



PROGRESS IN GIRLS' EDUCATION: THE CHALLENGE OF GENDER EQUALITY IN SOUTH ASIA

Sarah Huxley



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Sarah Huxley

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SERIES FOREWORD

There is a growing sense of momentum around education in South Asia. Governments are engaged and a lot has been done. The Millennium Development Goals have added an additional spur to action as indeed have greater awareness on gender disparity and the need for educated workers. There is though a long way to go if the rights of all children are to be realized.

Providing access to education is only part of the story. Once children are enrolled and attending, the quality of their education must make it a worthwhile experience. The special needs of girls in the social and cultural context of South Asia call for special measures, as do the needs of all children in situations of conflict and emergency. South Asia has many rich, positive examples of success in advancing basic education. It is important that these are shared and built on if there is to be an overall improvement throughout the region.

This series of papers aimed at promoting better education in South Asia grew out of collaboration between the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and the newly formed UN Girls' Education Initiative, and had its genesis at a Regional Meeting on Accelerating Girls' Education in South Asia in February 2005.

Essentially the series is intended to be a forum that allows debate, exchange of ideas and to break new ground. It will aim to capture the momentum and extol good practice to all engaged in educational policy and implementation.

The series does not seek to represent a specific viewpoint, but rather is intended to enable specialist contributors to present issues in greater depth and breadth than is often the case in official documents.

Initially the series will focus on girls' education but it is hoped that eventually it will broaden into a platform for more general education issues related to South Asia, with a particular emphasis on social inclusion. Contributions and feedback are invited from academics and practitioners from throughout the South Asia region and beyond. The series editors are particularly interested in submissions which offer new ideas and strategies that can assist those needing answers, and which can add impetus to the ongoing efforts in the region to provide quality education for all.

Come, join the debate!

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Sarah Huxley

ACRONYMS

BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Action Committee
CAR	Commission of Afghani Refugees
C-EMIS	Community-based EMIS
CFA	Continuous Formative Assessment
CFS	Child Friendly School
COPE	Community Organized Primary Education (Afghanistan)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRP	Child Rights Programming
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FSP	Female Stipend Programme (Bangladesh)
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GEEI	Gender Equality in Education Index
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human Development Index
IDEAL	Intensive District Education for All (Bangladesh)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILFE	Inclusive Learning Friendly Environments
MDA	Mid-Decade Assessment (EFA)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal

MoE	Ministry of Education
MWTL	Multiple Ways of Teaching Learners (Bangladesh)
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
NWFP	North West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSDP	Primary School Development Programme
PTI	Primary Training Institute
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
SPW	Students Partnership Worldwide (Nepal)
SRGBV	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (India)
SSHE	School Sanitation and Hygiene Education
SWAp	Sector-Wide Approach
TLM	Teaching–Learning Materials
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VEC	Village Education Committee
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
YES	Youth Empowerment Scheme (Pakistan)

TERMINOLOGY

Gender equality means that girls/women and boys/men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development. It is the equal valuing by society of the similarities and differences of girls/women and boys/men, and the roles they play.

Gender equity is the process of being fair to boys/men and girls/women. To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the existing historical and social disadvantages. Equity is a means, while equality and equitable outcomes are the results.

Gender parity in education is about giving every boy and girl the opportunity to have access to education and go to school. The drive to put equal numbers of boys and girls into school is referred to as achieving gender parity in education.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) – commonly used to assess gender difference – is the value of an indicator for girls divided by that for boys. A value less than 1 indicates difference in favour of boys, whereas a value near 1 indicates that parity has been more or less achieved.

Stereotypes (related to gender or other aspects of difference) are ideas held by some people about members of particular groups, based solely on membership in that group. They can be positive (black men are good basketball players) or negative (women do not understand mathematics). Used negatively, stereotyping statements reveal prejudice often resulting in discriminatory behaviours.

SUMMARY

South Asian countries are dedicated to furthering education as a fundamental human right, and this was affirmed at the governmental meeting in Islamabad in 2002. It was here that all eight States¹ pledged to assemble resources to provide 'free, inclusive, gender responsive quality basic education for all'. This commitment has also been reflected in the ongoing EFA Mid-Decade Assessment,² whereby the principles of non-discrimination, participation and equality were greatly espoused. Essentially the limitless, positive benefits that Education For All can bring, both towards individuals' well-being and their wider community, are immense: from intangible values such as self worth to broader national economic growth. It is this realization that is now dawning as South Asian countries strive towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and beyond.

Being female is often a disadvantage in South Asia. And although this is slowly changing, gender disparities continue to persist in the twenty-first century throughout entire education systems (at home and in the wider community) across South Asia. The 'real' or so-called lived experiences of children still largely remain unheard. There is a need to look at what happens at home, in classrooms and in their communities. Questions need to be asked, such as: 'What jobs are girls doing in the household and outside?', 'Are they looking after ill family members and younger siblings?', 'How can these potential barriers be minimized?', 'How do teachers interact with students?', 'Do girls participate meaningfully?' and 'Do teaching-learning materials and subject choices challenge gender stereotypes?' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008). Such questions should be a part of wider mechanisms at both grassroots and policy level, in order to achieve the different goals and articles of the CRC, EFA and MDGs (see Annex 1).

It is now time to focus on qualitative (as well as quantitative) gender-related data, because complex interrelated issues can be difficult to track through data sets such as the NER or GPI. Whilst such data obviously sheds light upon parts of the lives of girls, it by no means offers a complete picture. Questions such as which children are not in school and why, and what can be done to reduce barriers to participation and learning for different children, can only be addressed through participatory qualitative means. Furthermore, the complexity of inequalities relating to language, class, caste, gender, ethnic/religious background, disability and other differences that create deprivation (such as internally displaced children) must drive governments to find better strategies to accommodate diversity that goes beyond schooling. 'For education to be empowering (MDG3) it needs to result in equality of opportunities and in girls having more choice in their lives' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Even though most government schools in South Asia have abolished tuition fees, parents still face many challenges: many have to pay for textbooks, exams, uniforms, private tuition and school meals. These *hidden costs* make their children's education *inequitable*, i.e. if parents have a son and a daughter, and they can only afford the costs for one, then more often than not the son will benefit. Hence it is essential to cut the hidden costs for families because 'as long as education is costly or in short supply, access will continue to be "rationed", with those who are wealthy, urban and male at the front of the queue ...' (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005).

Many parents in **Bhutan** say they cannot afford to send their children to school, or need them at home to work. Officially education is free. One survey, however, revealed that over a period of six months parents had to pay an average of Ngultrum 1729 per student – for uniforms, school feeding, fees and other contributions – and this among a sample where 40 per cent of households had a cash income of only Ngultrum 5000 per year and an average of 3.4 children per family.

Source: Black and Stalker (2006); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Quality education, which encompasses issues of equality, relevance of learning, child participation and safety, is essential for the overall development of nations. There are, however, severe barriers to quality education in South Asian countries: these include the poor quality of many teachers' teaching methods, which results in reduced learning achievements in students, as well as the absenteeism of teachers (perhaps partly related to poor training) and the refusal of so-called higher caste teachers to teach so-called lower caste children.

In addition, poverty remains a constraint to educational achievement both at the macro-level (poor countries generally have lower levels of enrolment) and the micro-level (children of poor households receive less education). Researchers agree that investment in education as a poverty reduction strategy can enhance the skills and productivity among poor households in the long term. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that poverty declines as the education level of the head of the household increases. Thus to remedy the vicious cycle of poverty and poor education levels, countries will have to seriously implement a package of policy measures, comprising enhanced budgetary allocations, provision of proper school infrastructure and trained female teachers. In these efforts the governments will need the active participation of private and non-government sectors, the local communities and international development partners.

Countries in South Asia have already developed and implemented different policies and interventions aimed at increasing the enrolment of girls, and have also begun to encourage retention rates and wider well-being schemes. However, there is much more that can and should be done. Essentially, these examples of quality, gender-equitable education programmes must be identified, monitored, shared and **scaled up** in the region.

STRATEGIES TOWARDS QUALITY RIGHTS-BASED EDUCATION

1. Equality of opportunities / Right to education: girls and boys are offered the same chances to access school

- Make education **free** of costs; schools (distance, infrastructure, curriculum) **accessible** to all learners.
- Provide **incentives** for poor and marginalized families (stipend, scholarship, school feeding); non-formal education (**NFE**) for older, out-of-school and hard-to-reach children.
- Support **Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)** programmes for the most disadvantaged.
- **Involve parents and communities** in school–community partnerships.
- Develop adequate **water and sanitation (WATSAN)** infrastructure.
- Ensure that there are **sufficient female teachers** to support and act as role models for girls.

*2. Equality of pedagogy / Right **in** education: girls and boys receive the same respectful treatment and attention, follow the same curricula, enjoy teaching methods and tools free of stereotypes and gender bias*

- Provide enough, **well-trained (male and female) teachers** who can use a diversity of teaching methods.
- Develop policies that **protect children from harassment**, abuse and other forms of violence, including gender-based violence, bullying, physical and mental punishment.
- Ensure that **curriculum and textbooks are academically and pedagogically of good quality**, with positive images of boys and girls and other aspects of diversity; challenging prevailing stereotypes.

*3. Equality of outcomes / Right **through** education: as a result of education and beyond, in society more generally*

- Create continuing and equal opportunities for lifelong learning, professional training, empowerment and positive participation in society (decision-making power, control of resources, etc.).

Adapted from: Seel (2006); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

This issues paper is a step towards encouraging coordination amongst countries in South Asia. In doing so it presents a compilation of positive initiatives and remaining challenges based on evidence from the South Asia region. It is meant to generate further dialogue and action, and it has as its intended audience policy-makers and practitioners – including teacher educators – as well as (inter)national organizations. It is hoped that new sources of insight will be uncovered, and that a torch will be shone on the future potential of South Asia's children, especially those that have traditionally been excluded.

Chapter 1 provides the context, taking account of the region's diversity, and presents the holistic benefits of girls' education. This is followed by Chapter 2 which discusses some of the barriers to girls' education in relation to wider issues of social exclusion, disempowerment and state policies. Following on from this, Chapter 3 presents an integrated approach to health and education through a child rights framework, focusing on girl friendly schools and tackling gender-based violence. Chapter 4 continues to discuss aspects of quality education. In conclusion, Chapters 5 and 6 collate and present recommendations and emphasize that the time to scale up positive interventions is now!

This issues paper was initially conceived of as a synthesis of a set of papers being published by UNICEF ROSA/UNGEI, and only later evolved into an issues paper in its own right. It therefore draws substantially on other papers in the series, particularly Heijnen-Maathuis (2008), Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008), Gunawardena and Jayaweera (2008), Ramachandran (2008) and Chitrakar (2008).

THE SOUTH ASIA CONTEXT: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

1.1 Regional Diversity

South Asia is a culturally and economically diverse region with generally strong patriarchal and hierarchical social structures, which are often expressed through inequitable gender disparities. For example, according to Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008), overall literacy in South Asia is ‘confined to 48% for females and 72% for males.’ So despite (inter)national commitments, ‘the enrolment rate between girls and boys in South Asia still shows discrepancy between promise and reality ... [whilst] Sri Lanka and the Maldives have achieved gender parity, in Bangladesh there are now more girls than boys enrolled. Enrolment³ has increased throughout the region, but access for children from low income and socially marginalized groups remains a challenge’ (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Cross-country comparisons are difficult across such a diverse region, and even more challenging within countries where vast urban–rural and socio-economic disparities are acutely evident. For example, in Bangladesh the government manages fewer than half of the total number of primary schools, the other half being run by NGOs, and in Bhutan the difficult topography and remoteness of most rural areas present several logistical challenges.

However, what is common across South Asia is the use of child labour, and the work that girls are involved in is often concealed. Large cities in South Asia attract many impoverished or street-based children, the majority of whom have no access to education and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse – especially girls. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS is a growing epidemic, particularly in India where

formal education systems are yet to systematically educate young people about risks and preventative measures (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

In situations of conflict or natural disaster, quality education is paramount: it can be both life-sustaining and life-saving, providing both physical protection and psychological and social well-being.⁴ Armed conflicts (notably in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan) and natural disasters (tsunami, earthquakes) have a devastating impact on access, attendance and learning outcomes, which in turn have serious repercussions on children's educational futures. For particularly vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced girls, those in refugee camps, girls with disabilities, or those from ethnic minorities, the challenges are compounded.

Throughout the region public schools face neglect, with further challenges of piecemeal management and poorly trained teachers. Teacher absenteeism is high, especially in Pakistan, Nepal and India where teachers may be poorly paid and the profession perceived in a mediocre light. Teaching is often based on rote learning and the school curriculum lacking in practical exploration. Ineffective government schools have contributed to a two-tiered system of education (government and private) across South Asia, which may exacerbate inequalities based on gender, social class and caste (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008). After all, teachers are

also part of their wider society, and may adopt and espouse class and caste-based discriminatory practices.

1.2 Is South Asia Different From Other Regions?

Poverty, uneven development and historical colonial legacy are not unique to this region. However, the estimated 400 million young people aged 12–24, accounting for close to 30 per cent of all young people in the developing world, is a significant characteristic (Ramachandran, 2008). This 'demographic dividend' is said to have contributed towards a third of East Asia's economic miracle. 'The recent success stories of East and Southeast Asia and Ireland suggest that development requires a combination of factors ... Interactions among the many relevant factors have the potential to set off virtuous development spirals and to halt vicious spirals ...' (Bloom, 2005). The potential impact in South Asia is even greater.

The World Development Report 2007 (World Bank, 2007a) predicts that this youth demographic will steadily grow (except in Pakistan) and will peak in the next 25 years. Approximately 45 per cent of these young people are female. The potential contribution that they could play in the future workforce is immense, but in order for that to be recognized girls must receive quality education. As Ramachandran states, 'What places South Asia apart from East Asia is the

persistence of gender inequality. Yet, the potential of exponential economic growth and the promise of accelerated educational development have instilled a sense of optimism and hope' (Ramachandran, 2008).

1.3 The Holistic Benefits of Girls' Education

There is no doubt that educating girls is an essential part of winning the fight against poverty. *'On average, an educated girl boosts the income of her family and her community; has fewer, more healthy children; and is less likely to contract HIV/AIDS'* (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008). The benefits of girls' education extend far beyond the local community. Studies show that increasing the number of educated girls in a country fosters economic growth; educated women on average receive higher lifetime earnings,⁵ which can contribute to wider political stability and reduce healthcare costs. For example, more productive farming due to increased female education accounts for 43 per cent of the decline in malnutrition achieved between 1970 and 1995.⁶

Girls' education has often been positioned as a catalyst that could turn a difficult situation around (Shultz, 1993; Herz and Sperling, 2004; Dreze and Sen, 1995). Increased educational levels among women are linked to greater

control over the immediate environment (family health, nutrition, education of children). They also contribute towards women's empowerment, enabling them essentially to make informed choices and also negotiate the world around them from a position of strength. Many experts argue that promoting basic education (of at least eight to 10 years) could enhance livelihood options and help reduce poverty levels – recognizing that women share a major burden of work and their contribution to ensuring the survival of their families is essential (see Annex 2). Hence the education of girls is an important and critical investment (Ramachandran, 2008).

Education is the source of overcoming repressive traditions that have neglected the rights of girls and women. Educated mothers are in fact more likely to send both girls and boys to school and to keep them in school longer. Empirical evidence also suggests that the children of educated mothers have higher survival rates through infancy and childhood as their mothers are likely to be more aware about nutrition, hygiene and healthcare. Furthermore, education increases women's knowledge about controlling fertility and access to family planning services. Essentially, educated women enjoy an improved status in family, community and society (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

2.1 The Extent of Inequality and Social Exclusion

Firstly, it is important to point out that there is a lack of reliable data on diversity, i.e. those not from urban middle-class dominant caste backgrounds within South Asian countries, including socially excluded children. This often screens the severity of structural and local exclusionary practices, thus preventing governments in South Asia from responding effectively. As Heijnen-Maathuis (2008) highlighted, little importance has so far been attached to the education of street-working children, children of migrant workers, children with disabilities and other disadvantaged children, compared with the education of middle-class children.⁷

‘Understanding the patterns of social exclusion is crucial for identifying successful interventions. Who these children are, where they live and why they are excluded is difficult to know as countries have no information on school participation disaggregated by subgroups subject to exclusion. Analysing data from different sources may, however, give us an idea of the reality, and *it seems that nearly three-quarters of girls who do not come to school are from socially excluded groups*’ (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Diversity needs to be seen in a positive light, because it is the failure to do so which leads to underachievement: ‘it is diversity accompanied by derogation and discrimination that leads to exclusion’ (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006). Children

In **India**, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a government flagship designed to get all children into school, especially girls disadvantaged by caste, tribe or disability. It relies on community participation and monitoring with an emphasis on the recruitment of women and members of disadvantaged groups. The initiative evaluates every aspect of the learning space against gender-friendly standards, including the provision of safe water and sanitation. To ensure the retention of girls, schools serve midday meals and offer girls scholarships for uniforms and school supplies.

Source: Jha (2004a,b); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

can be discriminated against by *where* they live (rural/remote areas, urban slums, refugee camps), *how* they live (in poverty, chronically ill, malnourished), and *who* they are (with disabilities, gender, from ethnic, language, religious minorities). Often special programmes for children identified as 'different' or

'other' have been established which result in parallel education systems within countries: for 'hard-to-reach' children, or for children with disabilities, which are set against private schools for the privileged (Heijnen, 2003). The question remains whether they will result in more equal opportunities for all

In **Nepal** a pilot programme has targeted girls from Dalit communities through a process of community mobilization and trust building. Dalit castes are historically butchers, milk sellers, drummers, town criers (Khadgi) and sweepers (Dyola). The stigma of the Dalit label leads to many children refusing to enrol in school, especially if the school lies outside their immediate neighbourhood. In the school context discrimination often continues both from peers and teachers. Teachers may claim to be unbiased, but it is unlikely they would visit a Dalit household or allow a Dalit student to enter their own house. It is this kind of customary discrimination that is most difficult to eradicate.

Family support for Dalit children – girls in particular – to enrol and stay in school is generally poor and thus affects children's study. The negative influences range from active disruption of study by unsupportive parents, to basic logistical issues such as lack of space or light for studying. Though the government has created a Dalit scholarship programme, this does not sufficiently take into account costs of textbooks, stationery, clothing and fees for exams. Still, the girls involved in this pilot project say they are happy in school and teachers treat them well. However, what they feel very uncomfortable with is the 'Dalit' label of the scholarship.

Source: UNESCO Kathmandu (2005a); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

beyond education in schools – or are they just reinforcing exclusionary practices?

As Chitrakar rightly asserts, ‘Barriers take different forms – e.g. barriers to access, barriers to quality services and barriers to relevant curricula and/or pedagogy ... barriers to girls’ education can also take differential forms across nations/societies depending upon the socio-economic, religious and cultural contexts. Furthermore, barriers can be perceived as either intrinsic or extrinsic to girls in relation to how they experience educational participation ... some barriers can be obvious while others are subtle and tacit’ (Chitrakar, 2008). The UNICEF website (2007) concentrates on the following barriers, which are generic in nature, focusing on educating and schooling girls:

- Family poverty
- Weak legal frameworks around education

- Uneven playing field from the start
- Issues of safety and security around school affecting girls
- Lack of relevance of school to the lives of children.

And whilst these are a useful starting point they are by no means the complete experiential worlds of girls and boys (and indeed their wider social relationships). These are all very important factors but are mostly external and observable. Chitrakar (2008) elaborates that critical social theorists can offer a much deeper perspective into the social contexts of girls and boys at household, community, school, district education or ministry of education levels, whereby power relations and underlying organizational assumptions (often implicit) can be unpacked so that interventions are not superficial (see Stromquist, 1995). Hence he calls for a dualistic approach towards examining barriers to girls’ education (see Table 1).

Table 1 Defining the Scope for Investigating Barriers to Girls’ Education and Gender Equality in South Asian Countries

Adapted from UNICEF (2007)	Adapted from Heward (1999)
1. Family earning – opportunity costs of education	1. Opportunities for girls to have a voice and acknowledged as active agents rather than passive consumers of education and development
2. Provision of legal frameworks around education	2. Extent to which debates have been allowed to explore ‘education issues well beyond access, enrolment and level of attainment to that of the micro-processes of schooling, curricular content, meanings and the way in which girls and women construct their understanding of education’
3. Expectation and treatments of girls and boys right from the stage of early childhood	3. Meaning and values attached to educational attainment – beyond economic to social and political pay-off
4. Issues of safety and security around school affecting girls	4. Consideration of historical, social and cultural context – gender, plurality and education
5. Relevance of school to the lives of children	5. Gender aware and sensitive institutions

Source: Chitrakar (2008)

A sensitive and in-depth approach is essential in South Asia where gender disparities (exacerbated by poverty) are far greater than anywhere else in the world. South Asia is one of the few regions in the world where men outnumber women and this deficit 'stems from lifelong discrimination against girls and women, particularly from inferior nutrition and healthcare that girls receive early in life and during childbearing years' (Ramachandran, 2008). In fact, the disparity is not uniform even across South Asia – between nations and even between localities. '*Early marriage and pregnancy, anaemia, sexual violence, and poor educational opportunities all contribute to ill health among female adolescents in this region ... education and improved economic circumstances alone are likely to be insufficient to change practices that have become culturally, socially, and, in some cases, legally enshrined*' (Visaria, 2002). Not only gender or poverty, but also ethnicity, language, social status or caste, are major obstacles to access and successful completion of primary education.

Girls in South Asia may face several social exclusionary practices on a day-to-day basis (some obvious whilst others are more subtle⁸). There is still a strong preference for sons in many households, which transpires as parents often valuing the education of their son above that of their daughter. Furthermore, early marriage and teenage pregnancy are still widespread in the villages of most South Asian countries and therefore these girls

are denied the opportunity to pursue a life outside of domesticity. Indeed, exclusion can be compounded by wider structural issues: some parents may not send their daughters to school because of poor quality teachers, harassment, poor school infrastructure, etc. Hence parents may not perceive any 'returns' from sending their daughter to school.

According to Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008), overall costs of educating girls are higher compared with those of boys. These include direct costs both to the society (separate schools and/or expensive schools, i.e. being closer to settlements and therefore requiring more expensive land, requiring boundary walls, etc.) and the households (e.g. for uniforms or provision for safe transport), or indirect or opportunity costs because girls do more labour in the household than boys (Herz *et al.*, 1991). In addition, Mujahid-Mukhtar points out that the returns on investing in a girl's education do not accrue directly to her parents, who make this investment decision,⁹ but to the girl's husband and in-laws. On the other hand, boys are more likely to support their parents in old age or contribute to the household's future sustenance. Essentially, parents are often lacking information about the returns to female education, and/or regard the risks associated with investment in female education as greater than those with boys. 'Thus policy has to focus on reducing the costs of and changing the structures of delivery of schooling services, on the one hand, and interventions to change parental

attitudes and household behaviour on the other' (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008). There is also need for action at the level of macro-economic policy and the labour market, because as Herz *et al.* (1991) argue, a vicious circle ensues whereby: 'men earn more, making the returns to male schooling higher, so boys are sent to school more often than girls. Girls then grow up lacking the education they need to compete. Cultural traditions may reflect and reinforce economics, especially in poor rural settings' (Herz *et al.*, 1991).

More attention needs to be paid to the overall educational experience of girls, because *access to education of poor quality is no access*. Poor quality education is costly as it results in high repetition and dropout rates. Improved quality is crucial for retention and

survival, and to ensure sustainable learning outcomes as well as to challenge exclusionary forces (UNICEF, 2002a). Teachers are the agents of change and efforts to improve quality must begin with an understanding of how children learn and they must demonstrate respect for diversity. Teacher training should be improved to include reflective inquiry so that they are able when seeking explanations for lack of student achievement to consider inadequacies in content, methodology and the learning environment (to be discussed further in Chapter 6) (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

2.2 Understanding Empowerment

Empowerment can be difficult to fully comprehend and quantify, although there are now indicators such as the Gender

Loreto School, Sealdah (**India**) is a private school, but can be highlighted as an example of best practice in its pursuit of excellence and equity. The school has moved away from education for a privileged few, towards community schooling, including Kolkata's street children. Loreto has integrated children from poor and rich families without resorting to any form of selection, yet has maintained a track record of excellent academic results based on a non-competitive ideology, defying the logic that social class counts in the success or failure of a school. Loreto Sealdah opened its doors to at least 50 per cent of non-fee-paying students from nearby slums, 'bustees' and poorer areas of Kolkata, who receive free uniforms, food and books from the school and are subsidized by the fee-paying students. Education about human values and practising these are an important part of school life, both for students and staff and have been translated into sound educational practices. What is unique about the school is its ability to combine 'best practice' in terms of academic excellence and 'best practice' in terms of children's rights to non-discrimination, optimal development, participation and protection.

Source: Jessop (2000); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Empowerment Measure (GEM), and – perhaps more inclusive – the GEEI (developed by the Beyond Access Programme). Yet if one is to fully realize the benefits of education through eradicating inequalities and exclusionary practices (at both the local and national levels), it is essential to realize that good *quality education is tantamount to empowerment*. Access to quality education can provide girls with the opportunity to broaden their life experience and provide access to new resources and skills, which in turn they can utilize in their wider communities.

Essentially, ‘empowerment’ can be described¹⁰ as both the process and the outcome of effective life skills. Largely focusing on:

- *Ways of thinking*: knowledge of the environment and its resources; critical consciousness to question the status quo; aspirations to strive for a better life; skills in problem solving.
- *Ways of feeling*: feelings of competence; feelings of self esteem; feelings of control over the events of one’s life.
- *Ways of behaving*: autonomy; determination to make decisions and follow them through.

(As cited in McKee *et al.*, 2000)

In order for a child to be fully empowered they must be able to negotiate the world around them, being involved in decision-making processes and confident and comfortable in a variety of social environments. As indicated below, there

are several spheres that empowerment operates on, namely: social, material and psychological. In order to assess whether a child is actively engaged and participating in their lived experiences the following sorts of questions should be asked through qualitative studies:

EMPOWERMENT ANALYSIS

Social:

- What kinds of relationships exist between the family members?
- Is the family isolated or part of a social network?
- What resources exist/can be used?
- Do social values play a role in their social situation?

Material:

- What does the girl/family live on?
- Has the girl’s wider family any skills which could improve the material situation?
- What kind of accommodation do they have?

Psychological:

- How does the girl feel?
- Are there physical illnesses in the family – what significance?
- What characterizes the emotional climate in the family?

Source: SDC (2006).

For great visionaries such as Amartya Sen, empowerment is a process whereby ‘There can be little doubt that the

community or culture to which a person belongs can have a major influence on the way he or she sees a situation or views a decision ... note has to be taken of local knowledge, regional norms, and particular perceptions and values that are common in a specific community ... but this does not, in any plausible way, undermine or eliminate the possibility and *role of choice and reasoning about identity*' (Sen, 2006).

Thus, fundamentally, formal education alone 'is not adequate to empower women and neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past. The content of education, the context in which it is imparted and the "intangible" inputs are all equally important' (Ramachandran, 2008). While economic disparities and social inequalities are certainly important, a number of researchers argue that cultural beliefs and practices and regional characteristics play an important role in mediating the relationship between education, health and empowerment (Colclough *et al.*, 2000; Jayaweera, 1997; Kumar and Vlassoff, 1999). Jeejibhoj and Sathar

(2001) point out: 'the cultures of South Asia are largely gender stratified, characterized by patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, inheritance and succession practices that exclude women, and hierarchical relations in which the patriarch or his relatives have authority over family members. *Levels and patterns of female autonomy vary considerably within the region ... region plays the major conditioning role ...*' The social and educational status of Muslim girls in the Maldives, Kerala and Tamil Nadu (India) and Bangladesh is appreciably better than that of Hindus in Rajasthan or Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Equally, the situation of Muslim groups in Baluchistan is vastly different from those in Punjab (Pakistan) (Ramachandran, 2008).

In relation to the spread of HIV/AIDS, gender relations put girls and women at a greater risk in this region. Education has the potential to empower them to make informed decisions and give them the confidence to say 'No'. Yet, due to the resistance to reproductive and sexual health education in the region,

Working for Better Life (WBL), an NGO in **Bangladesh**, believes in children's empowerment. School debate programmes are used as the main tool for children's empowerment. WBL organizes student debate programmes in lower and middle secondary schools on social issues. Children come up with issues they want to discuss themselves, and topics have varied from domestic violence, environmental health issues, school fees, gender-based violence to corporal punishment, poverty and climate change. Programmes within schools and between schools involve more than 600 secondary schools and madrasahs across Bangladesh.

Source: www.workingforbetterlife.org; cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

governments and civil society groups are compelled to address the issue indirectly – perhaps with devastating impacts.

2.3 State Expenditure on Education

According to Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008), compared with other low income countries, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP remains low in South Asia, particularly in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan¹¹ (despite the fact that public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP has slightly increased during the past decade). Even Sri Lanka, with a previous record of high public spending on social programmes, has cut expenditure on education particularly since 1987. Mujahid-Mukhtar also stresses that weak financial management and antiquated budgetary practices mitigate the effectiveness of public expenditure in most, if not all, of South Asian countries. Furthermore, low levels of utilization and uptake can have disastrous knock-on effects. For instance, she remarks that in Pakistan, ‘according to rough estimates, almost 33% of the development budget allocated to the education sector in Pakistan for the year 2005/06 lapsed due to lack of capacity among education staff to prepare projects, inability to recruit qualified staff for timely project implementation, [and] delays in releases of funds’ (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008). Underspending affects all vulnerable groups, and girls especially within these.

Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) recommends the following options for generating greater funds:

1. *Percentage of GDP allocated to Education:* The most important source of funds for the education sector would be higher allocations by the South Asian governments. At present, except for the Maldives, none of the countries allocate more than 2–3 per cent of GDP to education. This share should be enhanced to 4–6 per cent, which would be equivalent to almost doubling their present funds for education.
2. *Tax for Education:* Governments should consider imposing a nominal (say 1%) tax on luxury items to be spent on education. This is being considered in India and was also imposed in Pakistan (termed *Iqra* tax) about a decade ago but was discontinued after a change of government.

Nonetheless, to increase resources for education, governments need to improve the collection of general purpose revenue. Tax policy and administration need to improve and more effort should be diverted towards collection of non-tax revenue, including user charges on public utilities and services.¹²

3. *Public–Private Partnerships in Education:* As most South Asian countries are poor, public resources

are not likely to be sufficient to improve girls' access to education of some minimum quality. In addition, due to poor public sector management, the efficiency of public expenditure is low. Hence, disproportionately higher resources would be required if girls' education has to be provided solely by the government. The public sector, therefore, needs to forge partnerships with the private and non-government sectors so as to increase the outreach and quality of girls' education. This may involve public financing of private delivery of education, for which necessary legal and regulatory frameworks and institutions need to be put in place.

4. *External Assistance:* All South Asian countries receive substantial bilateral and multilateral assistance from several international development partners. At the World Education Forum 2000, donors pledged to support developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia:

'The EFA 2000 Assessment highlights that the challenge of education for all is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia, and in the least developed countries. Accordingly, while no country in need should be denied international assistance, priority should be given to these regions and countries. Countries in conflict or undergoing reconstruction should also be given special attention in building up their education

systems to meet the needs of all learners.'
(Dakar Framework for Action: Clause 14)

'Economic policies matter for girls' education. Although, on the surface, economic policies may seem far removed from children's everyday lives, they are the root cause of much of the poverty that children face. Opportunities missed in childhood, such as good nutrition and education, can cause irreversible harm to children, and trap them in long-term poverty ... Pro-poor, pro-child economic policies underpin action to tackle poverty among children, and are critical for breaking intergenerational poverty cycles. Thus they can play an essential role in meeting the Millennium Development Goals' (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) elaborates by stating that wider economic policies have in fact a far-reaching affect on children: firstly, their impact on household livelihoods; and secondly, their impact on financing key public services essential for child development and well-being, such as health and education. Furthermore, the extent to which growth can help reduce poverty is influenced by levels of inequality: 'growth can be three times more effective in reducing poverty where inequality is low than if it is high. Given the dramatic rise in global inequality since the mid-1980s, this implies that *substantially greater redistribution of income and assets is needed to reduce poverty*' (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

She goes on to stipulate that there are three key areas of redistribution that governments should focus on that may have strong impacts on families and thus children in poverty:

- **Redistribution of productive assets**, such as land, and of income.

Countries with equitable distribution of land and access to education grow faster and convert growth into poverty reduction faster because poor people are the drivers of growth, rather than the eventual beneficiaries.

Adequately sized cash transfers can also help poor people build up productive assets.

- **Ensuring pro-poor growth.** Growth will reduce poverty most when it is

concentrated in labour-intensive sectors with the potential to employ unskilled or low-skilled people. In many contexts this means agriculture and micro-enterprise. As growth in these sectors may also increase children's workloads, they may need to be combined with policy and programmatic measures to ensure children's education.

- **Investing in basic services to promote human development**, in particular health, education and water and sanitation. As well as its intrinsic benefits, and contribution to improved health, education is particularly critical in enabling poor people to benefit from and drive economic growth.

POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY

3.1 Vulnerability in South Asia: An Overview

Vulnerability, generally, relates to a population's exposure to drastic livelihood shocks, environmental degradation, natural disasters, absence of safety nets, low levels of health and nutrition, and political strife or conflict in a country. The South Asian region has had a plethora of such examples only within the last couple of years, including: the internal conflicts of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka and the Maoist rebels in Nepal; the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan; and the tsunami in December 2005 that greatly affected India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

'Variables generally used to assess the magnitude and extent of vulnerability are: (i) the percentage of population dependent on subsistence agriculture; (ii)

the percentage of population covered by safety nets (public or private); (iii) the extent and outreach of philanthropy in the country; (iv) the frequency and percentage of population likely to be affected by conflicts (both external and internal), natural disasters and epidemics, etc. As data on most of these variables is not available in developing countries, region-specific proxy variables are used instead. For example, in South Asia, percentage of rural population could be used as proxy for population dependent on subsistence agriculture; other indicators could be share of agriculture in GDP, sustainable access to improved water and sanitation, and prevalence of HIV' (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

According to Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008), available quantitative data reflects that South Asian countries are a 'vulnerable' population (see Table 2). These countries

Table 2 South Asia: Vulnerability in the Region

	% of rural population (2004)	Value added by agriculture (% of GDP)* 2005	% of population without sustainable access to improved sanitation and water source 2004		Prevalence of HIV
			Water	Sanitation	
Afghanistan**	71.2	–	60	33	<0.01
Bangladesh	75.3	21.0	26	61	<0.1
Bhutan	89.2	–	38	30	<0.1
India	71.5	19.0	14	67	0.9
Maldives	70.8	–	17	41	<0.2
Nepal	84.7	40.0	10	65	0.5
Pakistan	65.5	22.0	9	41	0.1
Sri Lanka	84.8	17.0	21	9	<0.1

Source: UNDP (2006)

* Source: World Bank (2007a)

** Source: UNDP (2004): data available for 2003

are predominantly rural economies with a large percentage of the population working in the primary sector, which increases the 'vulnerability' of its people whose livelihood is adversely affected significantly by any natural disaster, such as the recent floods in the summer of 2007 in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

'Except for Nepal, where agriculture is the single largest sector, South Asian economies are most dependent on the services sector and not on the "reliable" manufacturing sector, unlike the developed nations. With the exception of Sri Lanka, the percentages of population without sustainable access to improved sanitation are high, ranging from 30 per cent in Bhutan to 67 per cent in India. Exposure to deadly disease, e.g. HIV, is less than 0.1 per cent except in India (0.9%) and Nepal (0.5%)' (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

3.2 Development Profiles

According to Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) in the context of HDI, recent evidence (UNDP, 2006) suggests that South Asian countries (excluding Sri Lanka and the Maldives) rank in the bottom 30 per cent of countries worldwide, i.e. below the rank of 125 out of a total 177 countries ranked (Table 3). The GDI values, although lower than HDI values, reflect a slightly better rank, and interestingly, the GEM ranks available for three South Asian countries show improvement, perhaps mainly due to the increase in the political participation of women in these countries.

Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) goes on to state that 'with almost one-half of their population, i.e. women, being mostly illiterate and economically inactive with low earnings, South Asian countries

Table 3 South Asia: Human Development and Gender Empowerment Profiles

	Human Development Index (HDI)		Gender Development Index (GDI)		Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)	
	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank
Afghanistan*	0.340	173	0.300	143	–	–
Bangladesh	0.530	137	0.524	102	0.374	67
Bhutan	0.538	135	–	–	–	–
India	0.611	126	0.591	96	–	–
Maldives	0.739	98	–	–	–	–
Nepal	0.527	138	0.513	106	–	–
Pakistan	0.539	134	0.513	105	0.377	66
Sri Lanka	0.755	93	0.749	68	0.372	69

Source: UNDP (2006)

* Source: UNDP (2004): data available for 2002

have, not surprisingly, a high incidence of poverty (Table 4). The **Human Poverty Index (HPI)**,¹³ which shows *deprivation* in the three dimensions of the HDI, reveals that, except for the Maldives and Sri Lanka, South Asian countries are

placed very low in the poverty ranking. With reference to the national poverty lines, all countries display a high percentage of poor population, from one-quarter of the people in Sri Lanka to half of the people in Bangladesh. *In India,*

Table 4 South Asia: Poverty Profile

	Human Poverty Index (HPI-1)		% population below income poverty line			Ratio of richest 10% to poorest 10%
	Value	Rank	\$1 a day 1990–2004	\$2 a day 1990–2004	National poverty line 1990–2003	
Afghanistan*	59.3	94	–	70.0	–	7.17**
Bangladesh	44.2	85	36.0	82.8	49.8	6.8
Bhutan	39.0	71	–	–	–	–
India	31.3	55	34.7	79.9	28.6	7.3
Maldives	16.9	36	–	–	–	–
Nepal	38.1	68	24.1	68.5	30.9	15.8
Pakistan	36.3	65	17.0	73.6	32.6	6.5
Sri Lanka	17.7	38	5.6	41.6	25.0	8.1

Source: UNDP (2006)

* Source: UNDP (2004): data available for 2002

** Estimated for richest 20% to poorest 20%

Pakistan and Nepal, almost one-third of the people are poor by national standards of poverty. If the \$2-a-day poverty standard is considered, the percentages of poor population rise drastically in South Asia: Nepal (69%), Pakistan (74%), India (80%) and Bangladesh (83%). Income inequality, based on the ratio of the share of income of the richest 10 per cent to that of the poorest 10 per cent, is fairly high in South Asian countries, ranging between 7 in Pakistan and Bangladesh and 16 in Nepal' (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

3.3 Poverty and Employment

As Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) remarks, the relationship between education and poverty is two-fold:

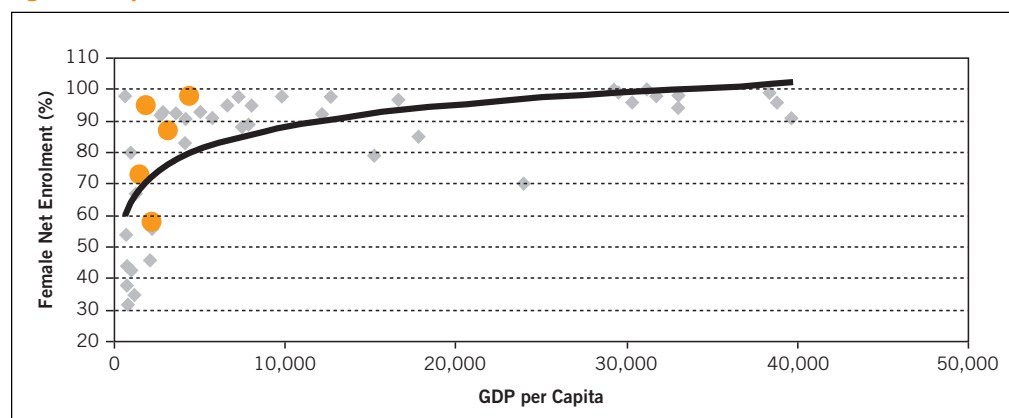
- Poverty as a constraint to educational achievement both at the macro-level (poor countries generally have lower

levels of enrolment) and the micro-level (children of poor households receive less education).

- Investment in education as a poverty reduction strategy which can enhance the skills and productivity among poor households.

In South Asian countries in general, females still receive less education than males (with the notable exception of the Maldives¹⁴). As Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) points out, because of scarcity of financial (and other) resources, low income countries are more likely than richer countries to have low overall enrolment ratios and also low gender parity in enrolments (see Figure 1). Poor households are not able to afford education for their children, either due to lack of financial resources to meet school needs or due to the loss of sending a 'little earning hand' to school.

Figure 1 Impact of Income on Enrolment



Source: Country data derived from UNDP (2006)

- South Asian countries

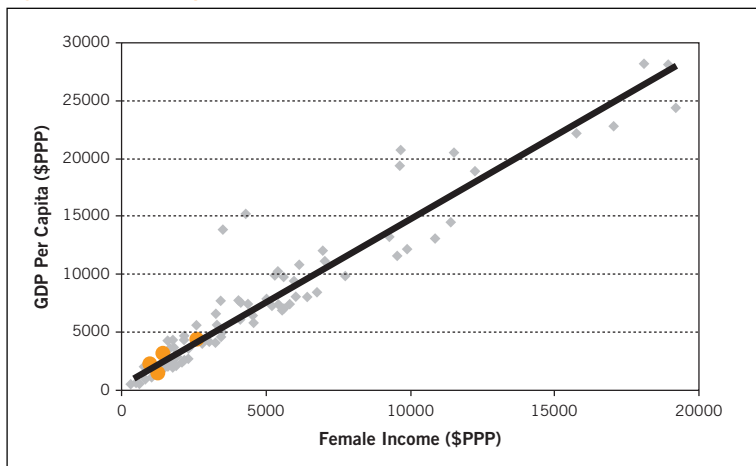
She establishes this point by stating that 'in Pakistan, the net primary enrolment rate of 36.6 per cent for poor households is much lower than the 59.3 per cent for non-poor households; for female education, these rates are 30.2 per cent and 52.3 per cent, respectively' (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

Interestingly, data available for five South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka) shows that with the exception of Pakistan, the remaining four countries have higher girls' enrolment rates than the average trend for countries with comparable per capita income levels. This implies that most countries in South Asia, despite lower incomes, have performed relatively better in the context of female primary enrolments, which may be due to certain policies (as in

Nepal) and other special measures and incentives.

Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) asserts that her estimates show that per capita income and female teachers play a significant positive role in determining female net enrolment in primary school. In addition, poverty is also manifested in terms of access to basic social and economic infrastructure. According to Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008), empirical evidence suggests that poverty declines as the education level of the head of the household increases. In Pakistan, of the illiterate heads, 42 per cent of households are poor, whilst in those with literate heads only 21 per cent are poor. Increased education is positively related to increased productivity, which, in turn, generates a higher national (or household) income (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Relationship Between Female Income and National Income



Source: Country data derived from UNDP (2006)

● South Asian countries

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

4.1 National Policies: Legal Commitments

Gender mainstreaming is a global approach that holistically promotes gender equality. 'Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects by governments, NGOs and the private sector' (Gunawardena and Jayaweera, 2008).

Table 5 indicates that all eight South Asian countries have made legal

commitments towards improving access to education for girls and boys and, according to Gunawardena and Jayaweera (2008), Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan have adopted wider policies of general gender mainstreaming evident through resource distribution and institutional provisions, resulting in a positive impact on girls and boys. They argue that part of the reason gender initiatives have been mainstreamed is because of the political will of the governments, but also because they were a 'response to social demand in countries which had attached a high value to education. Consequently gender parity has been achieved rapidly, contributing to features of gender equality in some sectors beyond the limits of educational institutions. Expected outcomes of universal education have not been realized in a context of macro-economic policies that

did not reduce poverty substantially in Sri Lanka, nor reach “hard-to-reach” islands and mountainous terrain in the Maldives and Bhutan respectively’ (Gunawardena and Jayaweera, 2008). Hence they emphasize the need for there

to be both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ calls for the right and need for education, as well as the political understanding that ‘poverty’ is a wider structural issue – and not just related to the geographically marginalized.

Table 5 Legal Commitments to Providing Access to Education

Country	Provision	Constitution
Afghanistan	‘The State shall adopt necessary measures for promotion of education in all levels, development of religious education, organizing and improving the conditions of mosques, madrassas and religious centres’	Article 17
Bangladesh	‘The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of a. establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law’	Article 17
Bhutan	‘The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality’	Article 9:15
India	‘The State shall within the limits of its economic capacity make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education ...’ ‘The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years’	Article 41 Article 45
Maldives	‘Persons shall be free to acquire knowledge and to impart knowledge provided that such acquisition and imparting of knowledge does not contravene law’	Article 19

Nepal	'The State shall pursue a policy of raising the standard of living of the general public through the development of infrastructures such as education ...'	Article 268
Pakistan	'Remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period'	Article 37 (b)
Sri Lanka	'the complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels' 'to promote with special care the interests of children and youth so as to ensure the full development, physical, mental, moral, religious, social and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination'	Article 27 (2) h Article 27 (13)

Source: Gunawardena and Jayaweera (2008)

4.2 Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAps) in Education

Since the 1990s, international development assistance has sought to move away from separate donor projects towards sector-wide approaches (SWAps), whereby donors aim to synchronize their support with government-led policy frameworks and programme plans. These long-term approaches are increasingly being aligned with national multi-sectoral poverty reduction strategies, which are in pursuit of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Gunawardena and Jayaweera, 2008). SWAps strive to improve efficiency and effectiveness: to achieve better outcomes in terms of access, completion, quality and equity (Seel, 2006). According to DAC (2000) there are seven key areas for SWAps to

concentrate on in relation to gender mainstreaming. These are:

- Wider policy environment
- Multi-level gender analysis
- Policy and strategy development processes
- Management and implementation structures
- Capacity
- Monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- Donor coordination in support of gender equality.

In addition it is critical that, as Gunawardena and Jayaweera (2008) aptly remark, attention to gender *equality* is critical if SWAps are to be successful in terms of equitable and sustainable development. SWAps and other major programmes in the eight countries of South Asia are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 SWApS and other Major Programmes in South Asia

Country	Name of Programme	Programme scope	Described as a
Afghanistan	National Education Strategy Plan through a unified vision of the educational needs of the country with targets established for achieving specific goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing access • Improving the quality of education • Improving governance and management standards in the Ministry and devolving greater authority to the schools 	General and Technical and Vocational Education	NESP
Bangladesh	Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) II (2003–09) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building • Quality improvement in schools and classrooms • Quality improvement through infrastructure development • Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling • PEDP-II implementation, management and monitoring 	Primary Education Sector excluding NFE	SWAp
Bhutan	Education Development Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend access to primary and secondary education • Improve quality and relevance of education at all levels • Institutional strengthening 	Primary and secondary education	Education Development
India	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2002–10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing elementary education to all children (6–14) • Disparity reduction among focus groups in education • Bridge all gender and social gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary level by 2010 • Universal retention by 2010 	Primary education	SWAp

Maldives	<p>Third Education and Training Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education quality improvement • Equitable access to be increased through the expansion of secondary schools • Institutional strengthening • Training for selected professionals 	Primary and secondary education	
Nepal	<p>Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP) II and EFA 2004–09</p>	<p>Primary and basic education Adult education</p>	PBA progressing to a SWAp
Pakistan	<p>Education Sector Reform Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of literacy rate • Universalization of primary education • Improvement in the quality of education through better teachers, reformed curriculum, and efficient examination system • Introducing a third stream of gender and area-specific technical vocational education in tehsil and district levels • Empowerment of district education authorities • Promotion of public–private partnerships • Diversification of general education 	Literacy, general education and quality of education	ESR
Sri Lanka	<p>Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity in access to education • Improvement in the quality of education • Efficient and equitable resource allocation • Strengthening governance and delivery services 	Primary and secondary education	SWAp

Source: Gunawardena and Jayaweera (2008)

The degree of importance placed on gender mainstreaming varies across governments in the region. Sadly, according to Gunawardena and Jayaweera (2008), countries such as the Maldives and Sri Lanka, which have already achieved gender parity, are sometimes apathetic towards wider mainstreaming concerns (such as increasing the number of women in employment), and can appear to place less emphasis on gender issues than some of the other countries still striving for gender parity.

4.3 Lessons Learnt: Approaches to Mainstreaming

'Education does not function in a vacuum and factors other than policies have facilitated or impeded gender mainstreaming. A confluence of multiple contextual factors surfacing from the political, economic and social environment has contributed to the success or failure of policies ... Examples of good practices relate to (i) political will and incentives, (ii) overcoming barriers to the education of girls in a country in which there is a high social demand for education, (iii) gender sensitizing and empowering women to change negative attitudes to the education of girls, (iv) the contribution of very large NGOs (e.g. BRAC)' (Gunawardena and Jayaweera, 2008).

Gender sensitization programmes such as the *Mahila Samakhya* in India have contributed greatly to changing negative

attitudes of parents and communities to the education of girls. The *Mahila Samakhya* began in 1989, and is an example of an important alternative approach to women's mobilization and empowerment. It eschewed economic development as the entry point in favour of political mobilization, and entailed an explicit redefinition of education as an enabling and empowering platform, as a process whereby women are encouraged to think critically, and to demand and acquire the information and skills they need to act collectively for positive change. Many women have been motivated to bring about change in the lives of their daughters: to ensure that they have better opportunities than they did. Sending girls to schools or residential learning centres has meant in some cases acting against social norms (such as child marriage). In addition, women are also actively involved in monitoring of schools, and participate in school bodies (such as the village and school education committees) (Gunawardena and Jayaweera, 2008).

Essentially Gunawardena and Jayaweera (2008) call for policy makers to acknowledge and build from the lessons learnt in the region relating to mainstreaming gender. These lessons are:

- Limitations caused by the absence of a holistic approach to mainstreaming based on a rights-based perspective, offering adequate incentives that are not limited to

primary education and are supported by legislation and institutional development.

- Limited success of special programmes for girls such as stipend programmes that require cost sharing by families enmeshed in poverty.
- Failure to envisage the goal of mainstreaming as gender equality and not gender parity.
- Over-estimating the potential of non-formal education as a substitute for formal education and at the same time undervaluing its role as a complementary strategy to facilitate mainstreaming.
- Absence of a results-based monitoring system at local levels to ensure effective implementation.
- Consequences of a lack of political will to universalize education as a fundamental right.
- Barriers reinforced by macro-economic policies that bypass the poor and perpetuate socio-economic and gender inequalities and ineffectiveness of poverty reduction strategies that are compartmentalized and are not mainstreamed in national policies.
- Lack of focus on reducing through education policies disparities such as urban–rural, provincial/district, geographical, socio-economic, socio-cultural cum gender, and those created by conflict and natural disaster.
- Impact of the failure to eliminate gender role stereotypes in educational materials, gendered behavioural expectations in educational institutions and gender insensitivity on the part of teachers and other educational personnel.
- Impediments created by inadequacy of conscientization programmes at all levels to counter adherence to son preference and to oppressive social practices that disempower girls and women and reinforce gender inequalities.
- Negative results of transfer of international goals to national policies without adequate consideration of contextual factors in each country.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND HEALTH

5.1 A CRC Vision of Education and Health

Every country in South Asia has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), making it a legal obligation to ensure compulsory quality education free of costs, based on the principle of non-discrimination.

The CRC on the right to education for all:

Art. 28 All children have an equal right to education.

Art. 2 There shall be no discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, social group or any other grounds. The implication is that schools must also promote tolerance and understanding of difference and diversity.

The CRC on children as citizens:

Art. 12 Children have the right to have their views heard and respected and to participate in decision making on matters that affect their lives.

Art. 29 The purpose of education is to (1) develop children's full potential, (2) prepare them to take responsible roles in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples, (3) develop their respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The CRC on content and style of education:

Art. 31 Children have the right to leisure and play.

Art. 28 School discipline should be in conformity with the child's human dignity.

Art. 17 Children have the right to information on all matters that affect them, e.g. health education (Art. 24); drug and substance abuse (Art. 33).

Source: Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Quality of education is now seen through the lens of a *rights-based vision* of education, which is inclusive, child-centred, learning-friendly, relevant, participatory and empowering. This vision can only be ascertained through creating an enabling environment, which should be both national (structural) and

local (individuals' perceptions). Child Friendly Schools (CFS) and Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments (ILFE) (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005c) are steps in the right direction that transform the CRC into quality educational practice (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

A **Child Friendly School (CFS)** is (1) a child-seeking school (actively identifying excluded children and providing them with access and learning opportunities) and (2) a child-centred school (acting in the best interest of the 'whole' child).

Child-friendly schools reflect an environment of good quality by being:

- inclusive and protective of all children;
- academically effective with all children (accepting, addressing and celebrating diversity);
- healthy for all children (physically and mentally);
- gender sensitive (access, process, outcomes);
- involved with families and communities.

Source: Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

An **Inclusive Learning Friendly Environment (ILFE)**

is a formal or non-formal place for learning, where teachers and administrators seek out all available support for finding and teaching all children, while providing special support to children who are enrolled but excluded from participation and learning.

A 'learning friendly' environment is 'child friendly' and 'teacher friendly' and stresses the importance of students and teachers learning together as a learning community. It places children at the centre of learning and encourages their active participation in learning, while also fulfilling the needs and interests of teachers.

In **Bhutan** teachers and teacher educators participated in a workshop on Child Rights linked to the use of corporal punishment in schools. One of the more effective classroom management techniques learned dealt with preventing 'discipline' problems by using active and joyful teaching methods such as Circle Time. Whilst Circle Time can have an important place in the curriculum as an opportunity to develop speaking and listening skills in children, it also fulfils a critical role in their moral development. Circle Time can provide a forum for discussion of important issues that affect children's lives such as relationships, non-discrimination, fairness, rights, tolerance, respect, cooperation and non-violent conflict solving, and as such may help to prevent behaviour and classroom management problems.

See also: www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/library/circlotime.

Source: Heijnen (2004); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

A commitment to embody children's rights at the grassroots is paramount. Policy level actions must be monitored and followed up at localities. Focus on the place of learning as an environment promoting children's rights means that it is safe and supportive of all learners, free from all forms of harassment, ridicule, bullying, discrimination, abuse and physical violence – including corporal punishment. Thus the CRC takes the EFA agenda forward by finding ways of enabling schools to serve all learners as part of a national education system that is inclusive and responsive (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Child friendly schools create an enabling environment because children are supporting children, teachers are supporting teachers, and parents are partners in the education of their children, and at the same time communities are supporting their local schools. Furthermore, these schools care for the students in a holistic way: bridge courses for children lagging behind may be offered (such as NGO Pratham in India); scholarships¹⁵ for poorer students; and school feeding programmes (such as WFP's work in Afghanistan and India) (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008). The schools are able to see a child as a 'whole' person – with a life outside the school grounds.

UNESCO is involved in an international initiative in schools called Living Values Education – www.livingvalues.net. Founded by a Hindu spiritual leader in the 1990s it is now operating in 66 countries in 4000 sites, many of which are schools. It has a **rights-based** approach to fostering positive self-development and social cooperation in children and young people. The programme provides activities, methodologies and materials for teachers and facilitators.

Source: Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

BEFORE SHE REACHES SCHOOL

Before children reach school age they must negotiate threats from a number of diseases. More than 50 per cent of child deaths are caused by pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, measles, malnutrition and HIV. Health and nutrition can affect education in many ways. In resource-poor countries, physical and mental disability can be a major barrier to schooling ... school readiness depends on cognitive, motor and socio-emotional development which can be affected by, among other things, under-nutrition, iron deficiency, anaemia and malaria.

Source: Jukes (2006); cited in Ramachandran (2008).

The 'bi-directional relationship' of a child's health and education cannot be ignored (see Annex 3). It is well known that countries with low infant and child mortality tend to have high literacy (Bloom, 2005; Bhalla *et al.*, 2003). Research over the last three decades has shown that gender inequalities are characteristic of communities with poor health, education and development indicators. Illiterate women are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, repeated childbearing and ill-health (Ramachandran, 2008).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease'. This definition creates an interrelated view of health and education. Questions such as: in what ways do health and well-being influence the ability of children to enrol, and complete at least eight years of elementary education; and

what are the aspects of health that are critical to girls, are crucial in understanding why a girl may not attend school.

Starting from early childhood, moving to adolescence, and on to adulthood, health affects education in many ways. There is a sort of progression from the immediate health situation of the child (level one) to socio-cultural factors (level four). Each subsequent level affects the prior level.

1. Level one:

- i. Health and nutrition in early childhood affects school readiness;
- ii. Health and nutrition in early childhood affects enrolment, attendance and learning.

2. Level two:

- i. Child and family health/illness (including tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS) affect educational participation and outcome.

3. Level three:

- i. School and community environment, including gender-based violence, affects education outcomes, that adversely affect enrolment, attendance and learning.

4. Level four:

- i. Socio-cultural perceptions, attitudes and prejudices affect women's and girls' access to services, thereby impacting both health and educational outcomes.

5. Level five:

- i. HIV/AIDS impacts girls' education in many ways – from increasing workload at home leading to withdrawal from school to discrimination and stigma.

All five levels need to be seen in a continuum. In many instances, the cumulative impact of early childhood health and nutrition is exacerbated during the later stages in life. An

overview of how health and education is promoted across South Asia can be seen in Annex 4 (Ramachandran, 2008).

5.2 Girl Friendly Schools: Infrastructure

In order to retain girls in school, policies beyond incentive schemes must be adopted. Essentially, learning environments must be made more girl friendly. Making schools girl friendly includes improving the physical school infrastructure, teaching in ways that discourage gender stereotypes, providing trained (female) teachers to act as role models, and including the community in the management of schools (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Water supply, sanitation and transport facilities are important components of girl friendly infrastructure. On the ground, this means that latrines are regularly cleaned, and designed and constructed in a gender-sensitive manner. Therefore

The MOE in the **Maldives** has embarked on a project supported by UNICEF to introduce child friendly classes in the primary schools. Starting in 2000, 22 under-served schools were targeted. However, subsequent to the Tsunami the project is targeting 105 schools in the country. Under the project teachers are trained to adopt a child-centred teaching methodology and the classrooms and schools are converted into a more conducive and child friendly environment to facilitate active learning.

To address the issues of gender, separate toilets and washing facilities are built in all schools, while also providing safe drinking water. Each school has at least one staff member employed to keep toilets, classrooms and the school compound clean and hygienic, or the community employs a person to do so.

Source: UNICEF (2004); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

it is important to involve students in the planning, implementation and evaluation of school water supply and sanitation projects. It is not uncommon for girls to skip school because there is a lack of adequate toilet facilities, or because they are improperly managed (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005).

During the last few years in thousands of schools in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan water and sanitation facilities have been installed or upgraded. In Alwar, India, also the *introduction of School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) projects has resulted in a high increase of girls' attendance over a period of some years*, highlighting hygiene education as a critical aspect of a quality life-skills curriculum (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

'Distance can also be an obstacle for girls to enrol and stay in school – especially to continue education beyond primary school. Sometimes girls can walk in groups or older women accompany girls to school when outside the village, or stipends may cover transportation costs. In Madya Pradesh (India) the Education Guarantee Scheme has started the practice of para-teachers or helpers collecting girls

from their homes and dropping them off each day at school to ensure their regular attendance, while also ensuring their security' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

5.3 Tackling Gender-based Violence

Many areas in South Asia, such as Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India, have seen (and still remain in) times of violent conflict and social unrest. The negative impact of violence, conflict and war on the education of girls is highlighted by Aikman and Unterhalter (2005) and WHO (2005). *On a day-to-day basis women and girls can suffer different forms of gender-based violence: at home, in school and in society at large*. Domestic violence is a worldwide phenomenon and according to the WHO it is a major public health issue. Gender-based violence includes all forms of brutality that are 'linked to gender roles traditionally assigned to sex – from using language that undermines the self-esteem of girls to more horrific situations of rape and sexual harassment – perpetrated, in the case of schools, by teachers or other students (WHO, 2005)' (Ramachandran, 2008).

Early marriage and teenage pregnancy can be outward expressions of gender-

In some countries students are targeted as change agents by involving them in promoting water, sanitation and hygiene activities in school through Child-to-Child cooperative teaching and learning, using the toolkit on 'Hygiene, Sanitation & Water in Schools'.

Source: www.schoolsanitation.org; cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

based violence. Indeed, in Bangladesh around 40 per cent of girls are married by the age of 15. A qualitative study done in poverty households of India reveals that the age of marriage is much lower among the very poor (Ramachandran, 2004a). In addition, studies done in India also reveal that unsafe abortion is still an area of concern – especially for girls who become pregnant before marriage (Visaria and Ramachandran, 2007). The phenomenon of sex-selective abortion has compounded the crisis of early pregnancy and abortion (Patel, 2007).

School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) can occur in school or on the way to school or after school hours – by teachers or fellow students. Girls who live at a greater distance from school are especially vulnerable. Unfortunately, there are few studies on SRGBV in South Asia,

but a recent report brought out by the Government of India (see Annex 5) has for the first time highlighted the pervasive nature of violence in schools (Gol, 2006). However, it is likely that given the cultural and social taboos in the region in relation to discussing the subject of sex, and associated stigmas and feelings of shame linked to sexual abuse, these figures and others may be under-represented. *SRGBV can affect a girl's ability to learn, and, if the school dynamics reinforce gender stereotypes, her self image may be obliterated, thereby negating the possible empowering effect of education.*

In addressing gender violence in schools, there is an urgent need for an inclusive school approach involving management, teachers and students as well as the curriculum to ensure that the issues of gender-based violence are tackled in a sensitive and appropriate manner. 'In different countries NGOs

Let's Talk Men – a film project in South Asia by Save the Children and UNICEF – aims at increasing understanding around masculinity and its relation with gender inequity and gender-based violence. Local filmmakers in **India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan** made four documentaries. They explore different aspects of male identity and provide a way to deconstruct patriarchy in their cultural context. The primary target audience for these films is adolescent boys and girls. Targeting boys is particularly important since so little media is addressed to them, even though it is men who are the main perpetrators of violence against girls. The films (and accompanying workbooks) have been used in schools in order to raise issues about gender-based harassment and violence against girls, and present alternative role models and ways of behaving for boys.

Source: Save the Children (2003); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

have started to address the issue of school-based violence. The Centre for Mass Education and Science (CMES) and BRAC, for example, organize workshops for adolescent girls (and boys) throughout Bangladesh. While such programmes are promising, they are only able to reach a small part of the population and are difficult to scale up as they are developed outside the formal education school setting' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Governments have made explicit commitments to meet the goal of gender equity in education (MDG 3); however, there is little proof of implementation of such national strategies. For example, topics about gender violence in the curriculum are few and far between (Dunne *et al.*, 2003). Students need to be able to investigate views of masculinity and femininity in order to develop respectful gender relationships (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

A PATHWAY TOWARDS QUALITY LEARNING

6.1 Teachers: The Vital Link

The number of teachers throughout the region has grown, but the rate of growth has lagged behind the rate of enrolments, and therefore class sizes have remained incredibly large (for example in rural government schools in Nepal it is not uncommon for there to be 80 students in one class). In fact it is estimated that in Bangladesh an additional 167,000 teachers are required (UNESCO, 2006). Critically, the gradual erosion of teacher terms and conditions (poor pay, few benefits, etc.) has resulted in the decay of teacher motivation and morale, particularly at primary level (Abadzi, 2006).

Throughout South Asia there is also a need for better quality teachers – especially female teachers and teachers recruited from minority populations.

Female teachers can act as positive role models as well as being key protagonists against SRGBV. Except for the Maldives and Sri Lanka, women are massively under-represented in the teaching profession: there are fewer female head teachers, principals, administrators and policy makers. Whilst some countries have established quotas for female teachers, few have managed to fill them, because effective incentives and support mechanisms have not been implemented. In Nepal for example, more than 62 per cent of primary school teachers in Kathmandu are women, while the average for the whole country is 29 per cent with only 19 per cent female teachers in the Far West Region (Bista, 2006). This is due to a number of reasons, including concerns of lodging away from home and issues of lower status and lower pay than their male colleagues (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

The acute shortage of female teachers in **Afghanistan** has been dealt with by accepting a community-selected woman with lower levels of education (usually grade 9) and providing teacher training supported by regular on-job monitoring and mentoring. While the weakness of this approach may be the quality of education, it has nevertheless reinstated female education disrupted by conflict or lack of qualified teachers, and, more remarkably, it has also facilitated first-time-ever female education in a number of rural communities. Emphasis is given to frequent and effective monitoring to support and maintain quality.

Source: World Bank (2005); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Mobility support for female teachers in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) **Pakistan** is a simple intervention with a huge impact. It has been introduced by the NWFP Department of Education in 2003 and is supported by UNICEF, while teachers also contribute Rs. 200 per month ... The provided transportation support has resulted in re-opening of schools, increased enrolment and retention of girls and an increased number of female applicants for teaching positions.

See also: www.unicef.org/pakistan/reallives_2706.htm.

Source: Angers, G. (2007); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

In **Bhutan**, teachers claim they cannot use participatory teaching-learning methods as these are too time-consuming and there is much pressure to finish the syllabus. More focus on Continuous Formative Assessment (CFA) and the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) tried to change this. Both approaches have helped teachers to become more responsive to different learning needs, while the overloaded curriculum and memory-based exam system are also being addressed.

Source: Heijnen (2005); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

All countries in the region still rely on traditional teacher-centred classrooms, whereby teachers drill learners to memorize facts, simply to pass exams. 'Child-centred teaching is perceived as difficult and time consuming. Countries have now started to respond with various interventions, one of them training more and better teachers – both in the subjects they teach and in teaching-learning methodology' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Teachers are the foundations of education systems and poor learning achievements are closely correlated to what and how teachers teach children (see Annex 6). Prejudice, corporal punishment, and stereotyping of girls or children from minorities are acutely destructive to children's learning. Teacher training therefore needs to

centre on how teachers can create learning environments where the contribution of *all* students is encouraged and valued (including students with different learning styles and abilities).¹⁶ In essence an enabling environment is fundamental, whereby children learn to appreciate diversity through the practices of their teachers.

Education does not thrive in an atmosphere in which children live in fear of those who teach them. Sadly, Sri Lanka is still the only country with laws banning corporal punishment in schools (however, enforcement and monitoring remains a challenge). Students across South Asia are often punished for wearing a torn or dirty uniform, or not being able to answer a question. Such punishment is debasing and destructive to a child's self-esteem, fostering

Reviews of curricula in the **Maldives** aim to make subjects more interesting and relevant and are designed to encourage teachers to change their style of teaching by encouraging them:

- to develop meta-cognitive skills and understanding;
- to be problem posers and guides rather than problem solvers;
- to present the material in everyday contexts;
- to encourage wider involvement of the parents and the wider community in the learning process;
- to enhance group work; and
- to encourage process-oriented teaching.

The feedback from schools has been very positive. It claimed for example in social studies that students' interest in the subject had increased and was generating lively classroom discussions. It also encouraged critical thinking and made students more active participants in class.

Source: Mohamed and Ahmed (2000); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

A 'Toolkit on Positive Discipline with particular emphasis on South and Central Asia' has been developed by Save the Children (Regional Working Group). Modules include 'Understanding child rights, concepts and child development' and 'Self-esteem, cultural context, positive behaviour management'. Clear tools and concrete activities help professionals, teachers, care-givers and parents to develop (self-)discipline in children without using physical or psychological punishment.

See: <http://sca.savethechildren.se/sca/Publications/Children-and-Violence/Physical-and-Humiliating-Punishment/>; cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

feelings of failure and humiliation. The message that children derive from such teacher behaviour is that violence is acceptable in settling conflicts. Therefore it is essential that corporal punishment is banned in all countries and effective alternate methods are sought.

Training opportunities have increased for teachers in many parts of South Asia, with often the main focus of these programmes being to: (1) use new methods such as role play, discussion, games and activities, assignments, case studies, etc., (2) raise the motivation level of teachers, (3) develop a better

understanding of child-centred classroom practices, (4) content and subject area strengthening and (5) preparation and use of teaching-learning materials (TLM). These are all teaching methods appropriate for developing the life skills of children; children become more engaged with the world around them through techniques such as group discussion, surveys, role plays and feedback and reinforcement from their teachers (McKee *et al.*, 2000).

Good teachers understand that their work goes beyond the transmission of curriculum and the assessment of measurable achievement. They are

The Primary School Development Programme (PSDP) in **Sri Lanka** was introduced to improve the quality of primary schooling by schools joining hands as a 'school family'. Headmasters, teachers, parents and students of all schools get together to design and implement programmes that enhance efficiency and effectiveness ... Professional development programmes for teachers include classroom observations as well as teacher and school development activities. School visits provide opportunities for peer support and exchange of experiences. Each teacher is expected to make two visits to a neighbouring school each year.

Source: Jha (2004a); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

aware of the challenge of the broader social contexts in which they teach and keep searching for more effective ways to reach all students. Effective teaching is often described by words such as competent, dutiful, fair, responsive, flexible, reflective, expert, inclusive, welcoming and respectful – also by students (Heijnen, 2004). Teachers are also learners and therefore adequate training and refresher courses are important in maintaining motivation levels. In Bangladesh, professional quality of primary school teachers in the field is enhanced through a 12-month Certificate in Education course conducted by Primary Training Institutes (PTI); and in Bhutan UNESCO's 'Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments' is integrated into the

existing pre-service education programme in the modules 'Understanding the Learner', 'Child development and psychology' and 'Teaching-learning processes' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

6.2 Student Participation

Students who are not engaged in learning or who do not see the relevance of what they are learning will often drop out. Hence student participation (involvement and interaction) in their learning is an important aspect of quality education. Within the learning environment children must be able to express their opinions, and in doing so feel comfortable about who they are and what they believe in. Forums in which children can express their views often

Approaches to gender equality in the classroom focus on interaction and relationships between boys and girls and between teachers and students. They address:

- Gender stereotypes, i.e. challenging stereotypical views for example that girls are less able to succeed in science and mathematics.
- Sexual violence, abuse and harassment: raising awareness of the issues and using teachers to raise awareness of learners.
- Differential enrolment of boys and girls in school.
- Ideologies underlying the curriculum.
- Curriculum choices: e.g. encouraging girls to take technology subjects.
- Teaching styles, including differential attention paid to boys and girls.
- School organization and discipline: making schools more girl friendly and child friendly.
- Extra-curricular activities: e.g. providing sporting opportunities for girls as well as boys.

Source: UNESCO (2003); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

develop their critical thinking and problem solving life skills: essential for any future job (see Annex 7).

In addition, 'it is important to ensure that children – boys and girls – have a say in policies and practices that affect them. This means that adults need to *listen* to what students have to say. When given opportunities, children have shown that their voice can be a real force for change. Examples can be found throughout the region, such as refugee children in Pakistan successfully

campaigning for a school and the creation of student councils in Sri Lanka. *Giving children a say in matters that affect them improves standards, behaviour and inclusion, while recognizing that social and emotional learning is as important as academic learning.* Children need to build knowledge and understanding of issues like social justice, human rights and sustainable development. As such, education should create the basis for a democratic and just society' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW) – an NGO in **Nepal** – is committed to children's participation in decision making about their education. SPW facilitated consultation exercises by involving schoolchildren in discussions at village, district and regional levels on the issues of quality education and gender equality in education. On the basis of those discussions, selected student representatives brought recommendations to policy makers at a national level forum through different media including art, drama and dance.

Source: UNICEF (2005c); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Intensive District Education for All (IDEAL) in **Bangladesh** has been an important component of PEDP. It especially focused on enhancing the effectiveness of primary education, by improving the quality of teaching, the school environment, the learning achievement of children and decentralizing schools. The main objectives of IDEAL were to establish and strengthen local level planning and management, improve classroom teaching and learning methods, reduce gender disparity, and promote active community participation. The project started in one district and was scaled up to other districts. An innovative teaching approach known as Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning (MWTL) based on the multiple intelligence theory of Howard Gardner was effectively adopted and applied to make teaching more child-centred, participatory and joyful. Lessons learned have revealed that IDEAL helped significantly to increase student learning achievement. In addition, School Management Committees also became more active in improving and supporting the schools.

Source: Aikman and Unterhalter (2005); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

6.3 Curriculum, Language and Assessment

Considerable progress has been made in designing more gender-sensitive curricula, such as in Bhutan. But textbooks with stereotypical images of women and men are still prevalent in many countries, where women are often portrayed solely as mothers and housewives. In addition, textbooks should not solely refer to urban or international experiences that are likely to be foreign to rural children, but rather offer a cross-section and range of lifestyles and life experiences (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

'In many countries the language of instruction¹⁷ in primary schools is a national or regional language, even though large numbers of people have a different mother tongue. A mismatch between the language spoken at home and the language of school has several

negative consequences, such as increased chances of repetition and dropping out. This affects girls more than boys as their lives are often restricted to the home and family where only the local language is spoken' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

When children do not speak the language of instruction they are more likely to drop out. Furthermore, research suggests that recognizing the importance of mother-tongue languages in a bilingual or multilingual education system results in improved educational attainments. Girls who learn in their home language stay in school longer, are more likely to be identified as good students, and repeat grades less often than their peers who do not get mother tongue/home language instruction. When learners can express what they know in a language in which they are adept, they develop higher self-esteem and greater self-confidence (Benson, 2005).

In textbooks used for Hindi language teaching in Madhya Pradesh, **India**, there has been a conscious effort to present girls in positive roles. Famous women from history are included, for example women who fought for their state and women renowned for their educational achievements and service to society. Clear messages on girls' education and the need for equal opportunities are included.

Unfortunately, the tendency to cast the positive roles of women in the characters of the idealized and exceptionally heroic has not been very effective. In addition, gender stereotyping and inequalities persist in the narratives. Women appear largely in maternal roles, while the decision makers and protectors tend to be male.

Source: Oxfam (2005); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Children from ethnic and language minorities in **Bangladesh** are disadvantaged by a mainstream education that does not recognize their language or culture. Their problems can be grouped into four main areas:

- 1. Poor access:** discrimination by teachers for poor Bangla language skills; inflexible school calendar, not reflecting local conditions; lack of schools in Adivasi communities.
- 2. Poor quality:** learning needs of Adivasi students unrecognized; insufficient teachers from Adivasi community; teacher deployment does not take account of ethnicity of teachers/learners; schools in Adivasi areas receive less government support.
- 3. Cultural inappropriateness:** foreign language of instruction; local culture, values not recognized in curriculum; education system does not recognize strength of diversity.
- 4. Lack of local control:** parents not involved as teachers do not speak community language; parents see less value in education not linked to culture and language.

Source: Durnnian (2007); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Teaching and learning materials, evaluation and assessment procedures as well as language policy are all components of a curriculum: all have gender dimensions, challenging or reinforcing equality. In some countries girls are denied access to certain subjects such as manual arts, technical subjects or higher mathematics because textbooks are written with boys in mind. 'Research shows, however, that girls are as capable as boys in these subjects. Schools and teachers must thus shape learning environments in which the right of children to learn is not linked to their sex. Girls may need to learn about cooking or vegetable gardens or traditional dancing, yet if these are only taught to girls, stereotypes and gender

barriers are reinforced. Such subjects should be open to boys as they also need domestic skills, while on the other hand girls may need technical, mechanical and mathematical skills' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Furthermore, curriculum development in South Asia tends to be a male dominated process. In Nepal and Afghanistan, for example, most textbook writers are males who may have little sensitivity towards gender issues in education. There is therefore a need to develop links between curriculum developers and teachers for mutual feedback and so that curriculum developers can observe classroom teaching (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

India has spent considerable time and budget on renewal of curricula and textbooks aiming at making it broad-based and the textbooks more relevant, interesting and child friendly. Three steps characterized the process of material development: (1) a participatory approach involving teachers, field staff and experts in developing textbooks; (2) textbook developers being exposed to a number of 'good practices' in other states and in NGO programmes; (3) field testing and systematic feedback leading to refinements, before large-scale introduction of new materials. As a result, the new textbooks for primary level are significantly different from the old ones.

Source: Jha (2004a); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Education systems tend to measure achievements by outcomes, based on standardized tests and national exams. There are, however, limitations in relying too heavily on test scores: they do not tell us how meaningful the subject matter is to a child (see Annex 6). The type of assessment that dominates most schools in South Asia is assessment of learning, i.e. it happens at the end of a topic through tests or other graded work. Its results 'count' and appear on report cards, but generally provide little more than a rank or a number. Assessment of learning by itself is inadequate for understanding all learning achievements, because it does not assess the process: waiting till the end of a unit to find out

how well students have learned is simply too late (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

'Policies are needed to promote alternate methods of "authentic" and formative assessment, to look at how schools support the learning process and progress of students, especially girls and socially marginalized learners, and to help teachers focus on performance indicators rather than just attainment measures. In Bhutan teachers are trained to use continuous formative assessment (CFA) as a strategy to monitor and support student learning by means of for example observation techniques, learning logs, portfolio reviews and feedback' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Community schools and home-based schools in **Afghanistan** follow the assessment policies mandated by the Ministry of Education. Students are graded according to a breakdown of 80 per cent from their cumulative scores on year-end exams in seven subjects on which they must score at least a passing grade of 0 per cent, 10 per cent from homework, and 10 per cent from classroom participation.

Students who fail one or two subjects are permitted to retake exams while those who fail three or more subjects must repeat the school year.

Source: USAID (2006b); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

6.4 School–Community Partnership

Community and parental participation in the education of children is vital in creating a quality learning environment (UNICEF, 2004). The provision of nearby and safe schools, such as community or home-based schools in Afghanistan and Bhutan, give communities and parents a say in the running of these schools. They are flexible learning spaces, in relation

to timing, venue and curriculum, which can accommodate the domestic demands, safety concerns, and relevancy requirements of parents (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

In many countries in South Asia communities are engaged through Village Education Committees (VECs) and School Management Committees (SMCs), which involve parents and

Community Organized Primary Education (COPE), developed by CARE, targets under-served regions with quality, community managed education opportunities in different countries in South Asia, for example in **Nepal** and **Afghanistan**. COPE schools are managed by Village Education Committees (VEC) and have higher survival rates and lower dropout rates than public schools. The government curriculum and formal examination schedule is used, while COPE teachers receive regular in-service training and in-school support. COPE's considerable investment in TLM – textbooks, teacher guides and stationery – supports a learning environment conducive to optimal learning. Additionally, continuous assessment, high levels of student–teacher contact time, and the positive learning environment of these schools has contributed to consistently strong test results.

Source: USAID (2006b); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

Community-based Education Management Information Systems (C-EMIS) are implemented in **Sri Lanka**, **Bangladesh**, **Pakistan** and **Nepal**. Data is collected at community level instead of being school–based, and is analysed and used at the point of collection for school improvement through community–school partnership. These projects have been developed through Government–NGO partnership, supported by Save the Children, with the aim to increase education ownership at the local level. The objective is to make all (school-age) children visible and create an education system capable of analysing and addressing causes of exclusion at different levels, linking these to quality responses in an inclusive child friendly learning environment.

C-EMIS data is meant to complement national EMIS data. The result is improved quality data and local and national level planning and decision making.

Source: Heijnen (2003); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

communities in the governance of schools, as well as encouraging parents to provide a *supportive home environment*. The roles of the committees vary, but can include responsibilities related to school calendar planning, quality monitoring, and school repair.

6.5 Alternative and Non-Formal Quality Programmes

The state remains the primary provider of basic education, but the role of non-

governmental organizations is certainly noteworthy. NGOs and community initiatives assist governments (on a variety of levels) as they work towards also achieving the MDG goals. Non-Formal (Primary) Education programmes need, however, to *collaborate* and integrate with government initiatives in order to maximize benefits. NFE can provide for girls who have been pushed or pulled out of school early, who are child workers, or who have never enrolled, through providing 'bridge courses'.

BRAC schools in **Bangladesh** [and **Pakistan**] cover the full government primary curriculum, but use more interactive teaching–learning methods, resulting in lower dropout rates and better student performance compared with government primary schools. The same teacher works with the same students through the primary cycle and class size is kept small. BRAC schools measure their success by their ability to serve as a bridge to the government education system. Over 80 per cent of students join the formal system.

Tuition and learning materials are free in BRAC schools, women teachers are recruited from the community and schools are supported and supervised regularly to maintain quality learning.

Source: Herz and Sperling (2004); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

AMAL-YES (Youth Empowerment Skills) is an organization working throughout **Pakistan** with non-formal education (NFE) for street children aged between 7 and 17 – boys and girls. The drop-in centres are located in working areas. NFE is complemented with training in vocational skills, child rights, life skills, HIV/AIDS awareness and sensitization, basic health and hygiene, social and cultural activities and development of community organizations. Participatory methodology is used while focusing on the three basic subjects: (1) reading and writing in Urdu and English; (2) mathematics; and (3) life skills-based peer education. Master peer educators or 'change agents' are supported with technical and financial assistance. They impart both peer training and non-formal education, earning a small honorarium. In Balochistan the Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) department provides space for the centres as well as educational materials. AMAL-YES was declared a model by UNFPA in Pakistan.

Source: UNESCO Bangkok (2004); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

RECOMMENDATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Countries in South Asia are using the Mid-Decade Assessment (MDA)¹⁸ to identify priorities and strategies towards achieving MDG goals 2 and 3 and the EFA goals. Strategies to address different challenges include: improving sanitation facilities, training more female teachers, and monitoring initiatives. Throughout the region common priorities are to identify and encourage learners that have not yet been reached (such as disabled children, child workers, and Dalits), by enhancing educational quality and relevance.

The EFA MDA¹⁹ revealed strong government commitment to continued innovative approaches and school quality improvements. Yet there are still children who do not have textbooks, sit in heavily overcrowded crumbling classrooms, unable to access libraries, and whose teachers have limited teaching

resources. If education is to reflect the CRC, EFA and MDGs there are immense challenges in quality implementation: changes are necessary in instructional and assessment practices.

‘Throughout South Asia primary education outcomes have been inadequate, and without a transition to further education countries may be left with outputs that are unsustainable. The incentives used to help children complete primary schooling should ideally be continued into the secondary level’ (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008). To respond to the need of increasing secondary enrolment and retention, countries like Bangladesh and India are implementing secondary-school stipend and scholarship incentives, such as the Female Stipend Programme (FSP) in Bangladesh. However, as with primary school incentives, they may not cover all

education costs nor provide adequate support to girls. As girls become older, location and accessibility of schools becomes very important and the pressure

for girls to leave school is acute with the advent of puberty, which can give rise to sexual harassment and parental pressure to marry.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Regional level

1. Conduct a **gender review of textbooks** and other teaching–learning materials to identify the challenges still to be addressed. Develop a common set of analytical tools, recommendations for revision and cooperation in the development of new materials, involving researchers, authors, curriculum specialists and policy makers.
2. Undertake a complementary **study of incentive schemes** such as stipends, scholarships, school feeding, etc., especially at the individual level of girls in terms of behaviour, (e)quality of opportunities and (e)quality of outcomes. Results should assist in implementing initiatives to reduce economic barriers.
3. Identify and **develop teacher education cooperation networks** between programmes and institutes with a special focus on developing child friendly or rights-based schools, sharing and benefiting from experience and expertise available within the region.
4. Initiate dialogue and initiatives based on the SAARC MTR on child rights. Assure that a regional **base-line study on the child rights situation** and CRC implementation in South Asia for different children is established, using the CRC implementation handbook and checklists (UNICEF, 2002b).
5. Ensure an **integrated approach to health and education**: assess how all children's health at school could be improved.
6. **Increase expenditure** in the education sector and reform non-education sector policies to tackle discrimination, e.g. in labour and financial markets such as employment policies.
7. Initiate **inter-regional dialogue** on gender mainstreaming: reassessment of how to reach gender parity (not just equality).

National level (policy)

1. Use the existing **CRC Implementation Handbook** and checklists to analyse the child rights situation in the country for improved educational planning, **monitoring and evaluation**. Develop policies and programmes that look more critically at quality and equality of education through the lens of rights-based and transformative change. Improve collaboration and cooperation between departments within education ministries and between government and non-government stakeholders in education, perhaps through joint monitoring initiatives.
2. Ensure the **safety** of school children – especially girls – by taking strong legal measures that outlaw gender-based violence and harassment in school and on the way to and from school, with clear procedures for dealing with violence. Adopt, implement and monitor prohibitions on the use of *corporal punishment* in school.
3. Review existing or develop new education policies, while raising issues of exclusion by asking **what kind of diversity is acknowledged** in education policies and practices (gender, ethnic, linguistic, religious minorities, disability, etc.).
4. Enhance accountability through **improved data collection** and analysis disaggregated by gender, income, region/district, urban/rural, public/private, formal/non-formal, social group and disabilities, so that inequities can be quantified and appropriate strategies devised to minimize imbalances. Make services for children accountable.
5. Acknowledge the rights of learners from **linguistic minorities** in education plans at different levels. Develop strategies that allow for mother tongue/bilingual education in policy and practice, strengthening students' learning skills, while the national language is taught as second language at upper primary level.
6. Promote girl-friendly education by removing **gender bias and discrimination from textbooks, teaching methods and classroom interactions** at all levels of education and by training teachers, principals, DEOs, and supervisors to be sensitive to gender and child rights and integrate wider life skills. Ensure wider consultation (both men and women) in curriculum/textbook review and development.
7. Develop condensed, accelerated programmes to facilitate re-entry into school of girls who have dropped out; provide transport, accommodation and extra tuition/remedial help where needed; **develop in-school or after-school compensatory programmes** that engage and retain excluded children, particularly girls, and boost their learning achievement.

8. Improve remuneration and career opportunities to **raise teacher status**. Provide performance incentives (e.g. official recognition; awards) and better conditions of service, making teaching an attractive profession, and provide pre-service and in-service **teacher training**; especially in participatory methodology that is gender and diversity sensitive and engages boys and girls. Develop 'reflective practice' in teachers.
9. Appoint **at least one female teacher per primary school**, and in the case of remote schools teams of two. Provide residential facilities, transport and other additional incentives to attract qualified female teachers to schools – rural and remote schools in particular.
10. Construct (more) **girl friendly primary and secondary schools** within a reasonable distance of communities to prevent extensive travel or boarding and thus reducing concerns about cost and safety. These schools must have separate latrines for boys/girls and male/female teachers, and also pay attention to personal hygiene issues of girls and female teachers.
11. Launch **publicity campaigns** using mass media and audio-visual aids to create a favourable environment for girls' education and positive images of women, while also engaging boys and men as advocates for gender-sensitive societal developments. In Pakistan, for example, boy scouts successfully advocated for girls' access to basic education. The *Meena* initiative in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal (UNICEF), a multimedia approach to raise the profile of girls while highlighting issues around child marriage, dowry system, gender-based violence and education for girls, has been very successful.

School level (programme)

1. Integrate gender into all school policies and practices and **increase knowledge on gender issues** and gender-based violence among teachers and in the school curriculum. Conduct **school-based research** of safety and security of students, including students and their perspectives. Research on the systematic barriers for different children – including on language barriers; on the classroom experience of girls; on the impact of female teachers; on different attitudes and expectations of male and female teachers regarding girls' abilities, etc. – should also be conducted in order to establish the real lived experiences of girls.
2. Conduct tracer studies to **analyse empowering and transformative effects of girls' education** – both of mainstream schooling experiences and alternative or NFE programmes. This data should be disaggregated in terms of gender and minority groups.

3. **Document and monitor development of 'model' rights-based schools** (child friendly schools/inclusive child-friendly learning environments). Share examples of good practice. Monitor child friendly school effects on quality of learning environments, teaching-learning processes and learning outcomes.
4. **Ensure families and communities are involved in their children's education:** parents' days, curriculum interactions, school programmes, etc. Also promote community-based structures that can assist in monitoring school activities (including girls and women from minority groups), and assess community contributions towards children's education through micro-credit schemes.

The whole range of educational issues – starting from the cost of education, to physical access and transportation, sexual harassment, overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages and attitudes of the teaching community – all work together to create a web of educational barriers. Therefore, addressing a couple of problems,

distributing incentives or initiating innovative programmes in a sporadic manner at specific locations will not have a long-term, sustainable impact on the system (Ramachandran, 2008). As Tables 7 and 8 illustrate, there is no one reason why girls do not attend schools – rather there is a plethora of obstacles.

Table 7 What Influences Girls' Education?

Systemic issues	Content and process of education	Economy, society and culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Physical access ■ Functioning schools ■ Quality of schools ■ Motivation of teachers ■ Attitudes and prejudices of teachers ■ Different kinds of schools, differentially endowed facilities ■ Calendar and timings ■ Corporal punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gender stereotyping in school ■ Perpetuation of gender bias in books ■ Relevance of curriculum ■ Language ■ Joyful learning ■ Ready access to books, magazines, papers and so on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poverty/powerlessness ■ Status of women ■ Direct and indirect costs ■ Child labour / domestic work ■ Self-esteem and self-perception ■ Health and nutrition ■ Post-puberty practices ■ Child marriage

Source: Ramachandran (2008)

Table 8 What Influences the Health and Nutrition of Girls?

The health system	Approaches, priorities, mindset and attitudes	Economy, society and culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Physical access ■ Availability of healthcare facilities and providers ■ Location and timing of services ■ Quality of care and clinical skills of providers ■ Single or multiple window for interrelated services ■ Reliable referral services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No specific girls' health programme - focus on women in reproductive age groups ■ Resistance to providing sex education to girls ■ Attitude of healthcare providers ■ Absence of a rights perspective in health services ■ HIV/AIDS and STI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poverty/powerlessness ■ Status of women ■ Poor nutrition ■ Burden of work from early age ■ Post-puberty practices ■ Child marriage ■ Domestic violence ■ Seclusion and purdah/ veiling

Source: Ramachandran (2008)

A long-term improvement in the participation of girls hinges on their health, quality of education, and on the ability to effectively address other forms of discrimination that girls and children from minorities face. Fundamentally, governments must commit political will alongside administrative and *monitoring initiatives*. Progression from gender parity to gender equality cannot be achieved with increased supply (of schools, health centres, hospitals) alone. The movement towards gender equality is only possible when governments and

other civil society organizations proactively intervene to remove structural barriers to girls' education. Gender-based violence must be tackled to include prevention of early marriage, eradication of girl trafficking, and by ensuring that schools are not reinforcing gender stereotypes nor turning a blind eye to sexual violence and abuse. *Life skills, knowledge about sexual and reproductive health issues, human rights and child rights within curricula must be implemented.*

POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING QUALITY HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Child rights (tackling vulnerability)	Health	Schemes (to reduce barriers to education)	Teacher and textbook improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate dialogue and initiatives based on the SAARC MTR on child rights. Assure that a regional base-line study on the child rights situation and CRC implementation in South Asia for different children is established. Increase percentage of GNP expenditure on educational reform, and improve utilization mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a joint study to assess how all children's health at school could be improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a complementary joint study of incentive schemes such as stipends, scholarships, school feeding, etc. Initiate inter-regional dialogue on gender mainstreaming – link to wider economic policies: reassessment of how to reach gender <i>parity</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a gender review of textbooks and other teaching-learning materials to identify the challenges still to be addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the existing CRC Implementation Handbook and checklists to analyse the child rights situation in the country for improved educational planning, monitoring and evaluation. Enhance accountability through improved data collection and analysis disaggregated by gender, income, region/district, urban/rural, public/private, formal/non-formal, social group and disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the safety of school children – especially girls – by taking strong legal measures that outlaw gender-based violence and harassment in school. Construct (more) girl friendly primary and secondary schools within a reasonable distance of communities to prevent extensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing or develop new education policies, while raising issues of exclusion by asking what kind of diversity is acknowledged in education policies and practices. Develop in-school or after-school compensatory programmes that engage and retain excluded children, particularly girls, and boost their learning achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote girl-friendly education by removing gender bias and discrimination from textbooks, teaching methods and classroom interactions at all levels of education and by training teachers, principals, DEOs and supervisors. Improve remuneration and career

Regional

National

<p>Child rights (tackling vulnerability)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the rights of learners from linguistic minorities in education plans at different levels. • Improve collaboration and cooperation between departments within education ministries and between government and non-government stakeholders in education, perhaps through joint monitoring initiatives. 	<p>Health</p> <p>travel or boarding and thus reducing concerns about cost and safety. These schools must have separate latrines for boys/girls and male/female teachers.</p>	<p>Schemes (to reduce barriers to education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch publicity campaigns using mass media and audio-visual aids to create a favourable environment for girls' education and positive images of women, while also engaging boys and men as advocates for gender-sensitive societal developments. 	<p>Teacher and textbook improvements</p> <p>opportunities to raise teacher status. Provide performance incentives (e.g. official recognition; awards) and better conditions of service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide pre-service and in-service teacher training: especially in participatory methodology that is gender and diversity sensitive and engages boys and girls. Develop 'reflective practice' in teachers. • Appoint at least one female teacher per primary school, and in the case of remote schools teams of two. Provide residential facilities, transport and other additional incentives.
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<p>Child rights (tackling vulnerability)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document and monitor development of 'model' rights-based schools (child friendly schools/inclusive child-friendly learning environments). Share examples of good practice. Monitor child friendly school effects on quality of learning environments, teaching-learning processes and learning outcomes. 	<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate gender into all school policies and practices and increase knowledge on gender issues and gender-based violence among teachers and in the school curriculum. Conduct school-based research of safety and security of students, including the participation of students – their perspectives are needed. 	<p>Schemes (to reduce barriers to education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct tracer studies to analyse empowering and transformative effects of girls' education – both of mainstream schooling experiences and alternative or NFE programmes. This data should be disaggregated in terms of gender and minority groups. Ensure families and communities are involved in their children's education: parents days, curriculum interactions, school programmes, etc. Also promote community based structures that can assist in monitoring school activities (including girls and women from minority groups), and assess community contributions towards children's education through micro-credit schemes. 	<p>Teacher and textbook improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure teachers and textbook writers have a forum to communicate on ideas for improvement: make sure the writers experience their own lessons.
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Local (school-based)

CONCLUSION: THE TIME IS NOW

'The [child rights] model emphasizes the school as a place providing learning opportunities relevant to life and livelihood, in a healthy, safe and caring environment that is inclusive and protective, gender sensitive and involves the participation of children, families and communities.' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008)

This paper has provided an overview of the existing challenges to girls' education in the region, and at the same time it has given an overview of successful initiatives, which have primarily been those that are multi-dimensional. Class, caste, ethnicity and disability are all factors that exert an influence on what kind of school a girl will attend, and up to what level she will pursue her education. Unfortunately, 'existing data sets/indicators used in the region do not capture the complex

ground realities of South Asia. It is important here to understand the interplay of poverty, social inequalities, cultural practices/norms, religious, caste and gender relations on the one hand and the institutional structures for education on the other' (Ramachandran, 2008).

Education must be relevant to children's lives, resulting in learners being able to use life skills learnt at school in real life situations. In child friendly schools this also includes knowledge about human rights, gender equality, health and nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace building. This holistic subject matter must be incorporated into curricula, and depending on how it is delivered, it will ultimately decide whether the education experience for a child will be empowering and transformative or not. Teachers must model and practise these

values. In the long term this will impact upon whether or not a country has a competent workforce in the future (not forgetting that there are *already* an estimated 400 million young people aged 12–24 in South Asia) (Ramachandran, 2008).

'Child friendly or rights-based schools as a concept of quality education linked to the implementation of the CRC is still relatively new in South Asia. All countries in the region are, however, developing model schools and some have started to integrate the concept in pre-service teacher education programmes. Process and progress monitoring will be important to assess whether the model schools in the different countries meet the specific objectives and reflect a quality learning environment. A recent evaluation of existing programmes in the region revealed that the *child friendly school concept is implemented in a rather fragmented manner, focusing on some but not all its dimensions*. As a rights-based concept, a child friendly school cannot be child friendly without also being inclusive, effective, gender sensitive, healthy and protective and involved with parents and communities (Keane, 2006)' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

'Regional sharing of experience and expertise, peer reviews, joining hands in teacher training incorporating CRC/CFS, documentation of best practice and regional networking are some ideas to further boost and scale up the

development of rights-based schools. This can be seen as an integral part of Education for All (EFA), creating opportunities to improve the quality of education for all children while addressing their equal rights to, in and through education ... The emphasis is on what students get out of the process rather than on what teachers are putting into it. It requires an approach to teaching that facilitates learning and where students do most of the work, rather than the teachers (Heijnen, 2006)' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

'The right to participation (CRC Art. 12) recognizes that children are agents of change, rather than passive recipients of services. Their capacity to fulfil this role, in keeping with their own growing maturity, depends on opportunities provided by schools. Education is one important context in which the capacity for self-expression and other skills and behaviours required for "participation" are learned, which also includes a process of questioning assumptions, reflecting on one's own experience, and taking responsibility for one's own learning. At a more practical level participation in school systems may imply that children are involved in classroom management procedures, are represented in school boards or are involved in discussions related to changes in facilities or extra-curricular activities (Hammarberg, 1997)' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

Participation is the foundation for democratic citizenship. *Children and*

For many years Save the Children and the Commission of Afghani Refugees (CAR) have been helping Afghani girls and boys in refugee camps in **Pakistan** (NWFP) to form Child-to-Child groups. Through these groups children have learned about their rights, health, disability, social and community issues. They have begun to see themselves as protectors of their rights. Children have identified problems affecting them and their community and have moved to address them. Children have become monitors of child rights in their schools and communities, promoting the right to education by visiting families whose children were not going to school.

'Before this group was started there was no education for girls, now there is a girl's school. We used not to eat together with the girls and now we do. Girls were not allowed to play sports, but now this has changed. We have motivated street children to go to school. We have spread messages to drug addicts. Children with special needs are coming to school. We have learned about the risks of mines.' (Child-to-Child group, Islami Khidmatgar, Ghandi Khan Khel Camp)

Source: O'Kane (2006); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

young people learn most about citizenship by being active engaged citizens (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008). Rights-based schools offer students the opportunities to take on responsibilities and exercise choices. A step towards this can be seen in the formal education sector, where NGOs in Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have supported children to play an active role in Community-based Education Management Information Systems (C-EMIS), by demonstrating their skills of information collection, analysis and critical thinking (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008).

South Asia has improved the enrolment of girls over the last few years, but issues of retention and quality remain. Every country in South Asia has identified

improving quality as one of its highest national priorities, focusing on the *whole learning environment*: including the infrastructure of schools; availability of textbooks and teaching materials; and more community involvement. Existing quantitative goals must be complemented with qualitative targets. Certain targets should improve, support and monitor the quality of teaching and learning, especially in disadvantaged communities and schools. Teacher training and their ongoing professional support in relation to issues of status and motivation, remuneration and career options require urgent attention.

Each country 'in the region must now make secondary education an equal priority. Achieving quality, gender equitable secondary education is what

Table 9 Rates of Return to Additional Years of Education (Males and Females) at Various Levels of Education

Level of education	Rate of return (%)	
	Males	Females
Primary	2.7	6.8
Middle	4.5	20.5
Matriculation	13.2	27.4
Intermediate	11.14	16.9
Bachelors	15.4	22.6
Master's or higher	15.1	30.7

Source: Aslam (2007); cited in Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008)

will ultimately lead to greater socio-economic returns, enabling young women (and men) to contribute to their communities beyond their own families and ultimately to the development of their countries' (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008) (see Table 9).

Policy thus has to focus on reducing the costs of and changing the structures of delivering school services on the one hand, as well as interventions to change parental attitudes and household behaviour on the other (see Annex 8 for suggestions for policy changes that may improve instructional outcomes).

Essentially, overall men still earn more than women, thus making returns on male schooling higher. Hence there is a need for action at the level of wider economic policies in tandem with education policy (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

The issue of gender equality is not limited to a single goal – it is cross-cutting and it applies to all. Without progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women, none of the MDGs will be achieved (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008).

The time for affirmative action is now.

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Useful websites and tools²⁰

www.unescobkk.org/gender. Gender in Education, including a Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education with, for example, a gender and education classroom observation tool; a tool for gender assessment of textbooks; a gender lens to create curriculum and textbooks free of gender bias; a gender lens measuring the child-friendliness of schools; and guidelines for implementing, monitoring and evaluating gender responsive EFA plans.

www.ungei.org. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative; including news lines and info by country and downloadable resources (issue papers; case studies; meeting reports; briefing papers, etc.).

www.unicef.org/girlseducation. Basic education and gender equality; resources; news line.

www.unicef.org/teachers. About teachers (including handbooks), learners (including student activities), learning environment and girls' education (archived 1999–2004).

www.id21.org. Communicating Development Research (Institute of Development Studies/University of Sussex; supported by DFID); free subscription to id21 Insights Education.

www.campaignforeducation.org. Advocacy for Education Change; promotes education as a basic human right; mobilizes public pressure on governments and the international community to provide free, compulsory quality education to all.

www.womenscommission.org/pdf/EdGenderTool.pdf. Tool to ensure a gender perspective in education in emergencies.

www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/appeal/IE/Publications_and_reports/Pos_Dis-final.pdf. Positive Discipline in Inclusive Learning-Friendly Classrooms – A Guide for Teachers and Teacher Educators.

www.violencestudy.org. UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children report, and progress report (in development).

www.unicef.org/teachers/compendium/index.html. Compendium on quality in basic education.

www.sil.org/sil. Linguistic research and development; especially focusing on unwritten languages. SIL has a formal consultative status to UNESCO.

www.unescobkk.org/IE. About inclusive education, implying responding to ALL children who are left out of or excluded from school and from learning; also downloadable: 'Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments'.

www.eenet.org.uk. Enabling Education Network website with links to regional networks and the EENET Asia Newsletter (downloadable). The 4th issue contains a School-Based Assessment format/tool to assess the child-friendliness of a school.

www.livingvalues.net. A rights-based approach to fostering positive self-development and social cooperation in children and young people. The website provides activities, methodologies and materials for teachers and facilitators.

www.who.int/school_youth_health/resources/information_series/en/. Documents and tools related to:

- Creating an environment for emotional and social well-being: an important responsibility of a health-promoting and child-friendly school.
- Violence prevention: an important element of a health-promoting school.
- The physical school environment: an essential component of a health-promoting school.
- Family life, reproductive health and population education: key elements of a health-promoting school.
- Improving health through schools: national and international strategies.

KEY PRACTICAL TOOLS

'Gender in education': www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=40

'Gender in the classroom': www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=4582

where also the following tools are available:

1. Guidelines for how to conduct classroom observation from a gender perspective
2. Gender lens for measuring the child-friendliness of school.

'Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning Friendly Environments': www.unescobkk.org/ie. Click on 'resources' and find the 6 booklets of the toolkit.

'Positive Discipline in the Inclusive Learning-Friendly Classroom – A guide for teachers and teacher educators': www.unescobkk.org/ie.

To address school-based violence and school health issues the following resources may be useful:

1. *Creating an Environment for emotional and social well-being: an important responsibility of a health-promoting and child-friendly school* (including the Psycho-Social Environment (PSE) profile questionnaire as a useful school environment assessment tool).
2. *The Physical School Environment – An Essential Component of a Health-Promoting School*.

To be downloaded from: www.who.int/school_youth_health/resources/information_series/en/.

Source: Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

NOTES

1. The eight SAARC countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
2. www.unescobkk.org/efamda. Government officials' meeting in New Delhi for EFA MDA South Asia workshop in December 2006.
3. Net enrolment figures only provide information on the number of children on the school register – not of their attendance, passing of grades or effective learning. Studies have revealed that at least half the children finishing primary education in South Asia cannot effectively read, write or do simple mathematics (Herz, 2006).
4. See also Mathieu (2006).
5. In Bangladesh, it was found that the average salary of a secondary-school educated woman is as much as seven times higher than that of a woman with no education (Haq and Haq, 1998).
6. http://www.netaid.org/global_poverty/girls-education.
7. See also Heijnen (2003).
8. See Chitrakar (2008) for a deeper analysis.
9. There is an assumption here that it is the parents who do this. In fact, the children themselves, older siblings or other relatives or friends could be financing children's education. In many Asian countries, daughters' earnings are known to be used for paying for sons' education, as shown in Greenhalgh's (1985) work on Taiwan.
10. In McKee *et al.* (2000).
11. Although the Maldives are a notable exception, where according to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, between 2002–04 public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP was 8%.
12. A discussion and study into which services should be initiated in order to ensure that governments would not be further disadvantaging the poor.
13. Calculated on the basis of: (i) probability at birth of not surviving up to 40 years of age; (ii) adult illiteracy rate; and (iii) population without sustainable access to improved water source.
14. Refer to Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) for a more detailed analysis of South Asian trends.
15. However, there can be misuse of scholarship funds, and lack of transparency and monitoring (see Ahmed and Chowdhury, 2005).
16. A resource for gender training and analysis in education can be found on the UNESCO Bangkok website: www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=4634: *A Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education* by the Gender in Education Network in Asia (GENIA).
17. Based on Benson (2005).
18. www.unescobkk.org/efamda. Government officials' meeting in New Delhi for EFA MDA South Asia workshop in December 2006.
19. www.unescobkk.org/efamda. Government officials' meeting in New Delhi for EFA MDA South Asia workshop in December 2006.
20. Source: Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

ANNEX 1

Key Legislation Promoting Girls' Education

CRC and education

Art. 28 All children have a right to education. The state is obliged to provide formal schooling, 'progressively, and on the basis of equal opportunity'. Primary education should be free and compulsory. Styles of school discipline should reflect the child's human dignity.

Art. 29 The purpose of education is to develop children's personality and talents, to prepare them for active adult life, to foster respect for basic human rights and a respect for the child's own culture and those of others, and life in a free, peaceful and tolerant society.

Art. 2 All rights laid down in the CRC shall be respected and ensured to all children without discrimination of any kind on grounds of race, gender, economic status, religion, citizenship, social class, ethnicity, language, etc. and measures will be taken to *protect* children against all forms of discrimination.

Art. 12 Children have a right to express opinions and their *views* shall be sought and considered on all matters that affect their lives, individually and collectively.

Art. 3 In all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child must be a primary consideration.

Art. 6 The right to life, survival and optimal development.

Education For All (EFA)

EFA Goal 2 Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly *girls*, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory education of good quality.

EFA Goal 5 Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

EFA Goal 6 Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

MDG 2 Achieve Universal Primary Education – ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education.

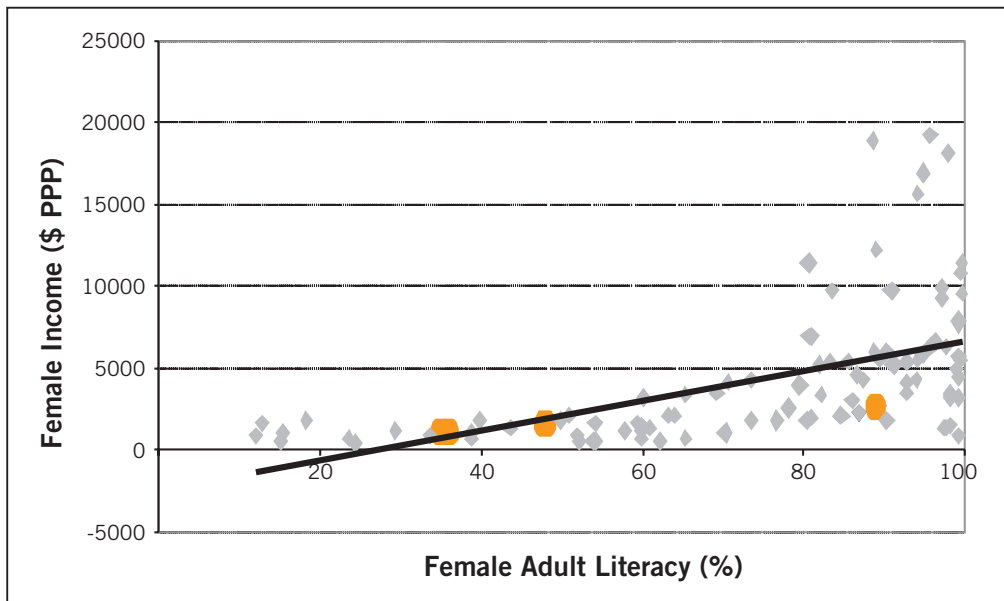
MDG 3 Promote gender equality and empower women – eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

Source: Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

ANNEX 2

Education and Women's Productivity and Income

Relationship Between Female Adult Literacy and Female Income



Source: Country data derived from UNDP (2006); cited in Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008)

- South Asian countries

ANNEX 3

How Health Affects Girls' Education

Health issues	Impact on education
Under-nutrition (protein energy and malnutrition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impairs mental development / cognitive development ■ On recovery, children remain impaired ■ Motor development affected ■ Poor emotional development ■ Frequent bouts of illness make it worse
Iron deficiency and anaemia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In infants, it affects psychomotor development ■ Older children – weak, listless, get tired, irritable, cannot concentrate and susceptible to illness/infections ■ Gender differences in access to food and medical care ■ Adolescent girls attaining menarche may not have access to iron and folic acid
Iodine deficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Iodine essential for brain development – mental development affected by deficiency ■ Hypothyroidism in mother can lead to mental retardation in children
Worm infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ May lead to weakness / aggravate malnutrition ■ Affects cognitive development ■ Hookworm can lead to anaemia
Infectious diseases, tuberculosis, malaria, meningitis, scabies, gastrointestinal infections / diarrhoeal diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Weakness, frequent spells of illness ■ Cognitive impairment ■ Skin eruptions / oozing sores – leading to segregation/disgust in school ■ Long-term behavioural problems (especially with scabies and skin infections)
HIV/AIDS impact on the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teacher attrition / dropout of children of people who are affected – no evidence as yet in Asia of impact of HIV/AIDS on education ■ Children withdrawn due to stigma, care of the ill ■ Low teacher attendance/availability in the event of many cases in village/locality ■ Scepticism regarding the value of education – sense of fatalism ■ Education system not prepared to deal with it – as yet

HIV/AIDS infection in children / risk of infection

- Poor families with no access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) give up hope
- Children orphaned and have to take on survival tasks
- Children with AIDS are most likely to have lost one or both parents
- Increased rates of depression and feeling of helplessness
- Social stigma – no support structure

Violence and child abuse

- Early exposure to violence can have an impact on the architecture of the maturing brain
- Social, emotional and cognitive impairment – including substance abuse, early sexual activity, anxiety, depressive disorders, aggressive behaviour
- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Feeling of shame and guilt
- Physical injuries, pregnancy
- Reproductive health problems
- Attempts to suicide

Corporal punishment, bullying and gender-based violence in schools

- Affect cognitive development
- Child withdraws in school – does not participate
- Negatively impacts self-esteem
- Lead to dropping out
- Feeling of shame and guilt
- Physical injuries, pregnancy

Source: Ramachandran (2007)

ANNEX 4

Promoting Health and Education for Girls – Where Do We Stand?

	Level of effort to promote girls' education:									
	Level 1 Poor: ✓; Level 2 Some effort ✓ ✓, Level 3 concerted effort: ✓ ✓ ✓	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Not available: n.a
Compulsory education	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Free education up to elementary	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Physical access	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Encourage recruitment of women teachers	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Water and toilets in school	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
School meal programme	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
School health programme	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Iron, folic acid, nutrition and school health	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Violence, abuse and corporal punishment	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Life skills education / HIV/AIDS education	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	n.a	✓ ✓ ✓	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a

Source: Adapted from Bennell (2004); cited in Ramachandran (2008)

ANNEX 5

Government of India Report on Child Abuse, 2006

The recent report brought out by the Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, has, for the first time, documented the prevalence of child abuse, including violence in schools. The report has come out with startling findings:

- Two out of every three children are physically abused.
- Out of the 69 per cent physically abused in 13 sample states, 54.68 per cent were boys.
- Over 50 per cent of children in all the 13 sample states were being subject to one or another form of physical abuse; 88.6 per cent were physically abused by parents.
- 65 per cent of school-going children reported facing corporal punishment – two out of three children were victims of corporal punishment, a majority of them in government and municipal schools.
- 53.22 per cent children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse – 5.69 per cent were sexually assaulted.
- Every second child reported facing emotional abuse, both boys and girls.
- 50.2 per cent of children reported they worked seven days a week – this includes children formally enrolled in school.
- Most children did not report the matter to anyone.

This study interviewed 3163 children who were enrolled and attending school. In all age groups, an overwhelming majority reported being beaten up at school. Out of those reporting corporal punishment in schools, 54.28 per cent were boys and 45.72 per cent were girls.

Source: GOI Report on Child Abuse (2007). www.wcd.nic.in; cited in Ramachandran (2008).

ANNEX 6

How Children Learn and Implications for School Practice

***Learners concentrate most on tasks that are personally meaningful and essentially learn what they want to learn.** The search for meaning is an innate human characteristic and motivation for learning increases and persists when students investigate real problems, and when learning is presented and reported in new ways. Surprisingly, students respond better to sophisticated learning tasks than simple ones, as demonstrated in schools that successfully teach urban poor children, not simplistic remediation, but linking reading, writing and maths problem solving to complex issues in the students' community.

***There is no limit to the capacity of humans to learn more; educators must not underestimate what students can do.** We create limits and set goals based on the perception of whether something is challenging and achievable, whether we have the self-confidence to do it, and whether we have the needed support.

***Learning is developmental and follows pre-determined sequences. Education is more effective when developmental differences are taken into account.** Learners who know little about a topic approach it differently from those who know more about a topic. For example, maths operations are first explored by manipulating real objects and later explored using symbols for the concrete objects.

***Each individual learns differently, using unique strategies, approaches and capabilities that may result from differences in linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds.** People construct new knowledge by building on what they already know. Each brain is different in the way it is organized and there is no such thing as a single general intelligence. The brain has a rather messy, non-linear way of forming patterns to link all of this old and new information.

***Learning is fundamentally social and, therefore, learning is inseparable from engagement in the world.** Learning is influenced and motivated by social interactions and interpersonal relations. Teacher–student interactions should go beyond recitation, in which there is a correct answer the teacher expects to hear, and involve real discussion, in which students offer conjectures and respond to others' ideas.

***Feedback – information from outside regarding the accuracy and relevance of our thoughts and actions – is essential to learning.** Educators must try to make sure that learners receive accurate, useful and timely feedback. It involves interaction with other students and experts, and a structure for peers to give and receive feedback. It involves learning how to self-evaluate.

***Successful learning involves strategies and those strategies are learned.** Students can be taught this form of self-management by coaching them to think ahead, plan for time and tools, envision the steps, and monitor progress. Students can also learn how to organize their own learning from listening to others as they describe their strategies and processes.

***There is a strong relationship between emotions and learning.** Strong emotions enhance memory; people learn poorly in stressful environments. Our ability to think and to learn effectively is closely linked to our physical and emotional well-being. An appropriate emotional climate is indispensable to sound education.

Source: Llewellyn / Creative Associates (2002); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

ANNEX 7

Case Studies on Girls' Participation

In **Nepal**, the Safe Spaces project, funded by Save the Children, has involved girls in participatory research (PRA) which has proved a source of empowerment for them by allowing them to identify the characteristics of a safe environment and to develop an action plan to 'take back their space' in the community and on the way to and from school. Boys were involved in the process only when the girls felt it was necessary. In order to reclaim their 'space', the girls identified the need:

- for parents to recognize the importance of girls' education;
- to avoid conservative traditions such as gender discrimination within castes, between sons and daughters, and early marriage;
- for girls to be able to demonstrate their ability within the community;
- for people to speak out against the injustices and oppression of girls;
- to raise awareness of girls' rights and enable their access to equal opportunities.

As a result of the process, changes have occurred within the community. For example, the girls' group was consulted by the community members on various cases of abuse or mistreatment of girls and the girls' group got an abducted girl released by contacting the police, local NGOs and the District Child Welfare Board; teachers and boys within schools and the community are paying greater respect to girls than earlier and boys who were initially teasers now support girls' efforts to manage change. Boys are beginning to advocate respect for girls through drama. Support groups for girls who have faced abuse have been established by local communities.

Source: www.id21.org/education/gender_violence/index.html; cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

In Mazar (north **Afghanistan**) youth groups have been involved in a campaign to get children back to school. They have been using multi-media and advocacy tools. The youth went across the northern region to meet with children, parents, community leaders and the Ministry of Education (MoE) and discuss why and how children could be supported and brought (back) into school. The youth worked directly with school-age children and gathered much information. Using poetry, song and drama, they conveyed how children could get themselves and their peers back in school. Children and young people had a major role in this initiative.

Source: Save the Children (Afghanistan); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

ANNEX 8

Policy Changes That May Improve Instructional Outcomes

CURRENT POLICIES	PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES	RATIONALE
Early Reading Fluency		
<p>Little or no attention to how much students learn early on; reading is considered a low-level issue.</p>	<p>Focus on reading fluency; shift resources to grades 1–2.</p>	<p>Early fluent reading is critical for future performance; inability to read increases repetition costs and dropout.</p>
<p>Grade 1–2 students have the same or less time and resources in schools and may have the poorer teachers.</p>	<p>Extra resources for lower grades to catch up, read, and calculate fluently; better teachers; frequent support and supervision.</p>	<p>Prevent dropout with illiteracy; enable multi-grade students to read fluently.</p>
<p>Donor reliance on sample-based learning assessment to monitor progress, focus on later grades.</p>	<p>Use rapid school surveys to monitor the skills of grade 1–2 for high-risk areas.</p>	<p>Learning assessments take place years after inefficient instruction; governments rarely use the data.</p>
<p>If many students fail, automatic promotion may be recommended.</p>	<p>It is better to remedy rather than promote automatically.</p>	<p>Students are unlikely to learn simple material in a higher-level class.</p>
<p>If classes have more than 60 students, multi-shifts are often established.</p>	<p>Very large classes may be preferable to limited instruction.</p>	<p>Opportunity to learn is all-important. Large classes might be managed through different grouping techniques.</p>
<p>Textbooks for classroom use; some textbook loan schemes.</p>	<p>Textbooks for all students to take home.</p>	<p>More practice, ability to recall complex material.</p>

<p>Textbooks for primary students only. No textbooks for secondary schools or teacher training institutes.</p>	<p>Textbooks for all levels to take home. Find means to get savings, loan schemes, and parental participation to get textbooks for the post primary levels.</p>	<p>Without textbooks, practice is limited in the lower grades, and content is forgotten or never learned in higher grades. Teachers' time usually costs more than books.</p>
<p>Mother-tongue Instruction</p>		
<p>Deference to national policies and national or English language of instruction for all grades in many countries.</p> <p>Experimental programmes in some countries carried out for decades.</p>	<p>Convincing countries and financing mother-tongue instruction at least for the lower grades; phase out in higher grades.</p> <p>Formalize and extend the experimental programmes. Sensitize communities.</p>	<p>Students may need 5–7 years to catch up with native speakers, particularly if foreign language has complex spelling.</p> <p>Phonetically spelled native languages help achieve literacy quickly.</p>
<p>Educator Training</p>		
<p>Almost any training scheme for educational staff is acceptable to the donor community.</p> <p>Lecturing about teaching.</p>	<p>Reform of teacher training based on learning principles highly pertinent to their work.</p> <p>Correcting dysfunctional modelling behaviours, instilling effective behaviours (partly through videos).</p>	<p>Teachers may practice in classroom little of what they are exposed to in training.</p> <p>Much teaching behaviour is learned through modelling rather than higher order instruction.</p>
<p>Supervision and Management</p>		
<p>Principals have limited supervisory authority over teachers and accountability for school performance.</p> <p>Rare supervisions from district offices.</p>	<p>School-based management. Knowledgeable principals encouraging teachers and providing frequent classroom feedback.</p> <p>Strengthen the supervisory and supportive chain and frequent teacher/visitation.</p>	<p>Increasing the intrinsic motivational rewards that result from signalling a job well done and giving corrective feedback.</p> <p>Teachers need someone to praise them, must work towards that goal.</p>

Limited interest in inspectors' and supervisors' reports	Retrain supervisory staff to submit reports on a limited number of instructionally significant variables.	If higher authorities are actually interested in the reports and can do something about improving conditions, this may constitute an incentive for staff to supervise.
Community Involvement		
Usually few systematic attempts to change parental perceptions on school-related issues.	A communications strategy involving mass media to convince parents about the value of bilingual education, teacher monitoring, school involvement, etc.	Erroneous parental perceptions on instructional interventions may drive governments to reject valuable solutions for educating the poor.
Community associations often ineffective in school supervision.	Search for ways to improve participation. Impart performance standards they must check for.	Communities are present and interested, even if they do not know how schools must be run.
School Health and Nutrition		
Education projects rarely include school health or nutrition.	Health and nutrition critical for information processing.	Education and health ministries must learn to collaborate more closely.
Usually no school feeding	Offer of food that does not require preparation, such as special high-nutrition cookies or milk.	Food may keep children in school and is modestly related to performance; empower communities to deal with corruption.
Early childhood education and development programmes limited in scope.	Improve effectiveness, engage communities (e.g. through community-driven development).	More-developed brains are better able to learn basic skills.

Source: Copied with permission from Abadzi (2006); cited in Heijnen-Maathuis (2008).

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Sarah Huxley is a development professional, who has been actively engaged in development work since 1999, with three years of direct experience in designing and implementing youth-focused and culture-related programmes in Kathmandu and rural Nepal. She holds a degree in Anthropology and Geography (from Oxford Brookes University) specializing in North–South relations, and will soon complete a Masters in Cross Cultural Studies of Children, Child Development and Youth at Brunel University, UK. She has worked in Nepal for the last three years and has a range of experience with both national and international organizations. Her special areas of interest are child participation, youth empowerment and cross-cultural development discourses.

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