



THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2004

BEST PRACTICES

UNICEF and its partners are working towards achieving gender parity in education and universal primary education. Programmes to improve girls' primary school enrolment and completion rates have paid dividends for boys and girls, their families, communities and nations. The variety and scope of UNICEF's programmes and approaches illustrate the need to be flexible and responsive to community needs. With its partners, UNICEF is matching interventions to the needs and goals of the populations they serve. Some examples of successful measures to improve girls' education are described below.

Afghanistan – The Back to School campaign has allowed 4 million children to enrol in school – 1 million of whom are girls. The Afghanistan government worked with local communities, non-governmental organizations and the international community to rebuild a school system left in ruin by two decades of war. Back to School, a UNICEF-supported initiative begun in 2001, has helped repair hundreds of school buildings, provide safe water and sanitation facilities, and supply more than 8,500 tents to be used as temporary classrooms.

Bangladesh – Schools for the hard to reach, using the BRAC model, run for two hours each day, six days a week, and are attracting children who would otherwise have no chance to receive a basic education. With total enrolment now at about 1.2 million, the majority of whom are girls, and an overwhelmingly female faculty, the programme is a success.

Bhutan – 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. 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 to 6 per cent in

2000. The drop-out rate for both boys and girls has also decreased significantly from 8 per cent in 1995 to 4 per cent in 1999.

Bolivia – UNICEF has supported training of 13,500 teachers through a Bilingual Intercultural Education programme. This programme has been adopted as a national policy and is now fully integrated into the country's education system. A National Plan for Literacy and Production has been created and piloted by UNICEF. More than 2,400 literacy centres are operating, reaching 120,000 people.

Brazil – The Bolsa Escola initiative to promote education and counter child labour has been so successful that it has been taken up on a national scale and is currently being applied in sub-Saharan Africa. Poor families that agree to keep their 7- to 14-year-old children in school and record at least 90 per cent attendance receive a minimum monthly salary.

Ecuador – Under the Beca Escolar scheme, introduced when an economic crisis led 20 per cent of the poorest families in the country to withdraw their children from school, girls are given priority access to scholarships. In 2002, Beca Escolar benefited 105,000 children, and it is being extended to 300,000 children in 2003.

Egypt – 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 and pledged to end the gender gap by the year 2007 – by reaching more than half a million out-of-school girls. A national task force has been established, involving more than a dozen government ministries along with non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, with the aim of establishing 3,000 girl-friendly schools in 2003.

India – The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Government of India's policy statement on universal elementary education, was announced in 2001. It aims to promote quality, community-based education and recognizes that education should be made useful and relevant by improving the curriculum, focusing on child-centred activities, investing in teacher training, and developing effective and innovative teaching aids and strategies. The initiative focuses on children from socially vulnerable and economically marginal groups, including girls, and promotes 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.

Kenya – In response to a new policy abolishing school fees, more than 1.3 million children entered school for the first time in 2003. The national primary school enrolment leapt from 5.9 million to 7.2 million pupils. Textbooks and other school supplies were provided to help disadvantaged children make a successful transition to school.

Morocco – According to a 2001 Ministry of Economic Provision and Planning survey, about 23,000 girls were employed as maids in the Grand Casablanca region, some 60 per cent of them under age 15. Since 2001, in partnership with local non-governmental organizations, and supported by the Wilaya of Casablanca, UNICEF has helped these girls receive an education and basic health care.

Myanmar – The School-Based Healthy Living and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education programme is taught to children from grades 2 to 9 as part of the standard curriculum. It focuses on a range of health and social issues, such as HIV/AIDS, personal hygiene, nutrition and drugs, through activities designed to develop life skills. 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.

Turkey – Local learning centres have been so successful that the Turkish Ministry of Education has adopted the open primary school as a model for its girls' education strategy. The open primary schools, which were set up to enrol girls normally confined to the home, aim to give a second chance to girls who have not completed their compulsory primary schooling – as well as to release them from the burden of domestic work in their own families.

United Republic of Tanzania – The Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania programme serves an estimated 3 million overage 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. The project has been introduced into the formal education system to serve all overage children and adolescents who will not be eligible to enter the school system under new rules that stipulate age as a condition for entry.

Zambia – The Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education was piloted in 1995 in 20 schools. By 2002, it had been taken to scale, operating in over 1,000 schools in all 72 districts. Using 12 'interactive interventions', the programme seeks to promote female role models, improve the effectiveness of classroom practices, and enhance girls' access to a quality education.