

Do girls risk missing out on school when women work?

Although increasing numbers of women are entering the workforce, their expanded participation is not always matched by an improvement in children's welfare. The need for substitute caregivers while mothers are at work places many children – most often girls – at risk of being kept out of or dropping out of school in order to care for younger siblings or perform household work, or both. The universally recognized rights of children to play, to receive an education and to be cared for by both parents are at risk, with negative implications for their well-being and future economic status. Evidence of these trends is consistent across many developing countries.

A recent survey in Nepal shows that eldest daughters tend to be at greatest risk of being withdrawn from school to help their working mothers take care of younger siblings and to assume household responsibilities. Evidence from the United Republic of Tanzania indicates that a lack of childcare facilities forces parents to take their children to work or pass on childcare responsibilities to their elder siblings. Increasing female employment in Peru has resulted in children, particularly girls, dedicating more time to household activities. Similarly, in countries in South-East Asia, as more mothers work outside the home, the

increased need for childcare is met by older children, aunts and grandmothers, who often become the primary caregivers of young children in rural areas.

See References, page 88.