



THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2004

SEVEN STEPS FORWARD

The 65 million girls out of school will never command the world's attention in the same way that a war will, but their plight is nonetheless an emergency. Leaders from all levels of society must take the following practical, urgent steps:

- 1. Include girls' education as an essential component of development efforts**, ensuring that human rights principles inform economic development programmes, and explicitly protecting girls' access to public services. Focus on 'equality of outcome' as well as equality of opportunity, and respect the right of children and their families to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.
- 2. Create a national ethos for girls' education** so that communities are as scandalized and concerned about girls kept out of school as they are about boys and girls more visibly exploited at work. Governments must routinely and publicly report the number of out-of-school girls, and they should monitor and expand successful girls' education projects. Countries should consider an education tax or commodities surcharge to be used exclusively to get girls or boys into school until gender parity is achieved.
- 3. Allow no school fees of any kind.** All primary schools must be free, universal and compulsory, and parents must have a choice in the kind of education their children receive. All primary school fees and charges must be immediately abolished.
- 4. Think both outside and inside the 'education box'**, integrating education policies into national plans for poverty reduction and scaling up programmes that work. Countries should take action on girls' education by promoting anti-discrimination laws, improved water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, gender-sensitive early childhood programmes, and efforts to reduce violence and protect children from abuse.
- 5. Establish schools as centres of community development**, particularly for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and for children living in conflict and emergency situations. Schools – proven to be the most efficient and cost-effective means of protecting youth from HIV infection – must become the centre of efforts to combat the disease and other threats to the survival of children and young people.
- 6. Integrate country strategies** at three levels: investments, policies and institutions; service delivery; and conceptual frameworks, namely of the economic and human rights approaches.
- 7. Increase international funding for education**, directing 10 per cent of official aid to basic education, with programmes that benefit girls as the first priority. Industrialized countries must make good on their commitment to give at least 0.7 per cent of gross national product in aid, and at least 0.15 per cent to the least developed countries.