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## EDUCATED GIRLS, A UNIQUELY POSITIVE FORCE FOR DEVELOPMENT





Sonia Yee/UNICEF/2003

Education is everybody's human right. This simple fact is at the core of UNICEF's commitment to girls' education. It means that no girl, however poor, however desperate her country's situation, is to be excluded from school. There is no acceptable excuse for denying her the opportunities to develop to her fullest potential.

Education saves and improves the lives of girls and women. It allows women greater control of their lives and provides them with skills to contribute to their societies. It enables them to make decisions for themselves and to influence their families. It is this power that produces all the other developmental and social benefits. Women's participation and influence in governments, families, communities, the economy and the provision of services is a common good. It leads to more equitable development, stronger families, better services, better child health. (*See Panel on the 'karate girls' of Bihar, India, page 25.*)

### A positive spiral

In addition to its benefits for girls and women, education is a uniquely positive force with a wide-ranging impact on society and human development. Debates continue about whether primary, secondary or tertiary education should be the priority when considering funding for education. But such debates distract from the essential issue for young girls: their right to a basic education. If they miss out on this, they inevitably miss out on secondary education and all the good that goes with it.

Among the many long-term benefits of educating girls are:

- **Enhanced economic development.** Decades of research provide substantial evidence of the link between the expansion of basic education and economic development – and

girls' education has an even more positive effect. Regions that invested over the long term in girls' education such as South-East Asia and, at least until the 1980s debt crisis, Latin America, have tended to show higher levels of economic development. As the primary enrolment rate for girls increases, so too does gross domestic product per capita.<sup>8</sup> Countries that fail to raise the education level of women to the same as that of men increase the cost of their development efforts and pay for the failure with slower growth and reduced income.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, economic development, and hence higher income per family, can help in convincing reluctant parents to forgo the quick economic benefit of their daughters' work, and instead send them to school, producing long-term benefits for a country's economy.

- **Education for the next generation.** If educated girls become mothers they are much more likely to send their children to school, thereby passing on and multiplying benefits both for themselves and society in a positive, intergenerational effect. One of the clearest findings from a recent UNICEF analysis of household data from 55 countries and 2 Indian states is that children of educated women are much more likely to go to school, and the more schooling the women have received, the more probable it is that their children will also benefit from education.<sup>10</sup> This recent study backs up research that traces the way in which literacy and language skills gained by girls at school not only result in improved health outcomes for themselves and their children but also eventually for their grandchildren as well.<sup>11</sup>

Through the achievements of children such as these in a community school in Egypt, the eyes of a remote community have been opened onto the world.



- **The multiplier effect.** Education has an impact on areas beyond learning, extending a positive influence into most aspects of a child's life. For example, children who go to school are more likely to learn what they need to stay healthy, including how to protect themselves against diseases. Education for girls, who are more vulnerable than boys to HIV, offers the needed protection for those at risk. These benefits cross generations as women with the knowledge of how to guard against HIV/AIDS are also more likely to send their children to school.<sup>12</sup> In addition, an education means that children are less likely to be trafficked or exploited as labourers, and less vulnerable to abuse and violence; and since girls are more likely to suffer these assaults, education is especially important to their protection and carries its influence beyond the classroom. (See Chapter 4.)
- **Healthier families.** One benefit to society of educating girls is a greater balance between family size and family resources. When a society ensures that mothers are educated, children will be healthier and fewer will die. Children of more educated women tend to be better nourished and get sick less often. The effect of a mother's education on her child's health and nutrition is so significant that each extra year of maternal education reduces the rate of mortality for children under the age of 5 by between 5 per cent and 10 per cent, according to a review of extensive evidence from the developing world.<sup>13</sup>

## PANEL 3

# Egypt: Dreams realized

Awatif Morsy will never forget the day she heard that a new school would be opened in her village.

"Someone came to the house asking for the names of the children who weren't attending class," she recalls. "My mother gave them my name. I was so thrilled."

Like most eight-year-olds in Beni Shara'an village, Awatif's life until that day was divided between back-breaking work in the nearby wheat fields and confinement at home. To girls like her, the new school – a single classroom on the ground floor of a converted house – was a dream come true.

"We would go and watch the facilitators decorating the room. Everything was bright and colourful. There were games and pictures, things I'd never seen before."

Not everyone in the village was so enthusiastic, at least initially. Some farmers complained that the school would deprive them of the cheap labour the children provided. Even Awatif's own stepfather was unconvinced.

"What does a girl need to study for?" he would ask.

Happily, that was not the view of Farouk Abdel Naim, the elderly merchant who was persuaded to donate the premises for the school to use. "I've come to believe that a girl's education is more important even than a boy's," says Mr. Abdel Naim. "A man can always make something out of his circumstances but a girl can't. She needs to be educated in order to get on in life."

Eight years on, it's hard to find anyone in Beni Shara'an who doesn't

share that opinion. The school – now expanded into three classrooms – is today seen as a wise investment from which the community is reaping tangible rewards.

Take the example of shopkeeper Ahmed Abdel Jaber. Himself illiterate, he sent his daughter, Rawia, to the school as soon as it opened.

"Until Rawia went to school, my store accounts were in a complete mess," he recalls. "But before long, she was taking care of all the books for me, as well as helping her elder sister to read and write."

In a village where illiteracy is an inescapable fact of life, there's no shortage of stories about how a daughter's education is making important differences to the quality of people's lives and businesses.

- **Fewer maternal deaths.** Women who have been to school are less likely to die during childbirth. The effect of schooling in reducing the number of births means that for every 1,000 women every additional year of education will prevent 2 maternal deaths.<sup>14</sup> Research has shown that maternal mortality is also reduced by better knowledge about health-care practices, use of health services during pregnancy and birth, improved nutrition and increasing the spacing between births: all factors that are fostered by being an educated woman.<sup>15</sup>

## The development gap

Although the international community has committed itself to girls' education as a human rights issue and the benefits of investing in

girls' education are clear, it has yet to become a priority for development investments. The reasons for this are complex and bring into question not just education policy but the historically dominant approaches to development that prioritize economic considerations and ignore human rights.

**Growth models.** Many of the early ideas about development were rooted in the belief that economic growth, measured by gross domestic product, was paramount. It was assumed that as the total value of goods produced and services provided by any country within one year expanded, poverty and inequality would be automatically, almost magically, reduced. The fruits of economic growth, it was assumed, would fall into the laps of all, whether rich or poor, male or female.

How the instructions on a doctor's prescription or on a sack of fertilizer suddenly seemed clear. How educational programmes on television began to make sense. And – more important still – how the example set by the children encouraged many older people to begin taking literacy classes themselves.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that through the achievement of these children, the eyes of a remote community have been opened onto the world.

While the drive to get more Egyptian girls into school was producing benefits in places like Beni Shara'an, it wasn't long before the impetus was being felt nationally. In 2000, Egypt unveiled a Girls' Education Initiative, within months of the global version launched by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan in Dakar, Senegal.

The Egyptian initiative was built on the success UNICEF and the country's Government had achieved since the early 1990s with the establishment of some 200 community

schools and 3,500 one-classroom schools. The aim was to take this 'girl-friendly' model and project it into seven rural governorates identified as showing the greatest resistance to girls' education.

The follow-up was as swift as it was decisive. A series of high-level meetings chaired by the First Lady, H. E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, set girls' education as Egypt's top development priority for the next five years. Coupled with that pledge was a commitment to end the gender gap by the year 2007 and in the process reach half a million out-of-school girls.

A national task force was established, involving more than a dozen government ministries along with non-governmental organizations and UN agencies. The broad strategy was to ensure that the approach to girls' education was an integrated one, involving a number of sectors and building solid partnerships between government and civil society.

Through a consultative process, local task forces emerged in each

of the seven targeted governorates. These were voluntary groups made up of community members, parents, girls both in and out of school, non-governmental organizations and some government officials whose participation was meant to guarantee that the schools truly belonged to the communities they would serve.

Overseeing the entire process has been the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, under its Secretary-General, Moushira Khattab, and supported by seven organizations of the UN system.\* The Council has championed a participatory planning process and is now coordinating the implementation of girl-friendly schools. In all, 3,000 such schools are to be established in 2003. The foundation stone for the first girl-friendly classroom was laid by Mrs. Mubarak in May 2003.

According to UNICEF Education Officer, Dr. Malak Zaalouk, a key priority has been to ensure that, to the communities they serve, the schools represent more than just an educational opportunity.

This view of growth as central to development in a country's productivity was refined and redefined frequently as many years of dismal experience in developing countries proved the model's inadequacy. Growth remained limited in all but a few developing countries and no consistent evidence emerged to show that this type of growth alone would reduce poverty or inequality.

The economics of development at this point were also gender blind. There was no attempt to consider if or how the status of women relative to men affected their participation in economic development. It also ignored areas of the so-called 'unpaid care' economy, i.e., domestic, nursing and other nurturing work largely undertaken by women on whom the 'productive' sector of the economy depended.

There was also little awareness that any benefits accruing to a household may be distributed unequally due to the established power relations between men and women.

In the 1980s, as growth models faltered, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund spearheaded the implementation of structural adjustment programmes aimed at reducing public expenditure and giving more scope for prices and incentives to find their own level in the marketplace. Adjustment often entailed cuts in spending on education, health and food subsidies that disproportionately hurt the poor. These cuts hit poor women particularly hard since they had to step up their workload both inside and outside the home so that their families could cope.<sup>16</sup> Adjustment also failed even on its own terms, resulting in next-to-no

"Poverty alleviation is the bigger issue," says Dr. Zaalouk. "For example, school meals are being provided with support from the World Food Programme and the Ministry of Agriculture. Then there's sanitation and health care, plus a strong element of community participation built into each school. The overall aim is to make people in some of Egypt's most deprived areas feel they have a real stake in the schools' success."

Over the years, international recognition for the work done in Egypt has grown – a process in which Awatif Morsy has played her own part. In 2001, Awatif was one of three child representatives sent by Egypt to Kampala, Uganda to attend a major preparatory meeting for the UN Special Session on Children.

She still remembers the excitement of her first trip abroad, and the sense of responsibility that came with leading one of the conference sessions. "If I hadn't gone to school, I'd never have had that chance," she says excitedly.

Now an outstanding pupil at the local secondary school (not to mention a promising writer of short stories), Awatif is looking ahead to university, and beyond. "Many of the people here in Beni Shara'an want me to become a doctor," she says. "I myself want to be a teacher, so that I can pass on some of what I've learned to other children."

That's already happening. Awatif has become a role model for other girls in the village. Eleven-year-old Faten is one: "I read all Awatif's stories," she says. "One day, I want to be just like her."

***The schools represent more than just an educational opportunity.***

\*International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNESCO, United Nations Population Fund, World Bank, and UNICEF.

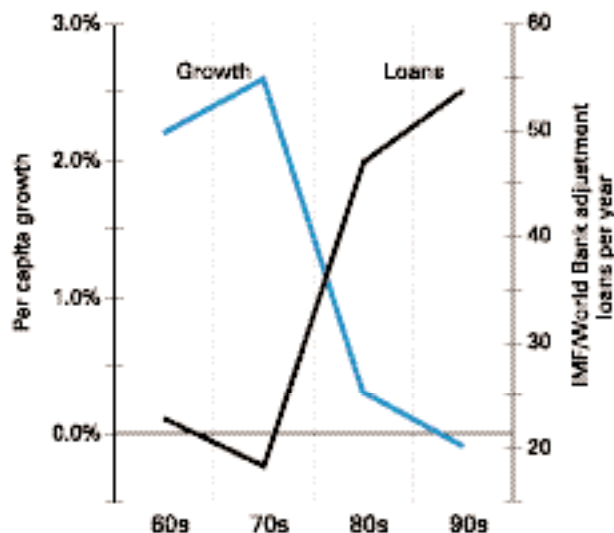
economic growth. As Figure 3 shows, per capita growth in developing countries plummeted even as adjustment lending by the Bank and the Fund soared. A Bank study in 2000 concluded: Growth of per capita income for a typical developing country during the 1980s and 1990s was zero.<sup>17</sup>

By the 1990s, the assumption that economic growth alone would deliver human development was recognized as flawed. The opposite seems to be true: human development can foster economic growth.<sup>18</sup> A UNICEF study of 49 nations shows that the countries that achieved the highest average annual growth between 1990 and 2000 were those that had a baseline in 1980 of low child mortality and low income poverty; while the economies that actually shrank in that decade were those that all started in 1980 with high child mortality, high income poverty or both. (*See Figure 4: Human development and economic growth*)<sup>19</sup>

There is now a more general acceptance that development, if it is to be meaningful, has to transcend economics. There is also more widespread understanding – particularly since the Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 – that a gender perspective on the economics of development is essential, and that poverty cannot be reduced in any sustainable manner without promoting women’s empowerment.<sup>20</sup>

**Models of universal education.** Education policy has followed a slow path to the realization that girls’ schooling is fundamental to a country’s success in achieving education for all. In the early years of the development movement, when many countries were newly independent, there was general enthusiasm for education as a vital factor in a nation’s advancement. But the task of educating all children was huge. In 1960, fewer than half of the developing world’s children aged 6 to 11 were enrolled in primary school, and in sub-Saharan Africa only 1 child in 20 attended secondary school. And by 1980, despite some success (overall primary enrolment had doubled in Asia and Latin America, and tripled in Africa<sup>21</sup>)

**FIGURE 3 IMF/WORLD BANK LOANS VERSUS GROWTH**



Source: Easterly, William, *The Elusive Quest for Growth*, MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2001.

millions of children were still out of school, the majority of them girls. Rapid population growth consistently frustrated progress, staying ahead of the increase in the numbers in school.

In the 1980s, structural adjustment made things worse. A study of the sub-Saharan countries that underwent adjustment between 1980 and 1993 indicates that the average reduction in real per capita spending was 14 per cent during the adjustment period.<sup>22</sup> Of the 15 countries in this group, 12 had a decline in per capita spending on education.

In 1990, the World Conference on Education For All held in Jomtien, Thailand recognized the chronic neglect of children’s right to education in the poorest countries, especially the neglect of the rights of girls which, under structural adjustment in the 1980s, was exacerbated rather than mitigated by international intervention and concern. This landmark gathering took a major step towards refocusing the world’s attention, making high-quality primary education the cornerstone of its renewed drive to put all children in school. It served to re-establish education at the heart of development.

**Models for girls’ education.** The Jomtien Conference, and the Education For All move-

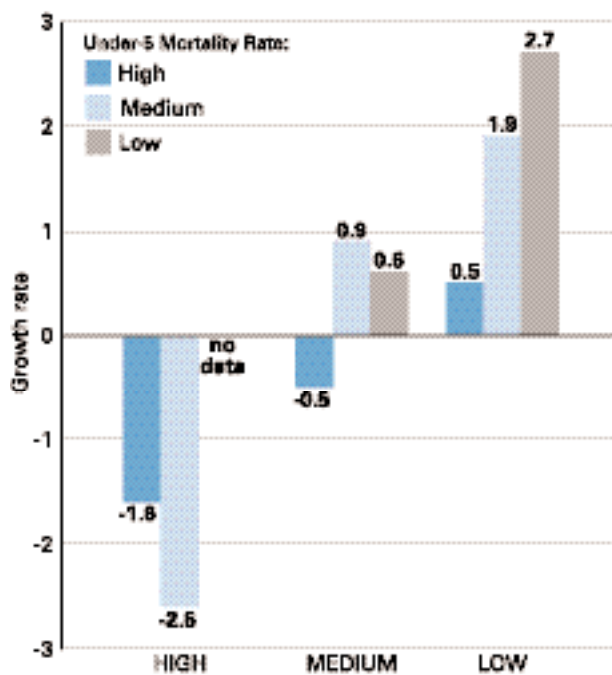
ment that was born of it, recognized the importance of closing the gender gap and of taking special measures to enable girls to go to school and to stay there. In the laudable drive towards education for all, it was assumed that the gender gap would be automatically reduced. In reality, this was not necessarily the case.

The greater attention paid to girls' education throughout the 1990s can be attributed to the intersection of two key movements based on human rights: the child rights movement that gathered steady momentum in the wake of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, and the women's movement, which culminated in the Platform for Action at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, a platform specifically addressed to the needs and rights of girls.

In this sense it has taken until the 21st century for girls' education to receive its due primacy.

#### FIGURE 4 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH BY LEVEL OF INCOME-POVERTY

(Average annual growth rate of per capita income, 1990-2000)



High/medium/low refers to income-poverty level.

Source: UNICEF, 'Synergies, cost-benefit analysis and child policies' (internal publication), UNICEF, Division of Policy and Planning, Global Policy Section, 2003

The academic evidence and programmatic proof of its efficacy had been there for many years, certainly since the late 1980s and early 1990s. But it was only in 2000, at the UN Millennium Summit and the World Education Forum in Dakar, that the push for girls' education moved from the education sector to centre stage.

#### Resistance

Beyond these broad international trends are other factors that have stopped girls' education from garnering the attention it deserves. Local beliefs, cultural practices and attitudes to gender roles, such as whether education improves or reduces a girl's chance of marriage, can undoubtedly hold girls back from school.<sup>23</sup> Cultural resistance is not always consistent in all countries and may vary in specific parts of a country or with specific population groups. What's more, expectations about gender roles differ at different stages of the life cycle, as in many Latin American and Caribbean countries, where there are marked differences between the early years of primary school and late adolescence.

But parents' objections to their daughters going to school are more likely to be on the grounds of safety or economics than out of a belief that girls should not be educated. They may feel that a school is unsafe, or that the journey to school is perilous or too long, putting girls at risk of sexual assault or other forms of violence. Too often their feelings are right on target.

Alternatively, they may believe that sacrificing a daughter's work at home or in the fields would jeopardize family income and survival. For poor families, bearing the opportunity cost of sending a girl to school may not seem economically justifiable in the short term. This is especially the case in societies that have not embraced the idea that women have the right to paid employment or where jobs for educated women are scarce. Decisions about whether to send daughters to school are often taken on the basis of analysing the costs and benefits to the whole family.<sup>24</sup>

In these cases the problem is often more on the supply side – the availability of safe, accessible and girl-friendly schools; employment possibilities for women; educational information for parents – than with any lack of demand for education from families. The proportion of parents who would stand against their daughters being educated, once the benefits had been convincingly explained and the physical or economic barriers at the local or family level had been overcome, would be small indeed. In Sierra Leone, for example, in areas where communities have been trained to work together on issues of common concern, parents, including very poor ones, now send their daughters to school.<sup>25</sup> When the Kenyan Government announced in 2003 that education fees were abolished, the schools were flooded with 1.3 million children and adolescents who had previously been

excluded. Of these, nearly half were girls. (See *Panel on Kenya and school fees, page 35.*)

The sense that the primary problem is not with the lack of demand for education from children and their parents is reinforced by opinion surveys from around the world. According to a recent global survey by the Pew Research Center, 6 in 10 respondents in Latin America and more than one half of Africans see poor schools as a “top national concern.”<sup>26</sup> When the polling organization Gallup International interviewed more than 50,000 people in 60 countries, 86 per cent of those surveyed rejected the suggestion that education was more important for boys than girls.<sup>27</sup> In the same vein, a recent World Bank comparative study of 23 countries carried moving testimonies from parents in poor families strug-

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gling with the decision as to whether to invest in their children's education – and from others already making heartbreaking sacrifices in order to do so.<sup>28</sup>

An extensive UNICEF survey of children and adolescents in East Asia and the Pacific asked those not attending school for their reasons. Only 19 per cent responded that they did not want to go to school or did not like school. Some 22 per cent had stopped school so they could work. While 43 per cent reported being out of school due to lack of money, 22 per cent cited the necessity of helping at home and 4 per cent said there was simply no school available.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, by far the most popular priority in the *Say Yes for Children* campaign, which amassed nearly 95 million votes of support

from adults and children worldwide from 2001 to 2002, was “Educate every child.”

Given this demand from the grass roots, the main ‘cultural resistance’ may be the reluctance of national and international policy makers to make education a priority and to implement measures that have been shown to work on the ground. The special situation of girls and women has traditionally been ‘invisible’ to predominantly male policy makers and girls’ education as an issue is only now being brought into the light. In some powerful quarters there will still be overt discrimination and determined resistance to the idea of giving girls an equal chance. Many politicians, administrators or aid officials who pay lip service to the principles of gender equality remain uncomfortable with pro-

## PANEL 4

# The ‘karate girls’ of Bihar, India

The connection between karate and girls’ education in Bihar – one of India’s most challenging States in terms of human development indicators – is not immediately evident. But for 18-year-old Lalita Kumari the two have come together to change her life. It started while she was attending the local Jagjagi or ‘Awakening’ centre; a day school for girls aged 9 to 15 and women from disadvantaged communities who have either not completed or never attended primary school. The centre offers lessons in basic literacy and numeracy six days a week for four hours a day. Learning materials are gender-sensitive and specially geared to local conditions and problems such as health, legal aid, women’s issues and the environment.

One day Lalita was asked if she’d like to attend an eight-month course

at the Mahila Shiksan Kendra, a residential education centre for semi-literate women and adolescent girls. The centre offers basic education and life skills training, and the possibility of continuing to secondary level. The course aims to be holistic, and emphasizes the need for a positive self-image. Girls are trained to develop analytical skills to help them in personal and social situations. On completion of the course, the girls return to their villages and record in a diary their experiences as they try to apply their new skills in their lives. The main purpose is to develop a pool of highly motivated rural women to assume leadership roles in their communities.

Lalita jumped at the chance that was offered her but her father opposed her going on the grounds that girls should stay at home. He also

strongly objected to the teaching of karate as part of the course; he thought this would spoil her name in society.

Lalita hails from a caste traditionally looked down upon as ‘unclean’; so the women at Mahila Shiksan Kendra stressed the hygiene-education aspects of the course, presenting it as an opportunity to rid her family of any stigma. Her father was won over and Lalita eventually graduated in 2001, having reached grade 5, though her aim is to complete her education up to grade 10.

“I was doing nothing but cutting grass, fetching firewood, cleaning and cooking,” says Lalita of her life before the course. “Today I teach karate to batches of 40 girls in four Mahila Shiksan Kendra in Bihar and Jharkhand.”

grammes that have a specific gender focus, and passively fail to implement them.

Any drive to get all girls into school has to be sensitive to the local context. It has to squarely face up to the realities of gender discrimination, wherever it exists. 'Traditional culture' is often used as an excuse to explain why expected results in girls' education have not been achieved.<sup>30</sup> Increasingly, that excuse does not stand up to scrutiny.

## Poverty's double edge for girls

A recent report on the extent and depth of child poverty in the developing world<sup>31</sup> found there to be some 135 million children between 7 and 18 years old without any education at all, with girls 60 per cent more likely than boys (16

per cent compared with 10 per cent) to be so 'educationally deprived' (see *Figure 5: Double jeopardy*). Practically all children who are deprived of an education also suffer other deprivations. Thus, the stark disparity between genders relative to education translates into the probability that girls are more likely than boys to endure other manifestations of poverty, such as being deprived of food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter or information.

What's more, although the gender disparity in education is apparent for both the poor and non-poor alike, it is significantly greater for children living in poverty (12 per cent of boys and 17 per cent of girls) than for those living above the poverty threshold (3 per cent of boys and 5 per cent of girls). Thus, girls are in dou-

This sense of empowerment is fundamental to the success of the Mahila Samakhya (usually translated as 'Education for Women's Equality') programme, which since 1992 has been an integral part of the Bihar Education Project. When the project was launched Bihar had, at 23 per cent, the lowest female literacy rate in the country, a figure that has since risen to 34 per cent. Mahila Samakhya, which now covers 2,063 villages in 10 districts of Bihar, recognizes the central role education can play in promoting equality for women. It aims to change not only women's ideas about themselves, but also society's notions about their traditional role.

At the core of the Mahila Samakhya strategy in Bihar is the local women's group. There are now over 2,000 of these with a total of more than 50,000 members. Their activities might range from helping families meet their daily basic needs to seeking influence in the political sphere. Among the successes of these groups over the past decade have been an increased demand for liter-

acy among adult women; greater recognition and visibility for women within their families and communities; and the election of hundreds of women to the local government bodies, the Panchayati Raj.

One of the prime concerns of the women's groups is how to ensure educational opportunities for their children, especially their daughters, and the centres offer girls – almost all from disadvantaged groups officially notified by the Indian government as 'scheduled castes' or 'scheduled tribes' – a fast track not only to education but to empowerment. Girls in these centres learn how to take decisions, assume leadership and develop collective strategies to change their own destinies. At some centres this involves learning karate or some other sport as part of a holistic curriculum.

Lalita describes her joy in teaching karate. "Initially the girls are nervous that they might break a leg so I reassure them that they will be safe. Gradually they get into the swing of things and they say that they want

to be strong like me. This makes me feel really happy."

Lalita's four older brothers strongly oppose her teaching karate and think it is high time she got married. Thankfully, her father is today her biggest supporter and approves of the way she manages her life. She behaves, he says, far better than any of his other children. Lalita now even travels alone by bus between the four Mahila Shiksan Kendras where she teaches.

"There have been instances on the bus where men have tried to push me out of my seat and even threatened me not knowing that I am a karate blue belt," she says. "Karate has been useful in making sure I get my seat back!"

ble jeopardy: because of their gender and because of their poverty.

### The alternative: A human rights, multisectoral model for development

There is an alternative approach to development that will allow girls their right to education, meet the commitments of the international community and maximize the multiplier effects of investing in girls' education – a human rights, multisectoral model.

### Human rights

The successful efforts to have the United Nations adopt such an approach were led by UNICEF, whose work and mission are based on two fundamental human rights treaties: The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Since 1996, UNICEF has been guided by the principles of these two treaties, linking the rights of children with the rights of women in all its programmes of cooperation.

Within this context, it is understood that children's rights cannot be realized nationally or globally without addressing discrimination in all its forms, especially the specific situation of girls and gender-based discrimination. And further, when the human rights principles of universality, equality, non-discrimination and participation are applied in economic approaches to development, the result is more equitable, democratic and sustainable growth for all.

### Multisectoral

Many, some would say most, of the obstacles that keep girls from enjoying their right to complete their education are found far from the school room. In towns without access to water, in communities sieged by HIV/AIDS, and in families caught in poverty's grip, girls are often kept at home to fetch daily rations, care for siblings or serve as domestic workers. In the face of such challenging realities, no new curriculum,

gender-sensitive lesson plan or culturally appropriate textbooks will get them to school.

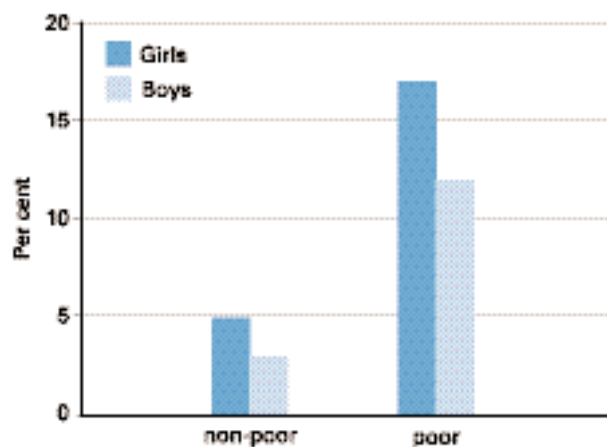
Solutions must come from outside education's standard framework – from an approach that integrates planning and action across multiple sectors. For example, interventions in health and nutrition, although initially designed to improve a child's chances of survival and sound development, will also contribute to better performance in school. Providing school meals will improve a child's nutrition, and also provide an incentive for youngsters to enter and stay in school. Logically and inevitably, a multisectoral approach will yield the greatest results for girls' education.

### Promise

The Millennium Development Goals have set a seal on this more rights-based, multifaceted, human-centred vision of development. As one of their principal foundations, the Goals link progress on education, health, poverty relief and the environment with girls' right to equality in schooling. Now this new approach and these Goals hold promise for the lives of girls and the fate of nations.

FIGURE 5 DOUBLE JEOPARDY

% of children age 7–18 who have never been to school of any kind



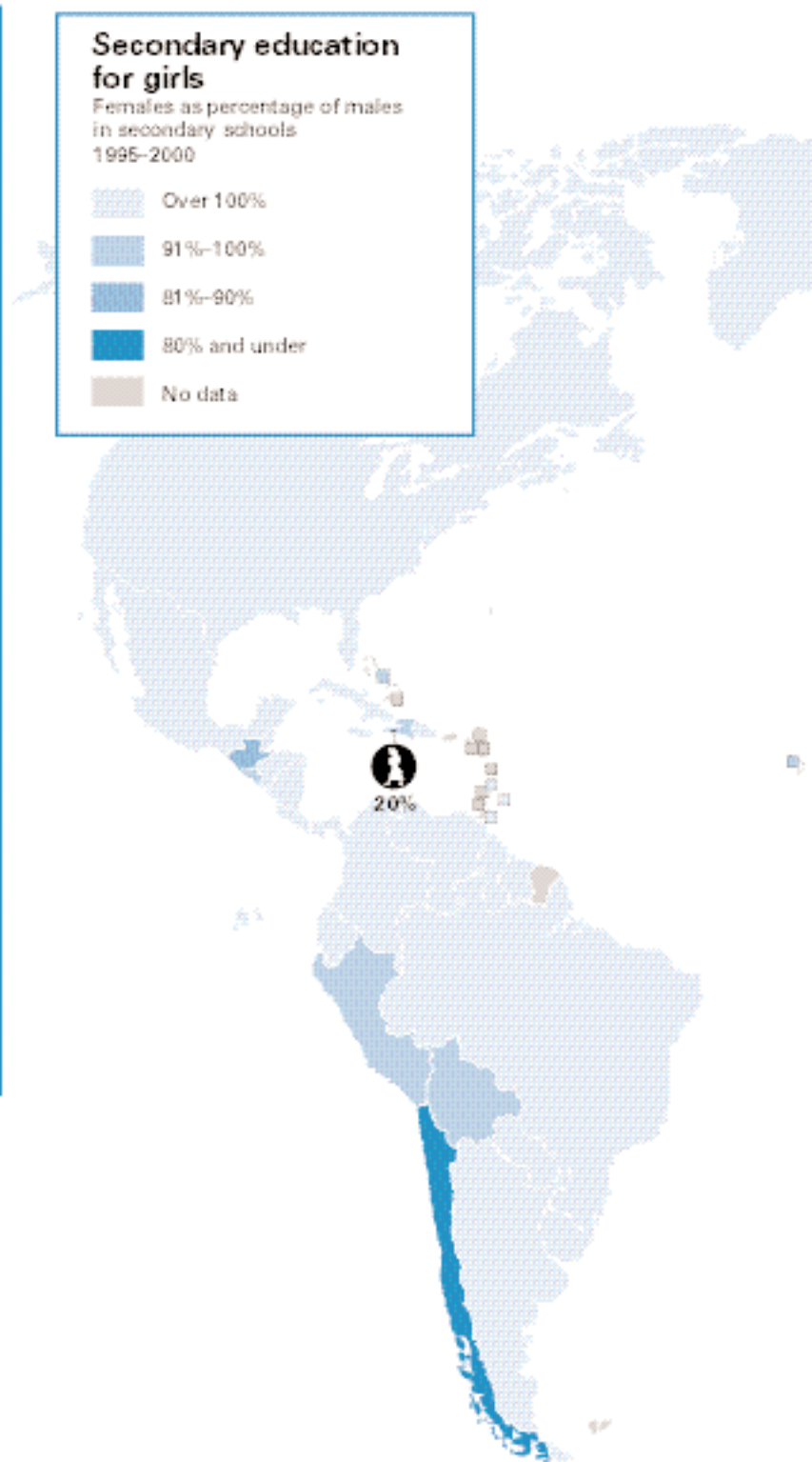
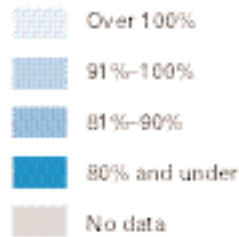
Source: Gordon, D., et al., 'The Distribution of Child Poverty in the Developing World: Report to UNICEF' (final draft), Centre for International Poverty Research, University of Bristol, Bristol, July 2003.

## Millennium Development Goals

Gender equality in education and women's empowerment are critical to achieving universal primary education. When school doors swing open for girls, both boys and girls walk through.

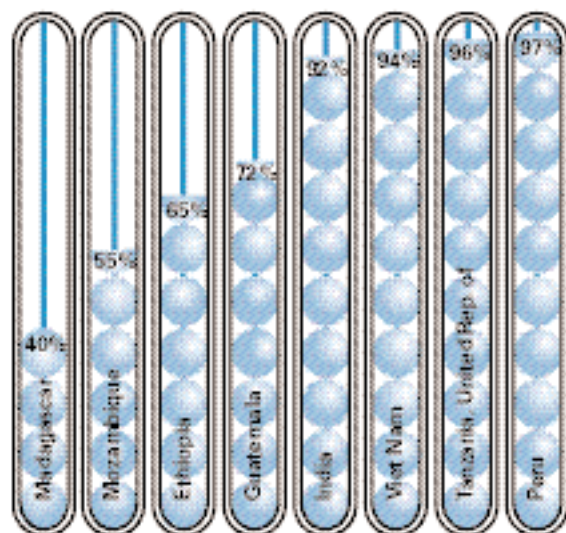
## Secondary education for girls

Females as percentage of males in secondary schools  
1995-2000



## Primary school achievement

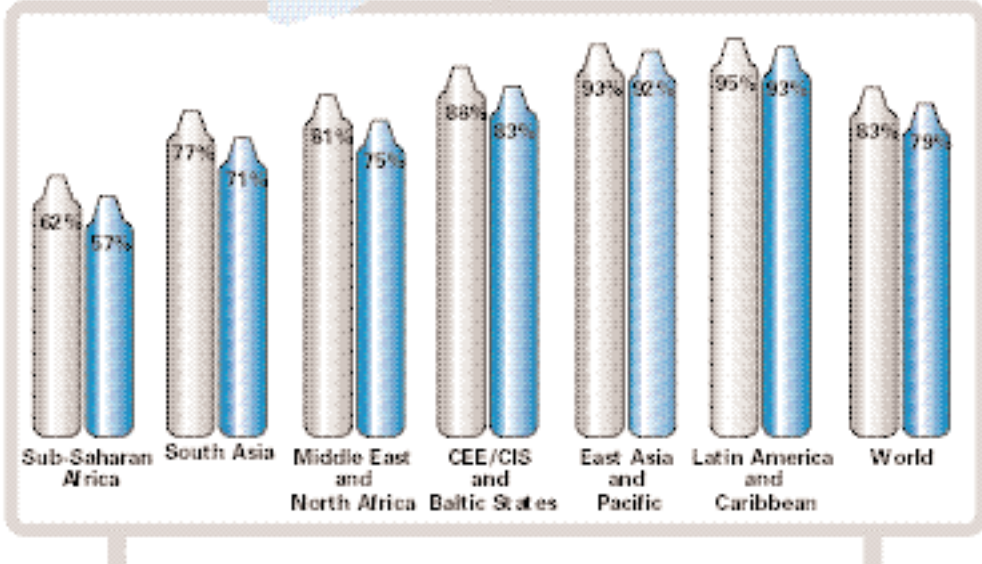
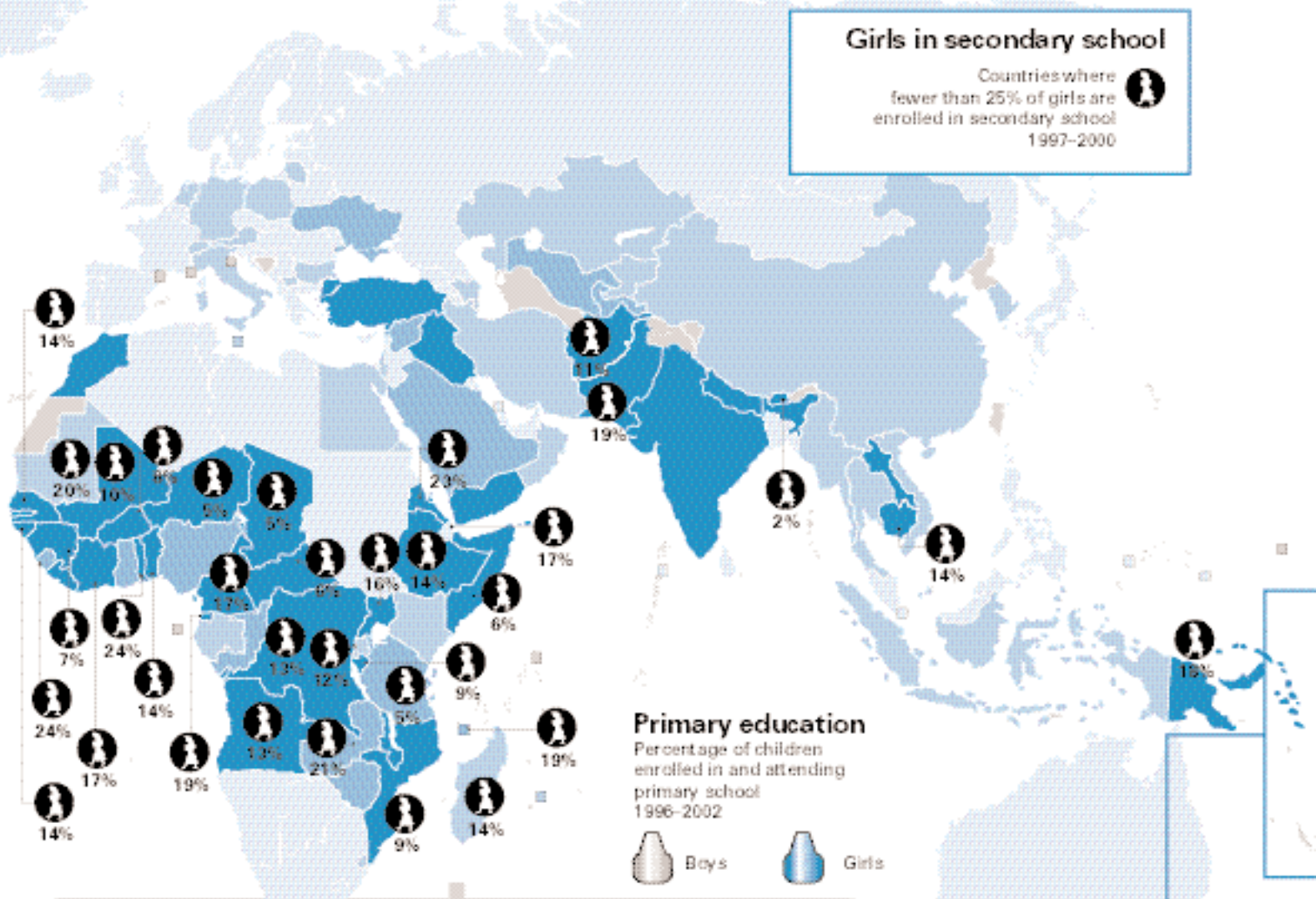
Percentage of children entering primary school who reach grade 5  
Survey data 1995-2001  
Selected countries



# ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

## Girls in secondary school

Countries where fewer than 25% of girls are enrolled in secondary school 1997-2000



This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Dotted lines represent approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.