. Council on foreign relations.

<sup>57</sup> King and Bellew, 1991. Gains in the Education of Peruvian Women, 1940–1980.

<sup>58</sup> UNICEF 2004. Strategies for girls' education

<sup>59</sup> Bernard 2002. Lessons and implications from girls' education activities: a synthesis from evaluations' Working Paper Series, UNICEF.

<sup>60</sup> Bernard 2002. Lessons and implications from girls' education activities: a synthesis from evaluations' Working Paper Series, UNICEF.

<sup>61</sup> Hayward, 2003. Report on linkages between violence against women and girls and UNICEF's medium-term strategic plan 2002-2005 priorities.

## Good practice in adult literacy programmes for women

**Target older people.** Too often literacy initiatives are focused on youth and young adults, whereas the bulk of illiterate women are over 30 in many contexts.

**Invest enough in literacy.** Good quality literacy programmes are inexpensive, yet even so governments spend shockingly low amounts on literacy. At least 3% of the education budget must be reserved for literacy initiatives.

**Work cross-sectorally.** Helping women access literacy opportunities may require a multi-faceted effort across different Ministries, to ensure outreach to women and effective targeting of efforts.

**Ensure relevance.** Focusing on women's own literacy objectives, motivation and skills is known to have strong positive effects on outcomes. Addressing issues in the 'literacy environment' such as campaigning for newspapers to use local languages or texts help to ensure that literacy skills are more likely to be acquired and retained. Ensuring that literacy training is bilingual to give learners an active choice about the language in which they learn is also vital. Recruiting female literacy facilitators from the community also helps motivate women to participate.

**Literacy is a long game.** Acquiring and using literacy skills is not a one-off activity but requires sustained learning and application. To prevent learners' skills from degrading over time, policies and programmes must be defined to encourage sustained participation and celebrate progress.

## **OVERALL POLICY DEMANDS**

### **Rich countries should:**

- Meet their fair share of the financing gap for basic education of \$16 billion per year
- Ensure that aid is targeted towards regions and countries with large numbers of girls out of school and where girls are disadvantaged relative to boys
- Scale up their aid to adult literacy and urge partner countries to prioritise women's literacy programmes
- Make aid predictable and available for the core running costs of education and especially to ensure an adequate supply of female teachers
- Support countries to develop education sector plans that specifically include initiatives on women's and girls' education both within and beyond the classroom

### **Poor countries should:**

- Ensure that their education sector plans include initiatives on women's and girls' education, such as stipends and scholarships, provision of sanitary facilities, and uniform grants
- Make school curricula gender-sensitive and ensure that teachers are trained and supported to deliver these
- Provide incentives for women teachers to enter the profession and ensure postings are appropriate for them
- Make schools safe for girls, and agree appropriate sanctions to tackle harassment of girls in schools by teachers, fellow pupils and others
- Invest 3% of their education budgets in literacy provision, with special emphasis on women's literacy programmes
- Ensure that such items are adequately budgeted for, within an overall education budget of 20% of the total

## **International Financing Institutions**

**The International Monetary Fund (IMF)** should advocate and implement more flexible inflation and deficit targets in its lending to LICs, through 2015 at a minimum. Targets should be set in accordance with the spending required to achieve MDG and EFA goals in those countries, and especially to accommodate scale-up of payroll to accommodate teacher training, hiring and retention to ensure governments can re-build professional teaching forces and deploy professional teachers in the numbers required to fulfill access and quality goals.

**The World Bank (WB)** should advocate governments allocate sufficient funds to invest in re-building professional teaching forces rather than subjecting professional teaching forces to cost-cutting as a triage action. The WB should move away from its traditional advice of deploying para-teachers (those whose level of education and professional training as educators do not meet professional standards) and instead advocate for the funds and processes needed to re-build professional teaching forces. The WB should also allocate more IDA funds for education in the form of grants, and should cease all interference in the activities of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI).