

ANNEX A

A SOLUTION TO ALMOST EVERY PROBLEM

The strategies that follow, whether working from inside or outside the classroom, have been proven to increase school attendance and completion by girls. Each promotes in its own way the model of a school that seeks to ensure effective learning in safe, healthy gender-sensitive and child-centred environments (see *Box 7: A child-friendly school*).

No country could implement all of these strategies at once. Governments should undertake an analysis of the particular barriers facing girls as a necessary prelude to selecting a package of the most pertinent interventions. An opinion poll of the perceptions of parents and children of those barriers would play an important part in such an analysis.

Making education free and compulsory is the keystone of any national plan to eliminate gender disparity in education and achieve universal education. Faced with an economically driven choice between sending sons or daughters to school, poor families often send their sons. Removing fees or offering financial support to families with daughters in school, as well as explaining the advantages of sending girls to school, can make a real difference. In Malawi, for example, the initial result of abolishing school fees in 1994 was an increase in enrolment of almost 70 per cent, from 1.9 million

in the 1993/94 academic year to 3.2 million in the 1994/95 academic year.⁸⁹

Strategies within the classroom

- **Making the classroom more child-centred and gender-sensitive**, and rooted in the life and environment of the community. The Nueva Escuela Unitaria Bilingüe intercultural programme in Guatemala is founded on participatory teaching and learning, with play and study creatively combined. Teachers make full use of Mayan languages and culture that have in the past been marginalized despite their importance to half the country's population. The result is a completion rate above the national average and a high enrolment rate for girls.⁹⁰
- **Recruiting and training teachers who are sensitive to gender and child rights, and paying them a regular, living wage.** Both female and male teachers should receive training in gender awareness in the classroom. Without this, some countries, such as Zambia, found that teachers may value and encourage boys' participation in class more than they value girls' and may allocate school tasks along strict gender lines, leaving girls to sweep the floors or clean the toilets.⁹¹ (See *Panel: Teachers spark hope, page 47*).

While one cannot assume that all women teachers are gender-sensitive in their teaching methods, there is a specific need in some areas to recruit more women teachers who can serve as role models for girls and may make girls' parents feel more comfortable.

Countries that achieve higher enrolment in primary education tend to employ a high proportion of female teachers.⁹² In Kenya, the Strengthening Primary School Management project, funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, requires one of every two head teachers or principals receiving training to be a woman. As a consequence, the proportion of women head teachers was boosted from 10 per cent to 23 per cent over a 10-year period, and female teachers at primary school level account for 41 per cent of the total.⁹³ The primary school completion rate also improved over the same time: the completion rate for 1994 to 2001 was 46 per cent (boys 48 per cent and girls 43 per cent). The rate improved in 2002 to 56 per cent for both boys and girls. The percentage of trained primary school teachers has increased from 70 per cent in 1990 to 97 per cent in 2002.

- **Promoting health in schools.** In Myanmar, one programme adopts a holistic, life skills approach to health. The School-Based Healthy Living and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education programme is taught as part of the standard curriculum to children from grades 2 to 9. It focuses on a range of health and social issues – from HIV/AIDS to personal hygiene, from nutrition to drugs – and explores them through activities designed to develop life skills such as communication, cooperation and problem-solving. The programme has led to dramatic success stories, such as a village in Tachileik township that started using iodized salt as a result of pressure from children who had learned of its benefits in one such class. Introduced in 1998, the programme now covers 1.3 million students in nearly 9,000 schools and is being

adopted by the Government as the standard for life skills teaching throughout Myanmar.⁹⁴

- **Promoting sports in schools.** Providing girls with access to sport can also contribute to achieving gender parity in education. With sports in many countries a traditionally male domain, girls' participation challenges gender stereotypes, breaking down entrenched attitudes. As female athletes gain recognition, they become mentors to others. Through sports, girls are given the chance to be leaders and improve their confidence and self-esteem. As girls participate in sports, they acquire new interpersonal skills and through additional social networks gain access to different opportunities, allowing them to become more engaged in school and community life. In Romania, sport has increased school participation among the minority Roma community by providing an opportunity for girls and boys to participate in teams, conditional to school attendance and academic performance.⁹⁵ In Zimbabwe, the Youth Education through Sport programme, led by young people, requires participants to commit themselves to staying in school and to volunteering in their communities. The programme's aim is for them to adopt life skills, become peer educators and contribute to their communities as positive role models. Since 2000, the programme has reached 25,000 young people in 10 provinces.⁹⁶
- **Eliminating gender bias from textbooks and learning materials.** Apart from the obvious value to girls, the thoughtful revision of textbooks, classroom materials and lesson plans is likely to increase their quality and relevance to the lives of all children. In Viet Nam, the Government is developing new gender-sensitive teacher-training modules, ensuring that future textbooks are gender neutral, and providing training in gender and child rights to national education managers and members of local parent-teacher associations.⁹⁷ In Somalia, a gender-based approach to curricula development and teacher training has increased enrolment by 28 per cent to more

than 260,000 (although the percentage of girls remained stationary at 35 per cent). There is now a higher demand for education by parents and communities, and increased numbers of women are becoming active members of community education committees.⁹⁸

- **Scheduling lessons flexibly.** Children are often excluded from school because of family responsibilities or the homework that is more often allocated to girls than boys. BRAC schools in Bangladesh have given priority to girls and inspired many other countries to follow their example. The school schedule is flexible; though it runs for two hours a day, six days a week, the times are set by local parents, and the school calendar is adapted to fit local considerations such as the harvest.⁹⁹ BRAC schools met with such success that the scheme expanded quickly, and total enrolment is now at about 1.2 million. As a result of the programme's special emphasis on girls' enrolment, about 70 per cent of children in non-formal primary education and schools providing basic education for older children are female. Around 97 per cent of the teachers in BRAC schools are women.
- **Teaching in the local language.** When the language of instruction is different from the children's mother tongue, it is often more disabling for girls, who tend to be less exposed to social environments beyond their immediate families.¹⁰⁰ In Peru, girls and boys are first taught in Quechua, their mother tongue, and subsequently learn Spanish as a second language. The proposal for Intercultural Bilingual Education to be applied to multigrade classrooms and one-teacher schools for native Quechua speakers in poor rural Andean areas has contributed to a 50 per cent increase in writing and communication abilities for girls and boys. In Burundi, studies show that after mother-tongue instruction was introduced in 1973, the effect was to greatly increase access to school, leading to higher attendance overall.

To meet the consequent high demand on schooling, the special measure of double shifting was introduced.

Strategies outside the classroom

- **Gathering gender-specific education statistics,** including those on learning achievement at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. All countries now gather statistics measuring enrolment of girls and boys. This data is vital if the quality of teaching and learning is to be improved and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals is to be measured. In addition to gender, wherever feasible, data should be disaggregated by factors including urban or rural location, household wealth and mothers' education. Analysis of such data is invaluable in showing disparities within disparities, for example, how gender intertwines with poverty or ethnicity to produce multiple disadvantages. Few countries, however, monitor learning achievement in a sufficiently systematic way, and still fewer break their results down by gender.
- **Providing early childhood programmes.** All children are likely to benefit from pre-school care, but evidence suggests that it enhances girls' preparedness for school more than boys'.¹⁰¹ What is more, it is the first point, after the family, at which gender stereotypes can be addressed. In Bolivia, the Kallpa Wawa and Khuskamanta Wiñaspa programmes combine literacy training for adult women with early childhood care. Indigenous Quechua women are taught to read and write as they learn about child care, nutrition, health, education and protection. As a result of the programme, almost 5,000 children have been registered and provided with a birth certificate, more than 11,000 Quechua families have been trained in integrated child development; and some 1,500 indigenous women have been trained and now work as child development promoters in 22 municipalities with high poverty indices.

- **Enabling young mothers to return to school.**

In many countries girls who become pregnant while at school are forbidden to return to their studies.¹⁰² The Forum for African Women Educationalists has been particularly active in lobbying governments in sub-Saharan Africa to change this policy. In Zambia, a 1997 policy allows re-admitting schoolgirls after they give birth, yet very few girls return due to perceived stigma and bullying from their peers. In Chile, the Ministry of Education in 1990 instructed schools not to expel any pregnant girl. However, the ruling proved difficult to enforce, and the Government submitted to Parliament a law, approved in 2000, guaranteeing the right of girls to continue and complete their education, while demanding from schools the necessary academic facilities.

- **Taking special measures to reach the most disadvantaged girls.** In some countries and regions where ethnic minorities, people living in rural areas and the poor face discrimination and exclusion, girls often suffer a multiple disadvantage because of their gender. The more disadvantaged the girl, the more essential it is that the education system should reach out to her through special measures, rather than just assuming she will be drawn in as part of a general drive for education for all. In Bhutan, 80 per cent of the population live by subsistence farming, scattered over mountain slopes rather than clustered in towns. Some 261 community schools have been established in huts, temples or farmhouses rather than in specialized school buildings, with management and supervision vested in parents and the local community.¹⁰³ Since the schools belong to the community, they create a sense of ownership, and so are better maintained, and parents show more interest in education. The Department of Education has successfully narrowed the difference in the proportion of primary school enrolment between boys and girls from 24 per cent in 1990 (girls 38 per cent, boys 62 per cent) to 6 per cent in 2000 (girls 47 per cent, boys

53 per cent). The drop-out rate has decreased from 8 per cent in 1995 to 4 per cent in 1999 for both girls and boys.

- **Providing alternative education for girls.** One way of reaching girls who have dropped out of school, as well as other groups such as working children and children in conflict situations, is through education centres established outside the formal school system. In Turkey, learning centres in five provinces encourage girls normally confined to the home and domestic labour, to enrol in 'open primary school'. The centres perform an invaluable social as well as educational function; girls have organized field trips to neighbouring provinces and even drama clubs involving local boys. The Turkish Ministry of Education has adopted the open primary school as a model for its own girls' education strategy.¹⁰⁴ (See Panel on Turkey, page 61.)
- **Providing alternative education for overaged children.** In the United Republic of Tanzania, the Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania programme serves an estimated 3 million over age children and adolescents who are out of school. It provides basic education through a specially designed three-year course, at the end of which children are eligible to join the mainstream school system. Girls were the initial focus of the project due to their low enrolment rates. But the difficulty in locating them, either because they were working indoors or they married, failed to adequately address gender in the enrolment process. It has been successful in reaching excluded or 'hidden' groups of children, including orphans, children of single parents and young mothers. The project has been mainstreamed into the formal education system to cater to all over age children and adolescents who will not be eligible to enter the school system under new rules that stipulate age as a condition for entry.
- **Locating schools closer to children's homes,** if necessary by establishing small, multi-grade or multiage schools in remote rural

areas. Girls are less likely to be able to make a long journey from home to school, not least because of concerns about their safety en route.¹⁰⁵ Burkina Faso, for example, has developed a network of ‘satellite schools’. These are small schools that accommodate only the first three grades, allowing the youngest children (who start school at the age of 7) to gain their first experience of school in or close to their own villages. Since their establishment in 1995, 229 satellite schools have reached over 100,000 girls and boys. Compared with pupils in the conventional school system, children who graduate from satellite schools perform at a higher level in all subjects including reading, writing and mathematics, with performance rates one-and-a-half to two times as high. Satellite schools also have a remarkable retention rate of almost 95 per cent. These positive results can be explained by a number of factors including the use of local language that makes learning quicker; parental engagement; and a lower average student-to-teacher ratio of 29 to 1 in satellite schools compared with 48 to 1 in conventional schools.

- **Making sure girls and boys are safe.** This involves making schools secure not only from without – perimeter walls have, for example, been found to increase girls’ sense of safety in many countries – but also from within. Education is a key to protection when it is of good quality, but falls short when the learning environment itself fails to provide the necessary protection against violence and abuse of children. When schools are associated with sexual or physical gender violence, girls’ access to education is negatively affected. Parents will naturally hesitate to send their daughters to schools that are thought to be sites of physical or sexual gender violence.¹⁰⁶ Boys and girls are often susceptible to psychological and physical violence in different ways, and adolescents in particular can find themselves especially vulnerable to violations of their safety. Lack of safety and security in the school environment may be very obvious in terms of physi-

cal danger, such as beatings or rape. The abuse of girls – sexual, physical and emotional – by teachers is a common problem. Breaking the silence about violence at school is an important step towards its diagnosis and prevention. The Gambia did this by including in a sexual harassment policy a directive stating that teachers should not be alone with pupils of the opposite sex.¹⁰⁷ The launch of a two-year UN Global Study on Violence, the recommendations of the Commission on Human Security, the momentum behind the Millennium Development Goals and the ongoing Education For All movement all offer opportunities for substantive empirical research and advocacy around safety in education.

- **Encouraging girls’ participation and activism for education.** Girls can be the most effective and inspiring advocates of child-friendly education if they are given the chance. The Girls’ Education Movement is a dynamic pan-African girls’ organization supported by the Forum for African Woman Educationalists as well as by the Governments of Norway and Uganda. Launched in 2001, the Movement aims not just to galvanize action for education for all, but also to change the character of school systems so that “they offer rich, rewarding and friendly learning experiences for all children.” Through the process of school mapping and the use of indigenous knowledge, the clubs were able to identify homes with out-of-school children, develop a list of all the children who were not going to school within the school’s catchment area and take the initiative in bringing them to school. As a result, not only has girls’ enrolment increased, but there has also been a shift in the way girls are perceived, from passive victims to active, vocal and engaged participants. The Movement has made a point of involving boys as active advocates of gender-sensitive Education For All.¹⁰⁸
- **Involving the local community.** The Community Empowerment Project in Jordan led to the village of Al-Rashedieh holding a

community meeting, where women discussed their worries about their daughters being forced to stop school due to the absence of a secondary school for girls in the area. The women prepared a petition and went to plead their case with the director of the education ministry in Aqaba. Within six months, three fully equipped girls' secondary classes had been established.¹⁰⁹ The Opening Doors for Girls' Education project in the rural Andean areas of Peru, which have been affected by extreme poverty and conflicts over the past two decades, involves 324,000 inhabitants of 540 communities in monitoring girls' inclusion in society and their right to a good education. This participatory monitoring strategy has benefited more than 65,000 girls. In Sudan, the Child-Friendly Community Project shows how community involvement made a difference in the number of girls in school and the quality of education for girls and boys alike (see *Panel on Sudan, page 65*).

- **Supplying safe water and latrines.** Many girls drop out of school at the onset of menstruation, partly because there are no separate toilet facilities. Sometimes it is not enough simply to provide the latrines, however. Girls' involvement in identifying their location and type can be critical in determining whether they will be used. UNICEF has helped provide 1,400 schools in Pakistan with water and sanitation and is currently promoting school sanitation and hygiene in 46 other countries.¹¹⁰
- **Decreasing the domestic workload.** Many girls are kept at home to help with domestic tasks. Supplying communities or women's groups with equipment such as mills to grind cereals, huskers, carts and plastic barrels for water conservation, can decrease the amount of work to be done so that girls can be freed to attend school. Girls may also be prevented from going to school because they have to fetch water from a traditional well or remote water pump. Creating water points can alleviate their workload, as well as provide safe

water for the whole community. Day-care community centres for children under six can relieve girls from looking after their siblings, thereby allowing them to go to school.

- **Making sure men and boys are involved.** The rights and well-being of children are best served when relations between men and women in the household are based on mutual respect, equal rights and shared responsibilities. Men often can play unique and positive roles in the lives of children and often actively support efforts to reduce gender inequality (see *Chapter 5, What about boys?*).

National efforts

The most successful girls' education initiatives incorporate many or most of these facets into an integrated programme. Zambia's Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education is a case in point. Its 12 'interactive interventions' have been so successful that what was a pilot project in the mid-1990s has now been extended all over the country.¹¹¹ Piloted in 1995 in 20 schools, the programme was operational in over 1,000 schools in all 72 districts by 2002.

Another example of a national effort on behalf of children's right to education is the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, launched in October 2001. It is the Government of India's policy statement in universal elementary education that provides a framework from which to reach out to all children in the 6- to 14-year old age group by 2010. It seeks primarily to promote community-owned, quality education. It recognizes that education at this level should be made useful and relevant by improving the curriculum, focusing on child-centred activities, effective and innovative teaching aids and strategies and training teachers to further the quality agenda. For instance, the State of Kerala undertook a study on classroom processes with a gender focus in 168 schools in order to develop a teacher-training module. Almost 28,000 teachers received the training

and reference material to help them transform their classrooms.

The initiative seeks particularly to bridge social, regional and gender gaps by targeting children of socially vulnerable and economically marginal groups – girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children and children belonging to minority groups – with the active participation of the community in the management of schools. It has provision for the distribution of free textbooks to all girls and children belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes up to grade 8. It provides for interventions in early childhood care and education, indirectly helping to ease the burden of sibling care on girls.

The strategies advocated and implemented by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are embedded in community ownership of school-based interventions through the effective decentralization and involvement of various institutions. It is seen as a partnership between the central, state and local governments while providing states with an opportunity to individually develop their own vision of elementary education. This process involves the creation and support of local bodies like the Mother Teacher Associations and Parent Teacher Associations and bringing them together with the Panchayati Raj Institutions, school management committees, village education committees and others in the management of elementary schools.¹¹²

BOX 7

A CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL:

- Is gender-sensitive for both girls and boys
- Protects children; there is no corporal punishment, no child labour and no physical, sexual or mental harassment
- Ensures that children are learning and not being preached at
- Involves all children, families and communities; it is particularly sensitive to and protective of the most vulnerable children
- Is healthy; it has safe water and adequate sanitation, with separate toilet facilities for girls
- Teaches children about life skills and HIV/AIDS
- Involves children in active and participatory learning
- Develops children's self-esteem and self-confidence free of bias from teachers and parents

