

**WORKING PAPER SERIES**

**LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS  
FROM GIRLS' EDUCATION  
ACTIVITIES: A SYNTHESIS  
FROM EVALUATIONS**

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## **Lessons and Implications from Girls Education Activities**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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# LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM GIRLS' EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Introduction*

**UNICEF identifies full and equal access to and completion of education for girls as part of its core commitment to ensure basic education of good quality to all children.** Both require advocacy and action, indicating two broad strategies aimed at enhancing girls' participation: interventions to integrate gender equality into the mainstream of overall education policy and programming; and more focussed affirmative action interventions.

**This report provides a synthesis of issues and insights relevant to both of these objectives.** The findings were identified through a review of evaluations conducted of a set of UNICEF-funded projects and programmes in support of girls' education, situated within the broader context of its support to basic education. Twenty-three evaluations<sup>1</sup> of projects from Asia, Africa and Latin America and undertaken during the past decade were analysed. The reviewed materials cover more or less readily available evaluations that met minimum standards. As many good projects may not have been evaluated at all or their evaluations were not available or judged of sufficient quality, the materials do not reflect the full range of UNICEF supported activities in girls' education.

### *National Policies*

**National policy systems continue to be critical in determining whether girls go to school and how well they succeed there.** The messages from the review focus on the fundamentals of recognising, accepting and systematically enforcing at all levels the right of girls to be in schools and to learn there. Most specifically, they reinforce the importance of the following elements:

- **Good coordination within Ministries of Education and with other government agencies and sectors** (particularly those of national finance, economic and social development planning, and health);
- **Education systems capable of addressing deficiencies in the training, supervision and compensation of teachers**, leading to higher professional morale and commitment;

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<sup>1</sup>The evaluations are listed in Annex 1

- **Stronger, more coherent, systems for monitoring and evaluation as means of bringing data on educational inequity for girls to senior policy attention and to generate public demand for change.**

**The gender focus needs to be made explicit in national systems.** Inclusive education for girls requires moving with greater energy towards seamless integration of different types of educational provision and methods of learning and providing equitable public resources to a wide range of approaches, including non-formal programmes and community schools. **Developing bridging strategies, which allow girls who drop out of school, or never attend, to come back and be part of a recognised national programme is fundamental to realising Education for All objectives.**

**There is a need to strengthen linkages between gender-affirmative action and overall national education reform as well as inter-sector collaboration.** Outcomes in realising girls' education prove to be more sustained and comprehensive where multi-sector effort reduces broad exclusionary forces against girls/women and reinforces inter-sector collaboration in areas of health, family income security, child protection and care.

**A national perspective is needed to enable a broad understanding of the range of barriers affecting girls' access and persistence.** There are core responsibilities that should be assumed by national governments. At the same time, empowering local communities is vital as a complementary strategy to ensure horizontal collaboration and integration at the local level. **There is, however, a concern that the drive of central governments toward localising responsibility for education is obligating increasing numbers of vulnerable communities to assume responsibilities beyond their capacity.**

### *Schools*

**The traditional school remains the core expression of a nation's commitment to children's education.** This is irrespective of efforts to create opportunities for learning at a distance, in non-formal settings and using technological alternatives. **The physical accessibility and safety of the school, its sense of psycho-social security and the quality and relevance of its pedagogy are fundamental in determining its status as a welcoming learning environment.** These criteria determine whether and how any child, and especially girls, will participate. The review yielded the following findings and lessons in this regard:

- The vocabulary of the **child-friendly school** as such was not yet strongly developed at the time of most of the evaluated projects. Nevertheless, **the underlying principle of schools needing to be more welcoming and supportive to girls is certainly evident as an "assumed" fundamental condition of their participation.**

- **A key such quality concerns the language of instruction.** All children are losing where the language they face in the classroom is foreign, typically delivered by teachers of cultures other than their own. Girls continue to be especially vulnerable, as they often have less exposure to a social environment beyond their immediate families and thus tend to deal with the unfamiliar with less self-confidence.
- **School infrastructure is another "friendliness" factor.** Girls tend to be first to respond by non-participation to an insecure personal environment, insufficient or broken furniture, unsafe or unhealthy buildings and a lack of potable water and good sanitation facilities. **Attention to these dimensions continues to be seen as an important condition for securing girls' attendance, although not the defining ones. Provision of adequate infrastructure is not enough to keep them in schools where teaching is poor and they do not learn.**
- **Teachers remain clearly important for creating and maintaining schools that proactively welcome girls.** They ensure their best learning performance and enhance their life-skills. They are indispensable especially to provide the interface between the family and the wider society.
- **Teacher support and supervision are essential in this regard.** Rarely do education systems have sufficient technical resources to make formal supervision viable on its own. Teacher-to-teacher professional linkages, especially among female teachers, is being recognised as probably the only way for sustained support to quality teaching.
- **Providing opportunities for girls to support and encourage one another is similarly proving an effective way to sustain participation.** Especially important in the case of the more at-risk girls is facilitating their adaptation into the culture of the school. In the early grades most specifically, girl-girl mentoring is suggested as having a positive effect in keeping girls in school, one perhaps more powerful than scholarships.
- **Incentives remain a key issue in girls' education interventions.** They are assumed to be an effective way to assist girls and their families overcome especially the cost barriers to participation. There is, for example, an indication of risk in concentrating on incentives only, and, in consequence, the failure to ensure a sufficiently comprehensive view of exclusionary pressures in the system or for the child.
- Schools, like national systems, are generally weak in monitoring the status of children within the scope of their responsibility, including both those who are enrolled and those who are not. **There is a need to train local education staff to collect and monitor local data on the progress of girls' education in their localities.**

## *Families and Communities*

**The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises families as the first and most important determinants of the protection and development of children.** Education systems and schools may push girls out through inadequate conditions, but it is in families - especially through mothers - that decisions are made and resources allocated to send them in the first place. For this reason, education systems and schools must support families and communities in coming to accept children's right to education and in finding ways of enabling girls to benefit from it. The review generated the following findings and lessons in this regard:

- Marginalized families have to find an appropriate balance among often conflicting values, priorities and perceptions in contexts of restrictive traditional cultures, subsistence-level resources and unsupportive societies. **Local participation, as a concept and a strategy, is recognised by most interventions as key to ensuring relevance and acceptability girls' education. Families and communities are being more often included as core players in action, which effectively brings girls to school.**
- **Genuine change in attitudes and actions on the part of schools and education policies to improve supply are proving effective in altering the weight parents give to girls' schooling.** Enhanced infrastructure, accessibility and teaching quality, coupled with broad public advocacy for gender equality and local employment generation, can serve to reduce disincentives.
- School-family collaboration is proving especially critical for girls' enrolment and persistence since barriers to their participation are rarely based in the school or family alone. **Problems of early marriage and pregnancy are prime examples of the need to involve girls, their families and the school in joint analysis and action.** All those responsible for girls' well-being should be supported in finding ways to help them balance home, child-care and academic responsibilities.
- **Of particular potential in facilitating this capacity for participation at the local level are the increasing efforts being made to engage women (mothers, teachers, community neighbours) as advocates and role models for girls' education.**

## *Priorities, Strategies and Mechanisms of Intervention*

*The evaluations indicate and imply suggestions for best practice in focusing and managing interventions for girls' education. The review summarises the lessons learned from the reviewed evaluations, but also draws on the wider body of global knowledge*

*about girls' education in order to define priorities, strategies and mechanisms of intervention:*

- **It is important and appropriate for interventions to concentrate on the most excluded and, within these, give priority to gender equality and girls' participation. At the same time, such actions are stronger where they seek to improve the quality and accessibility of education for all children as a matter of their right and society's obligation.** For example, national campaigns to remove regulations against pregnant girls in school or requiring schools to have proper sanitary facilities have more lasting effect when incorporated into broader policies aimed at opening schools to any child facing special challenges and constraints to access and persistence.
- **There is a need to take a holistic perspective.** Interventions for girls are stronger, where they strengthen capacities of all levels (national policy, school and community environments) to understand and remove the barriers excluding girls by promoting linkages in ways that lead to joint action. This is particularly true when dealing with emerging issues, e.g. HIV / AIDS on the education of girls.
- **Capacity building and institutional changes are vital.** All those involved have to seize the opportunity to learn. This involves acquiring, practising and adapting the new attitudes, behaviours and mechanisms of collaboration and tailored action implied by concepts of inclusive and girl-friendly education. The challenge is to translate the ideas of equity into roles as parents, teachers, and education officers. It is also essential to ensure responsiveness and adaptation to variable and largely unpredictable environments. Success will in many cases depend on a small number of highly motivated individuals or small groups, who will act as change agents and catalyse action and encourage persistence.
- **There is a need to balance the need for interventions at the national policy and bureaucracy level and more comprehensive and sustained action at the school and community and family levels.** Lasting impact on girls' participation is limited where local initiatives are not accompanied by attention to national policies in education itself and in related sectors. National advocacy and policy should simultaneously address issues of equity in economic and social development, links between education and work as well as management capacity within the bureaucracy for supporting effective teaching and producing relevant curriculum.
- **Linkages are critical at all points in the system if gender equality is to be realised. Bridging between formal and non-formal approaches, e.g. community schools, is required to create a sufficiently complete education provision.** Various forms of education should be considered as complementary rather than parallel to the formal education and benefit from

public support. Programmes based on ownership and implementation at local levels can then provide quality teachers, relevant curriculum and safe conditions.

- **The focus of interaction and synergy for girls' education will necessarily be the school.** While schools are perhaps the most tangible expression of a community's expectations and hopes for its children's development, they are also the operational arm of national policy and bureaucracy systems. Schools need support in being able to engage with both the family / community and the bureaucracy / policy levels. Interventions need to establish key linkages through teacher training and supervision systems and curriculum development. Such systemic support is especially important in the context of new gender policies, which may require teachers to change behaviours that are part of their traditions and culture.
- **Interventions must understand and work within the decision-making processes and criteria that families use in determining their daughters' education and learning.** Because families vary greatly in terms of social, economic and cultural context, and in the experiences they have had with schools, projects succeed where they are able to recognise the differences and act accordingly in building on the strengths and mitigating impediments. Most especially, intervenors must acknowledge the "ethics of intervention". They need explicitly to engage in partnership with families and communities in ways, which protect their culture, their psychosocial well being and their economic security.

### *Conclusions*

**There has been evident progress in girls' education, especially in enhancing their access, persistence and success.** On the basis of the evaluations reviewed here, it is, however, difficult to determine how lasting the progress is likely to be. Moreover, uncertainties remain as to what a gender-sensitive approach means in practice, particularly in different cultures. **The overall conclusion of this review is that projects and programmes are most successful where they facilitate capacities and create mechanisms to enable participation and foster linkages.**

# LEÇONS ET PORTÉE DES ACTIVITÉS EN FAVEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION DES FILLES RESUME ANALYTIQUE

## *Introduction*

**L'engagement pris par l'UNICEF pour garantir à tous les enfants une éducation de base de bonne qualité repose sur une conviction centrale : il faut veiller à ce que les filles aient libre accès à l'éducation, sur un pied d'égalité avec les garçons, et à ce qu'elles puissent achever leurs études.** À cette fin, des activités de plaidoyer et des actions concrètes sont nécessaires. Deux grandes stratégies se dégagent pour améliorer la participation des filles : intégrer l'égalité des sexes aux politiques en matière d'éducation et aux programmes scolaires ; et mener des interventions davantage axées sur l'action palliative.

**Ce rapport présente une synthèse des questions et des réflexions sur ce double objectif.** Ses conclusions ont été formulées à la suite d'un bilan sur l'évaluation d'une série de projets et de programmes en faveur de l'éducation des filles financés par l'UNICEF, dans le cadre de son soutien à l'éducation de base. Vingt-trois évaluations<sup>2</sup> de projets menés en Asie, en Afrique et en Amérique latine pendant les dix dernières années ont été analysées. Les documents examinés portent sur des évaluations plus ou moins disponibles et conformes à des normes minima. Cependant, compte tenu du fait que de nombreux projets valides n'ont pas été évalués ou que leur évaluation n'était pas disponible ou qu'elle n'a pas été jugée de qualité suffisante, ces documents ne reflètent pas la totalité des activités soutenues par l'UNICEF en faveur de l'éducation des filles.

## *Politiques nationales*

**Les politiques nationales restent essentielles pour déterminer le taux de scolarisation et de réussite scolaire des filles.** Les conclusions du bilan soulignent qu'il importe au plus haut point de reconnaître, d'accepter et de défendre systématiquement à tous les niveaux le droit des filles à aller à l'école et à apprendre. Certains éléments clés ont été définis, à savoir :

- **Une bonne coordination avec les ministères de l'éducation et autres agences et secteurs du gouvernement** (notamment ceux des finances, de la planification du développement économique et social et de la santé) ;

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<sup>2</sup>Les évaluations sont reproduites à l'annexe 1

- **Des systèmes éducatifs en mesure de remédier aux insuffisances en matière de formation, supervision et rémunération des enseignants, afin d'améliorer leur moral et leur niveau d'engagement ;**
- **Des systèmes de contrôle et d'évaluation plus fiables et plus cohérents permettant d'appeler l'attention des responsables de haut niveau sur l'accès inégal des filles à l'éducation et de susciter une volonté de changement de la part du public.**

**Une approche sexospécifique doit être clairement encouragée dans les systèmes d'éducation nationaux.** L'intégration des filles à l'école exige des efforts plus énergiques pour introduire sans heurts différents types de mesures éducatives et de méthodes d'apprentissage. Il convient aussi d'octroyer des ressources publiques équitables à un large éventail de stratégies, y compris des programmes non traditionnels et des écoles communautaires. **L'élaboration de stratégies passerelles qui permettent aux filles qui ont abandonné l'école d'y retourner, et à celles qui n'y sont jamais allées de s'y inscrire pour la première fois, et d'adhérer à un programme national reconnu est essentielle pour atteindre l'objectif de l'éducation pour tous.**

**Il est impératif de lier plus étroitement l'action palliative en faveur des filles à la réforme de l'éducation nationale, ainsi qu'à la collaboration intersectorielle.** Les initiatives en faveur de l'éducation des filles s'avèrent plus durables et plus complètes lorsque plusieurs secteurs s'unissent pour s'opposer aux forces d'exclusion des fillettes /femmes et renforcent leur collaboration dans des domaines tels que la santé, la sécurité du revenu des familles et la protection et les soins aux enfants.

**Une perspective nationale est nécessaire pour mieux comprendre tout ce qui limite l'accès des filles à l'éducation et les empêche de rester à l'école.** Certaines responsabilités de base incombent aux gouvernements. En même temps, il est essentiel de rendre les communautés locales autonomes afin d'assurer la collaboration horizontale et l'intégration au niveau local. **Il est toutefois à craindre que la tendance des gouvernements centraux à la décentralisation oblige un nombre croissant de communautés vulnérables à assumer des responsabilités qui excèdent leurs capacités.**

### *Écoles*

**L'école traditionnelle reste l'expression fondamentale de l'engagement d'une nation en matière d'éducation des jeunes,** et ceci indépendamment des efforts déployés pour créer des possibilités d'enseignement à distance, dans des cadres non traditionnels et à l'aide de nouvelles techniques. **La facilité d'accès à l'école, sur un plan concret, l'environnement sans risque qu'elle représente, le sentiment de sécurité psychosociale qu'elle engendre et la qualité et la pertinence de ses méthodes pédagogiques sont essentiels pour en faire un milieu d'apprentissage accueillant.** Ces critères définissent les conditions et les modalités de la participation des enfants,

notamment des filles. À cet égard, le bilan a permis de formuler les conclusions suivantes:

- L'expression « **école amie des enfants** » n'avait pas encore cours au moment où la plupart des projets ont été évalués. Néanmoins, **le principe sous-jacent selon lequel les écoles doivent être plus accueillantes et soutenir davantage les fillettes est évidemment une condition essentielle et préalable de leur participation.**
- **L'importance de la langue utilisée en classe.** Tous les enfants sont désavantagés lorsque l'instruction est faite dans une langue qui n'est pas la leur, généralement par des enseignants issus d'une culture différente. Les filles continuent d'être particulièrement vulnérables car leurs contacts au-delà du cercle familial immédiat sont souvent plus limités, ce qui les prive de confiance en elles dans une telle situation.
- **Les infrastructures scolaires sont aussi un facteur de « convivialité ».** Les filles ont tendance à ne pas participer lorsque le cadre d'apprentissage compromet leur sécurité personnelle, que le mobilier est insuffisant ou en mauvais état, que les locaux sont dangereux et insalubres et que l'eau potable et des installations sanitaires adéquates font défaut. **Quoiqu'ils ne soient pas déterminants, ces facteurs continuent d'être considérés comme une condition importante de la fréquentation scolaire des filles. Mais ces infrastructures ne suffisent pas à elles seules à faire rester les filles à l'école lorsque l'enseignement est médiocre et qu'elles n'apprennent rien.**
- **Les enseignants jouent un rôle évidemment crucial pour créer et gérer des écoles qui accueillent les filles d'une manière dynamique.** Ils garantissent qu'elles apprennent le mieux possible et acquièrent les aptitudes nécessaires pour se préparer à la vie. En particulier, ils sont indispensables pour assurer l'interface entre la famille et la société en général.
- **Les enseignants doivent bénéficier d'une supervision et d'un soutien à cet égard.** Les systèmes d'éducation disposent rarement des ressources techniques suffisantes pour assurer une supervision efficace des enseignants. La création de liens professionnels entre instituteurs, et notamment institutrices, est probablement le seul moyen de soutenir durablement un enseignement de qualité.
- **Offrir aux filles la possibilité de se soutenir et de s'encourager mutuellement est aussi un moyen efficace de favoriser la participation.** Dans le cas des fillettes qui courent le plus de risques, il est impératif de faciliter l'adaptation à la culture de l'école. Pour les plus jeunes élèves, le système du tutorat de fille à fille a été suggéré en raison de son influence positive sur le taux d'abandon scolaire. Cette approche pourrait être plus efficace que l'octroi de bourses.

- **Les mesures d'incitation restent un élément clé des interventions en faveur de l'éducation des filles.** On admet généralement qu'elles sont un moyen efficace d'aider les filles et leur famille à surmonter les obstacles, notamment financiers, qui s'opposent à la scolarisation. Mais on sait aussi qu'en privilégiant uniquement ces mesures, on court le risque de ne pas voir toutes les pressions restrictives qui existent au sein du système ou qui s'exercent contre l'enfant.
- Les écoles, comme les systèmes éducatifs nationaux, éprouvent souvent des difficultés à évaluer la situation des enfants placés sous leur responsabilité, qu'ils soient scolarisés ou pas. **Il est nécessaire de former le personnel local et de rassembler et d'analyser des données locales sur les progrès de l'éducation des filles dans leurs localités.**

### *Familles et communautés*

**La Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant reconnaît que la famille est le premier facteur déterminant de la protection et du développement des enfants.** Les conditions inadéquates des systèmes éducatifs et des écoles contribuent à exclure les filles. Mais c'est avant tout au sein de la famille, notamment à l'instigation de la mère, qu'est prise la décision concernant la scolarisation d'une fillette et les ressources qui y seront allouées. C'est pourquoi les systèmes éducatifs et les écoles doivent encourager les familles et les communautés à reconnaître le droit des enfants à l'éducation et à trouver les moyens qui permettront aux filles d'en bénéficier. À cet égard, le bilan a permis de formuler les conclusions suivantes :

- Les familles marginalisées doivent concilier des valeurs, des priorités et des perceptions souvent conflictuelles alors qu'elles vivent dans des cultures traditionnelles restrictives, des sociétés qui n'offrent aucun soutien, et ont un niveau de ressources tout juste suffisant pour assurer leur subsistance. **La participation locale, aussi bien à titre de notion abstraite que de stratégie, joue un rôle fondamental pour faire accepter l'éducation des filles et montrer son importance. Les familles et les communautés prennent une part croissante aux initiatives d'intervention, ce qui a un effet positif sur l'inscription des filles à l'école.**
- **Une véritable évolution de l'attitude des responsables de l'éducation et des initiatives prises par les écoles pour stimuler la demande peut convaincre les parents de l'utilité de l'éducation des filles.** L'amélioration des infrastructures, de l'accès à l'éducation et de la qualité de l'enseignement contribue à éliminer les obstacles lorsqu'elle s'accompagne d'activités de plaidoyer en faveur de l'égalité des sexes et de la création d'emplois au niveau local.

- Il est impératif que les écoles et les familles collaborent pour obtenir que les fillettes soient inscrites à l'école et y restent. Car le manque d'accès à l'éducation est rarement le fait exclusif des unes ou des autres. **Le mariage et la grossesse précoces sont des exemples qui illustrent parfaitement les raisons pour lesquelles les filles, leur famille et l'école doivent participer à une analyse et une intervention communes.** Toutes les personnes responsables du bien-être des petites filles doivent recevoir un appui pour trouver les moyens de les aider à concilier leurs tâches domestiques et leur travaux scolaires.
- **Les efforts croissants déployés pour inciter les femmes (mères, institutrices, voisines) à soutenir l'éducation des filles et à servir de modèles offrent un potentiel extraordinaire pour renforcer la capacité de participation au niveau local.**

### *Priorités, stratégies et mécanismes d'intervention*

*Les évaluations fournissent des indications et des suggestions qui montrent la meilleure marche à suivre pour promouvoir l'éducation des filles. **Le bilan récapitule les leçons tirées de l'examen des évaluations, mais s'appuie aussi sur des connaissances générales à propos de l'éducation des filles pour définir priorités, stratégies et mécanismes d'intervention :***

- **Les interventions doivent cibler de préférence les plus exclus et, au sein de ce groupe, favoriser en priorité l'égalité des sexes et la participation des filles. En même temps, elles sont plus efficaces lorsqu'elles s'efforcent d'améliorer la qualité de l'éducation et l'accès aux études pour tous les enfants, compte tenu du fait que l'éducation est à la fois un droit des enfants et une obligation de la société.** Par exemple, des campagnes nationales visant à autoriser les filles enceintes à poursuivre leur scolarité ou demandant aux écoles de se doter d'installations sanitaires adéquates ont un effet plus durable lorsqu'elles s'intègrent à des politiques générales axées sur l'ouverture des écoles aux enfants en butte à des difficultés spéciales et la levée des restrictions qui limitent l'accès à l'éducation et la poursuite des études.
- **Il convient d'adopter une perspective globale.** Les interventions en faveur de l'éducation des filles sont plus efficaces lorsqu'elles contribuent à tous les niveaux (politiques nationales, écoles et communautés) à la compréhension et à l'élimination des obstacles et qu'elles favorisent des alliances en vue de mener des actions communes. Cela se vérifie particulièrement probant pour les questions d'actualité telles que les conséquences du VIH /SIDA sur l'éducation des filles.
- **Le renforcement des capacités et les changements institutionnels sont indispensables.** Toutes les parties concernées doivent saisir la possibilité

d'apprendre. Cela signifie acquérir, pratiquer et moduler les attitudes, les comportements et les mécanismes de collaboration et d'action qui découlent d'une éducation ouverte et « amie des fillettes ». Le défi consiste à traduire la notion d'égalité en des rôles concrets pour les parents, les enseignants et les fonctionnaires de l'éducation. Il est aussi essentiel de garantir la capacité de réaction et d'adaptation à des milieux variables et largement imprévisibles. Dans bien des cas, la réussite dépendra d'un petit nombre d'individus ou de petits groupes fortement motivés qui agiront en faveur du changement, seront les moteurs de l'intervention et se battront pour maintenir les activités.

- **Il est impératif d'équilibrer les interventions menées au niveau des politiques nationales et des bureaucraties avec des actions plus complètes et plus soutenues aux niveaux des écoles, des communautés et des familles.** On n'améliorera la participation des filles de manière durable que si les initiatives locales s'accompagnent d'un effort plus général en faveur de l'éducation et des secteurs connexes au niveau des politiques nationales. Les campagnes et les politiques nationales doivent aborder simultanément les questions de l'égalité au sein du développement économique et social, les liens entre l'éducation et le travail et la gestion des capacités au sein de la bureaucratie pour soutenir un enseignement efficace et produire des programmes scolaires adaptés.
- **Il est essentiel de relier entre eux tous les points du système pour promouvoir l'égalité des sexes. Des passerelles doivent être jetées entre l'enseignement de type classique et des méthodes pédagogiques non traditionnelles, comme les écoles communautaires, pour offrir une éducation complète.** Diverses formes d'éducation doivent être considérées comme complémentaires plutôt que parallèles à l'enseignement classique et bénéficier d'un financement public. Des programmes dont le contrôle et la mise en œuvre seront assurés au niveau local pourront alors disposer d'enseignants de qualité, de programmes scolaires adaptés et de conditions de sécurité adéquates.
- **L'école sera obligatoirement le centre de la synergie en faveur de l'éducation des filles.** Tout en étant peut-être l'expression la plus tangible des attentes et des espoirs que nourrit une communauté pour ses enfants, les écoles sont aussi le moyen d'action des politiques nationales et des systèmes bureaucratiques. Les écoles doivent recevoir une aide pour travailler à la fois au niveau des familles et des communautés et au niveau de la bureaucratie et des politiques. Les interventions doivent établir des liens d'importance critique par la formation des enseignants, le contrôle des systèmes et l'élaboration des programmes scolaires. Ce soutien systémique est particulièrement important dans le contexte de nouvelles politiques en matière d'égalité des sexes qui pourraient obliger les enseignants à modifier des attitudes et comportements inhérents à leurs traditions et à leur culture.

- **Les interventions doivent tenir compte du processus de prise de décision et des critères utilisés par les familles pour déterminer le bien-fondé de l'éducation des filles.** Chaque famille existe dans un contexte social, économique et culturel qui lui est propre et a une expérience unique du système scolaire. La réussite des projets dépend donc de la compréhension et de la reconnaissance de ces différences. Les intervenants doivent avant tout respecter une « éthique d'intervention ». Ils doivent explicitement former des partenariats avec les familles et les communautés afin de protéger leur culture, leur bien-être psychosocial et leur sécurité économique.

### *Conclusions*

**Des progrès manifestes ont été accomplis en matière d'éducation des filles, notamment en ce qui concerne l'accès à l'enseignement, la poursuite des études et la réussite scolaire.** Sur la base des évaluations examinées ici, il est toutefois difficile de se rendre compte si ces progrès seront durables. En outre, des incertitudes demeurent à propos des répercussions concrètes d'une stratégie axée sur l'égalité des sexes, notamment dans des cultures différentes. **La conclusion générale de cette analyse est que les projets et les programmes réussissent le mieux là où ils renforcent les capacités et créent des mécanismes qui favorisent la participation et encouragent les rapprochements.**



# **LAS LECCIONES E IMPLICACIONES QUE SE DESPRENDEN DE LAS ACTIVIDADES RELACIONADAS CON LA EDUCACION DE LAS NIÑAS**

## **RESUMEN EJECUTIVO**

### *Introducción*

**El UNICEF entiende que el acceso integral y en un plano de igualdad de las niñas a la educación, así como la terminación de la educación de las niñas, forma parte de su compromiso fundamental de garantizar educación básica de buena calidad para todos los niños.** Tanto el acceso integral a la educación como la terminación de la misma requieren promoción y medidas prácticas, lo que apunta a dos amplias estrategias destinadas a aumentar la participación de las niñas: las intervenciones en pro de la integración de la paridad de los géneros en la política y programación generales en materia de educación, y la necesidad de mejorar el enfoque de las políticas de acción afirmativa.

**Este informe suministra una síntesis de los temas y observaciones pertinentes a esos objetivos.** Los resultados se obtuvieron mediante un minucioso examen de las evaluaciones de un conjunto de proyectos y programas que reciben fondos del UNICEF y que prestan apoyo a la educación de las niñas dentro del contexto más amplio del apoyo de la organización a la educación básica. A tal fin, se analizaron 23 evaluaciones<sup>3</sup> de proyectos realizados en el decenio pasado en Asia, África y América Latina. Los materiales examinados cubren las evaluaciones relativamente disponibles que se ajustan a ciertas pautas mínimas. Debido a que la evaluación puede no haber contemplado algunos proyectos nuevos, o a que no se disponía de las evaluaciones de los mismos, o éstas no cumplían con las normas mínimas de calidad, estos materiales no representan la gama completa de las actividades relacionadas con la educación de las niñas que reciben apoyo del UNICEF.

### *Políticas nacionales*

**Los sistemas políticos de los países continúan determinando de manera fundamental si las niñas van a la escuela y la medida en que tienen éxito en sus estudios.** El mensaje que se desprende del examen se concentra en los aspectos fundamentales de la individualización del derecho de las niñas a permanecer en las escuelas y aprender, así como en el grado de aceptación de ese derecho y en la necesidad de hacerlo valer de manera sistemática. Más específicamente, el mensaje hace hincapié en la importancia de los siguientes elementos:

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<sup>3</sup>Las evaluaciones aparecen en el Anexo 1

- **Buena coordinación entre las dependencias de los Ministerios de Educación y con otros organismos y sectores de gobierno** (especialmente los de finanzas, planificación del desarrollo económico y social, y salud, en el ámbito nacional);
- **Los sistemas de educación que cuenten con la capacidad de resolver las deficiencias en materia de capacitación, supervisión y compensación de los docentes**, que genera un mayor grado de moral y compromiso profesional;
- **Sistemas de vigilancia y evaluación más firmes y coherentes, que sirvan tanto para llamar la atención de los funcionarios superiores a cargo de políticas públicas acerca de los datos sobre las inequidades educacionales que sufren las niñas como para generar por parte del público la exigencia de que se produzcan cambios.**

**Es necesario que los sistemas nacionales reflejen explícitamente el enfoque basado en las cuestiones de género.** Para lograr una educación que incluya a todas las niñas es necesario avanzar de manera más enérgica hacia la integración absoluta de diversos tipos de enseñanza y métodos de aprendizaje y hacia la asignación más justa de recursos públicos a una amplia gama de enfoques, entre ellos los programas de enseñanza no estructurados y las escuelas comunitarias. **Para conquistar los objetivos de la Educación para Todos es fundamental que se elaboren estrategias vinculantes, que permitan que las niñas que abandonan sus estudios o no asisten a clases puedan regresar y formar parte de un programa nacional certificado.**

**Es necesario reforzar los vínculos entre la acción afirmativa en materia de género y la reforma educacional nacional en su totalidad, así como la colaboración intersectorial.** Las labores en pro de la educación de las niñas obtienen resultados más sostenibles e integrales cuando la labor multisectorial reduce las amplias fuerzas que tienden a excluir a las niñas y a las mujeres y refuerza la colaboración intersectorial en las esferas de la salud, la seguridad de las familias en materia de ingresos, y la protección y la atención de los niños.

**Es necesario contar con una perspectiva nacional que posibilite la amplia comprensión de la gama de barreras que se anteponen al acceso de las niñas a la educación y a su permanencia en el sistema educacional.** Los gobiernos nacionales deben hacerse cargo de determinadas responsabilidades básicas. Al mismo tiempo, es fundamental que se potencie a las comunidades locales como estrategia complementaria orientada a garantizar la colaboración horizontal y la integración en el ámbito local. **Existe, sin embargo, la preocupación de que la tendencia de los gobiernos centrales a otorgar carácter local a la responsabilidad por la educación está obligando a un número creciente de comunidades vulnerables a hacerse cargo de responsabilidades que superan su capacidad de respuesta.**

## *Las escuelas*

**La escuela tradicional sigue constituyendo la expresión básica del compromiso de las naciones con la educación de los niños.** Esto es así independientemente de los esfuerzos que se puedan realizar para crear oportunidades de enseñanza a distancia o en ámbitos no estructurados, o mediante el empleo de tecnologías sustitutivas. **El acceso y la seguridad física que proporciona la escuela, así como el sentimiento de seguridad psicosocial que brinda, y la calidad y pertinencia de sus métodos pedagógicos resultan fundamentales para determinar si constituye un ámbito de enseñanza acogedor.** Esas condiciones determinan la participación de cada niño, y especialmente de las niñas, y el grado de esa participación. El examen brindó al respecto los siguientes resultados y lecciones:

- Aunque cuando se estaba llevando a cabo la mayoría de los proyectos evaluados el vocabulario de los escuelas acogedoras para los niños no había alcanzado un alto grado de desarrollo, **el principio subyacente de que las escuelas deben brindar una mejor acogida y un mayor respaldo a las niñas constituye una condición fundamental de su participación que se da claramente por sentada.**
- **La importancia fundamental del idioma en que se lleva a cabo la instrucción.** Todos los niños pierden cuando se les enseña en un idioma extranjero, generalmente en clases a cargo de docentes de culturas diferentes a las suyas. Las niñas son especialmente vulnerables en esas circunstancias, ya que frecuentemente no tienen suficiente contacto con medios sociales ajenos a sus familias inmediatas, y por lo tanto tienden a confrontar lo desconocido con menos confianza en ellas mismas.
- **La infraestructura escolar es otro factor que puede contribuir al carácter acogedor de las escuelas.** Las niñas suelen ser las primeras en dejar de participar cuando en la escuela existen condiciones de inseguridad personal, cuando el mobiliario es insuficiente o está en malas condiciones, cuando las instalaciones son peligrosas o insalubres, o cuando carecen de agua potable y saneamiento adecuado. **Sigue vigente la convicción de que es necesario prestar atención a esos factores, que son importantes aunque no determinantes, para garantizar que las niñas asistan a clases. La existencia de una infraestructura adecuada no es suficiente para garantizar la presencia de las niñas en las escuelas si la enseñanza es deficiente o si las niñas no aprenden.**
- **Los docentes continúan desempeñando un papel importante con respecto a la creación y el funcionamiento de escuelas que den buena acogida a las niñas.** Los buenos educadores procuran que las niñas tengan el mejor desempeño escolar posible y enriquezcan sus aptitudes para la vida. La importancia de los docentes es fundamental, especialmente cuando se trata de establecer vínculos entre las familias y la sociedad en general.

- **Al respecto, las funciones de apoyo y supervisión que desempeñan los docentes tienen carácter esencial.** Son contados los casos en los que los sistemas de educación disponen de suficientes recursos técnicos para posibilitar una supervisión estructurada. Se juzga que los vínculos entre los docentes, especialmente cuando se trata de mujeres, probablemente son el único medio mediante el cual se puede dar respaldo sostenible a la enseñanza de buena calidad.
- **Otra manera eficaz de mantener la participación consiste en ofrecer a las niñas oportunidades de darse aliento y apoyo las unas a las otras.** En el caso de las niñas más vulnerables, resulta especialmente importante ayudarlas a adaptarse a la cultura de sus escuelas. Se sugiere que en el caso específico de los grados escolares iniciales, la tutoría de niña a niña obtiene resultados positivos, quizá aun más que la concesión de becas, en lo que concierne a la permanencia de las niñas en las escuelas.
- **Los incentivos continúan constituyendo un tema fundamental con relación a las políticas de educación de las niñas.** Se consideran un medio eficaz para ayudar a que las niñas y sus familias superen los obstáculos a la participación que representan los costos. Uno de los peligros consiste en concentrarse exclusivamente en los incentivos y no obtener, como resultado, un panorama suficientemente amplio de las presiones que acentúan la exclusión en el sistema o contra los niños.
- Las escuelas, al igual que los sistemas nacionales, resultan poco eficaces cuando se trata de vigilar la situación de los niños bajo su responsabilidad, incluidos tanto los que están matriculados como los que no lo están. **Es necesario brindar capacitación al personal local de educación a fin de que pueda recabar datos y vigilar el progreso de la educación de las niñas de sus correspondientes jurisdicciones.**

### *Las familias y las comunidades*

**La Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño considera a las familias el factor determinante inicial y más importante en lo que se refiere a la protección y el desarrollo de los niños.** Los sistemas de educación y las escuelas pueden alentar el progreso escolar de las niñas suministrándoles condiciones adecuadas, pero son las familias, especialmente las madres, quienes toman la decisión inicial de que las niñas vayan a la escuela, y las que asignan los recursos necesarios para ello. Debido a ello, los sistemas de educación y las escuelas deben brindar apoyo a las familias y a las comunidades, a fin de que respeten la educación de los niños y descubran las maneras en que las niñas pueden disfrutar de ese derecho. Al respecto, el examen obtuvo los siguientes resultados y lecciones:

- Las familias marginadas deben establecer un equilibrio adecuado entre los valores, prioridades y percepciones a menudo contradictorias en los contextos de las restrictivas culturas tradicionales, los recursos mínimos necesarios para la subsistencia, y las sociedades que no apoyan la educación de las niñas. **Casi todas las intervenciones interpretan que la participación, tanto en su carácter de concepto como de estrategia, resulta fundamental para garantizar la pertinencia y la legitimidad de la educación de las niñas. En esas intervenciones se incorpora más frecuentemente a las familias y comunidades como protagonistas básicos, lo que tiene como resultado la asistencia de las niñas a la escuela.**
- **La modificación genuina de ciertas actitudes y acciones por parte de las escuelas y determinados cambios en las políticas educacionales tendientes a mejorar la instrucción logran alterar de manera positiva la importancia que los padres otorgan a la educación de sus hijas.** El mejoramiento de la infraestructura, el grado de accesibilidad y la calidad de la enseñanza, sumados a la amplia promoción pública de la paridad de los géneros y la creación de fuentes locales de empleo, puede servir para reducir el desinterés por la educación de las niñas.
- La colaboración entre las escuelas y las familias está demostrando ser un factor fundamental en la matriculación y permanencia de las niñas en las escuelas, ya que los obstáculos que dificultan la participación rara vez provienen exclusivamente de las escuelas o las familias. **Los problemas derivados del casamiento y el embarazo adolescentes son ejemplos claros de la necesidad de que las niñas, sus familias y sus escuelas participen en el análisis conjunto y las actividades que fomenten la escolaridad de las niñas.** Se deberían apoyar los esfuerzos de todos los responsables del bienestar de las niñas en lo que concierne a ayudar a las niñas a cumplir con sus responsabilidades domésticas, maternas y académicas.
- **Las gestiones cada vez más frecuentes que se llevan a cabo para que las mujeres (madres, docentes y vecinas) sean las defensoras y los modelos de referencia de la educación de las niñas presentan un importante potencial con respecto a esa capacidad de participación en el ámbito local.**

### *Las prioridades, las estrategias y los mecanismos de intervención*

*Las evaluaciones ofrecen e implican sugerencias sobre la manera de mejorar las prácticas referidas al enfoque y la gestión de las intervenciones en materia de educación de las niñas. **El examen no sólo resume las lecciones obtenidas de las evaluaciones, sino que aprovecha el conjunto más vasto de los conocimientos mundiales sobre la educación de las niñas para definir las prioridades, las estrategias y los mecanismos de las intervenciones:***

- **Es importante y adecuado que las intervenciones se concentren en quienes sufren mayor grado de exclusión y que, a este respecto, se otorgue prioridad a la paridad de los géneros y a la participación de las niñas. Al mismo tiempo, esas medidas obtienen mejores resultados cuando tienen por objetivo mejorar la calidad de la educación y el acceso a la misma para todos los niños por tratarse de su derecho y de una obligación por parte de la sociedad.** Por ejemplo, las campañas mundiales orientadas a eliminar las normas contra la educación escolar de las niñas embarazadas, o las que exigen que las escuelas cuenten con instalaciones sanitarias adecuadas, tienen efectos más duraderos cuando se incorporan en el marco de políticas más amplias destinadas a abrir las puertas de las escuelas a todos los niños cuyas posibilidades de ir a la escuela y permanecer en ella estén amenazadas por problemas y limitaciones especiales.
- **Es necesario adoptar una perspectiva integradora.** Las intervenciones en pro de las niñas resultan más eficaces cuando fortalecen en todos los niveles (los ámbitos político, escolar y comunitario en el plano nacional) la capacidad de individualizar y eliminar las barreras que excluyen a las niñas mediante el fomento de los vínculos que conducen a las acciones conjuntas. Esto es especialmente válido cuando se trata de confrontar cuestiones emergentes, como el VIH/SIDA en relación con la educación de las niñas.
- **La creación de capacidad y los cambios estructurales tienen una importancia fundamental.** Todas las partes deben aprovechar la oportunidad de aprender. Esto implica la adquisición, práctica y adaptación de las nuevas actitudes y los nuevos comportamientos y mecanismos de colaboración y la toma de medidas adecuadas a las necesidades que están implícitas en los conceptos de una educación que incluya a todas las niñas y que sea acogedora para las niñas. El desafío consiste en plasmar el concepto de paridad en las funciones que correspondan a los padres, docentes y funcionarios de los sistemas de educación. También resulta fundamental que se garantice la capacidad de dar respuesta y efectuar modificaciones cuando así lo requieran las variaciones en el medio ambiente, que son generalmente imprevisibles. En muchos casos, el éxito dependerá de un número reducido de individuos o grupos pequeños altamente motivados, que funcionarán como agentes de cambio y catalizadores, y que alentarán la permanencia de las niñas en la escuela.
- **Es necesario establecer un equilibrio entre la necesidad de intervenciones en la política nacional y el plano burocrático y un accionar más integral y sostenido en los ámbitos comunitario y familiar.** Cuando las iniciativas locales sobre la participación de las niñas no prestan suficiente atención a las políticas nacionales que se refieren a la educación y a los sectores con ella relacionados, se obtienen resultados limitados a largo plazo. Las labores de promoción y la política nacional deberían tratar de manera simultánea las cuestiones relacionadas con la paridad en materia de desarrollo económico y

social, y los vínculos entre la educación y el trabajo, así como la capacidad de gestión con que cuenta la burocracia para poder dar apoyo a la enseñanza eficaz y para elaborar programas de estudio adecuados.

- **Cuando se trata de lograr la paridad de los géneros, los vínculos tienen una importancia fundamental en todas las facetas del sistema. Es necesario vincular las políticas de educación estructurada y no estructurada, como en el caso de las escuelas comunitarias, a fin de poder suministrar una educación suficientemente completa.** Las formas diversas de educación deberían ser vistas como formas complementarias de la educación estructurada, y no como sistemas paralelos, y deberían contar con apoyo público. Los programas basados en el sentimiento de propiedad y ejecución en los niveles locales podrían de esa manera brindar docentes capacitados, programas pertinentes y condiciones seguras.
- **La escuela será necesariamente el foco de la interacción y la sinergia en pro de la educación de las niñas.** Aunque las escuelas probablemente constituyen la manifestación más tangible de las expectativas y esperanzas de las comunidades con respecto al desarrollo de los niños, son también la rama operativa de la política nacional y las estructuras burocráticas. Las escuelas necesitan respaldo para poder funcionar de manera adecuada en los ámbitos de la familia y la comunidad, y de la política y la burocracia. Las intervenciones deben establecer vínculos fundamentales mediante los sistemas de capacitación y supervisión de los docentes y mediante la elaboración de los programas de estudio. Ese respaldo sistémico reviste especial importancia en el contexto de las nuevas políticas referidas a las cuestiones del género, que pueden requerir que los docentes modifiquen comportamientos propios que pueden formar parte de sus tradiciones y culturas.
- **Las intervenciones deben tener en cuenta los procesos y criterios de toma de decisiones que emplean las familias para establecer los parámetros acerca de la educación y el aprendizaje de sus hijas, y actuar en ese contexto.** Debido a que existen grandes diferencias entre las familias con relación a sus contextos sociales, económicos y culturales, así como en lo que atañe a las experiencias que han tenido con las escuelas, el éxito de los proyectos depende de que quienes los llevan a cabo comprendan esas diferencias y obren en consecuencia aprovechando los aspectos positivos y reduciendo los impedimentos. Los responsables de los proyectos deben aceptar especialmente “la ética de la intervención”. Deben establecer explícitamente alianzas en las que se proteja la cultura, el bienestar psicosocial y la seguridad económica de las familias y comunidades.

## *Conclusiones*

**Se han registrado evidentes avances en materia de educación de las niñas, especialmente en lo que se refiere al aumento de las tasas de acceso a las escuelas, y de permanencia y éxito en las mismas.** Pero sobre la base de las evaluaciones aquí examinadas resulta difícil determinar si se trata de un proceso duradero. Por añadidura aún existe incertidumbre sobre lo que significa en la práctica una política que tenga en cuenta las cuestiones del género, especialmente cuando se trata de culturas diversas. **La conclusión general de este examen es que los proyectos y programas tienen más éxito cuando ayudan a crear capacidad y generar los mecanismos que posibilitan la participación y alientan el establecimiento de vínculos.**

## BACKGROUND AND LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

### 1. UNICEF and Girls' Education

*Education is a right for every child without exception .... States are responsible.... We must see and understand the totality of children's lives.... ensure that fulfilling the right to education of decent quality is seen as the responsibility of all society ... (and) promote a comprehensive expanded view of education systems. (UNICEF's Core Messages on EFA)*

*... focussing on girls in isolation or on education alone will not eliminate all the obstacles (to their education). What is required is attention to education as a whole, with persistent and targeted actions that address the impact of the education system and society on girls as learners.... (and) address systemic issues in general, while allowing for specific actions that are directed only to girls in the short run (Girls' Education: A Framework...)*

Within the frameworks of the CRC and EFA, UNICEF identifies *full and equal access to and completion of education for girls* as part of its core commitment to ensuring inclusive basic education of good quality to all children. Both require advocacy and action, indicating two broad strategies aimed at enhancing girls' participation: interventions to *integrate gender equality into the mainstream of overall education policy and programming*; and more focussed *affirmative action* interventions.

The first involves action at the level of policy and public awareness, stressing education as an essential right of development for all children and thus the responsibility of all. It also involves work within the education system, collaborating with governments and civil societies to create schools as comprehensive, inclusive and effective learning environments. The second involves specifically tailored actions aimed at addressing those factors, which particularly affect girls.

This report provides a synthesis of issues and insights relevant to both of these objectives, identified through a review of evaluations conducted of a set of UNICEF-funded projects and programmes in support of girls' education, situated within the broader context of its support to basic education. Twenty-three evaluations<sup>4</sup> of projects from Asia, Africa and Latin America and undertaken during the past decade were analysed.

### 2. Limitations of the Report

The synthesis is limited in several ways. Firstly, it is *not a reflection of the full body of knowledge and results being generated through UNICEF's initiatives* in girls' education overall; nor of the effectiveness of that work. To do so would require a

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<sup>4</sup>The evaluations are listed in Annex 1

systematic and comprehensive review directly of those interventions i.e. an evaluation of the thematic area itself. Rather, the synthesis is one step removed based on an evaluation of evaluations.

Secondly, the synthesis is *not based on all evaluative material*, which might have been available. Limited by time and resources, it has instead drawn from reports made available through UNICEF's Data Base and offered by country offices in response to requests for evaluations of girls' education projects. A fuller range of assessments would have required the on-site search of documents such as informal memos, monitoring reports and notes to file.

Third, most<sup>5</sup> of the *evaluations incorporated into the review have been designed and conducted as discrete initiatives*. They are the products of evaluators with different background knowledge, expertise and perspectives and working within the time, budget and scope imposed by their specific terms of reference. In consequence, the kind, range and quality of data, analyses and conclusions across the evaluations vary, as do the nature and scope of their recommendations and generalisability of their "lessons learned".

Finally, the scope of the synthesis is limited in that *levels of analysis in the evaluations overall are not especially strong*. Most concentrate more on inputs (what projects delivered and the activities they undertook), than on results (the changes which were realised as a consequence of those inputs). Also, only a few explore the factors influencing project implementation, or the implications of these factors for the continued validity of the assumptions guiding the projects. In consequence, while the evaluations provide valuable detail on what is or was happening from the perspective of project delivery, they are rather less rich in terms of the "value-added" of those actions in making a difference to the situation of girls' education more widely.

Given these limitations in the evaluative material, the synthesis has in some areas elaborated on issues and/or included additional references drawing from UNICEF policies on, and experiences of, the girls' education and exclusion more generally. The latter are reflected in "Priorities, Strategies and Mechanisms of Intervention" and "Concluding Issues: Need for Actions and Analyses". "Major Findings and Lessons" draws on the content of the evaluations themselves.

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<sup>5</sup>The exception to this was the Midterm Review of the African Girls' Education Initiative which drew on a series of on-site case studies of six AGEI country programmes, with the same objectives, within a single analytical framework and collecting data through a common set of guiding questions. While several evaluations of the PAGE project in Zambia were reviewed, none were cumulative in their analyses. None elaborated on, nor answered questions posed by, the others.

## FRAMEWORK OF THE SYNTHESIS

### 1. Confirming the Specific Exclusion of Girls

Irrespective of the absence of a common conceptual approach or set of defining questions in the reviewed evaluations, all share two overarching conclusions: that progress is being made in all regions to end the exclusion of girls from good quality and readily accessible education; but that this progress remains in most regions too slow, denying to far too many girls their basic right to learn. Advocacy among policy-makers and mobilisation within communities is beginning to erode dysfunctional gender-biased paradigms; sustained and fundamental change at the levels of systems' structures and functions and of individual behaviours remains to be achieved.

Confirmed explicitly or implicitly by all of the evaluations, the most common causal denominator in all categories of educational exclusion is gender: *being female continues to matter*. Across all other factors, gender is the one consistent variable among children who are persistently denied access to school, whose learning is being poorly served when they are there, and who are being pushed out before completion. Nor is this exclusion an accidental or random occurrence. Purposive, systemic and gender-based, the evaluations indicate that limits continue to be put on girls' participation by family and community cultures which consider their formal education inappropriate, unnecessary or threatening to traditional values. These limits are reinforced by schools situated far from girls' homes; which are unsafe, insecure and generally disempowering in their failure to recognise or address the particular capacities, needs and vulnerabilities they bring as learners. They are maintained by socio-economic systems which require girls to provide domestic and paid labour, to participate in time-consuming and sometimes disabling puberty rights, to marry early and to withdraw from school when they become pregnant.

Thus, while all children suffer exclusion from education because of family poverty, unstable communities, poor school facilities and weak pedagogy, *a second set of barriers compounds the exclusion of girls*. While policy and actions on the first set are necessary conditions to overcoming exclusion for children (including girls) in general, they are not sufficient to overcome the exclusion faced by girls in particular.

All of the evaluations report some measure of quantitative gains being made by girls on the basis of targeted interventions addressing one or both of these sets of exclusionary factors. More girls are being enrolled in basic education and more of these are completing at least that level. Most of the evaluations note the need to ensure that this progress, and the policy and programme actions provoking them, becomes integrated into the mainstream of the education systems and communities involved. The following sections of the synthesis look at the specifics of these results.

## 2. Conceptual Approach to the Synthesis

As confirmed by all of the evaluations, the factors which keep girls away from school, push them out early and maintain gender inequality in the system as a whole are multiple and interactive. The evaluations are clear that no single focus, strategy or innovation is sufficient to ensure gender equality, quality or inclusiveness. Interventions are proving most effective where they recognise and act in synchrony with as many as possible of this complex of factors and conditions as they affect girls and their learning.

Reiterating the earlier point that this diversity of factors is not random, the conditions causing and sustaining girls' exclusion identified by the evaluations fall within three broad and interactive *environments*: (i) national education policy and bureaucratic systems (ii) schools and (iii) families and communities. It is the knowledge, attitudes and actions within each of these three environments and the nature of the linkages among them, which determine whether or not girls go to, stay in and learn at school. Even where they focus in only one environment (within a limited number of target schools, for example) interventions are proving to be most successful when they understand and take account of the ways in which the other two environments impede or support girls' inclusion, and how all three interact.

The characteristics of these environments as they affect girls and their education, and implications for interventions aimed at making them more girl-friendly, provide the principal organising framework for the synthesis presented here in Section C. Section D draws on the conclusions and lessons learned from the evaluations, as well as from knowledge of the field in general, to discuss priorities, strategies and mechanisms for supporting girls' education. Section E suggests a few recommendations for intervenors.

# THE ENVIRONMENTS OF GIRLS' EDUCATION

## 1. National Policy and Education Systems

### Introduction

Recognised by all the evaluations, national policy systems continue to be critical actors in determining whether girls go to school and how well they succeed there. The conclusion of a situation analysis of girls' education in Kenya is supported by global experience generally: that without official recognition of education as a right of all children, and in the absence of an explicit and affirmative gender policy framework, the inclusive education of girls is not likely to happen. The availability of good quality structures and processes conducive to their participation is a function of expressed political will and policy action. Their absence can have wider implications. By what they do and fail to do, "...legal and regulatory laws affect parental and community attitudes and behaviours towards girls and women", giving both tacit and direct support to limits put on girls' participation in the other environments (Kenya: 36). They create environments in which parents can pull girls out of school for early marriage, communities can fail to act against abusive teachers, and schools can decline to maintain secure and safe facilities for girls.

On the other hand, pro-child and gender equitable national policies, and school systems which implement them, are fundamental to strengthening the status and quality of girls' education. They create environments in which initiatives for removing structural barriers to access and establishing enabling conditions for participation are generated for all children. The CRC places the onus of responsibility on this level for ensuring the directives and resources to accommodate the education of each child, regardless of capacity and need. It is here where the most serious impediments to comprehensive, integrative action to end exclusion originate and are maintained.

It is also at the national level where the official designation of what is legitimate and illegitimate education is made, and the decision to make schools responsive or exclusionary taken. Whether teachers are trained using didactic or active learning methods, for whom the curriculum and its language of delivery are made relevant, how entry and advancement are regulated, and what types of schools are recognized as having status -- these are all national level policy decisions. Children continue to be excluded where these policies marginalia them by being discriminatory; where they support poorly trained teachers and under-funded supervisory systems, provide insufficient learning materials and distributing them inequitably; and fail to collaborate across sectors.

These are the types of deficiencies, which are most evident in education systems in which girls do not fully participate. Failure to rectify them is made even more crucial where local cultures and traditions also do not favour the public education or equal treatment of girls. It is particularly critical in these situations that national actions affirm gender equality and serve as impetus to social, as well as systemic, change. The challenge

for project intervenors is similarly critical. They need directly and consistently to address national-level exclusionary practice, while also encouraging local initiatives and promoting links between all levels.

## **Findings and Lessons from the Evaluations**

### **National Commitment and Integrated Action**

Evaluations reaffirm the critical role of national governments in reinforcing the barriers and providing the facilitators for girls' access and persistence. None are depicted as neutral; on the contrary, their dual roles are confirmed as critical in determining quality and equity in basic education, explicitly as "implementor and monitoring agent" and implicitly in "designing the field of play" (AGEI/MTR: 9<sup>6</sup>). Through the policies and priorities they set, national systems are presented as the necessary focal points for mobilising comprehensive and collaborative action at all levels and across all sectors.

There has been progress. Within the broad framework of advocating girls' participation and the auspices of the AGEI, national systems in Africa are undertaking and strengthening analyses and needs assessments with respect to the status of girls. They are putting issues of education quality, co-ordination and coherence onto public agendas, and providing the basis for more systematic and shared action between themselves and donors. Critically, in at least some of countries, they are also pursuing follow-up of their EFA commitments at the highest political, as well as policy, levels. Forcing a perspective which is explicitly national in scope, and establishing gender as a norm of policy and implementation action, interventions such as the AGEI are keeping girls' education as a major dimension of both Ministry of Education and donor discussion. Slowly, action on girls' education is becoming part of inter-agency collaboration, including the sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) evolving in countries such as Zambia, Uganda and Ethiopia.

Advocacy and sensitisation among national policy-makers, for example, is considered among "the most successful" of the PAGE<sup>7</sup> interventions in Zambia (Zulu: 17). The strategy of acting within a systemic national-level framework, while operating at the same time through the provinces, is allowing PAGE to build a strong base of national commitment to gender equality. It is also contributing to the emergence of a SWAP<sup>8</sup> in which gender and equity are core components. A country-level situation analysis, complemented with specific sub-sector research studies and a public advocacy campaign, has facilitated enactment of a regulation allowing pregnant girls back into school, a more gender-balanced national enrolment, and criteria for "girl-friendly" schools. Work at the national level has also allowed for inter-donor co-ordination in the development of

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<sup>6</sup> African Girls' Education Initiative/Mid-term Review

<sup>7</sup> Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education

<sup>8</sup> The sector-wide approach in Zambia is the Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP)

gender-sensitising teaching modules, a pre-service teacher education course, family mobilising interventions and improved school sanitation.

Globally, more remains to be done. Where national commitment to reaching vulnerable communities and their children in general is weak, the exclusion of girls continues to be especially problematic. National resolve remains still limited in many instances, the AGEI/MTR noting persistence of "...considerable barriers to girls' schooling, including the increasing withdrawal of state funding from education" (iv). PAGE evaluators also emphasise the need for yet more integrated action: to address the need of re-enrolled new mothers for childcare; to translate criteria for girl-friendliness into concrete action; and to make girl-welcoming school infrastructure improvements comprehensive.

A number of messages emerge from the evaluations with respect to enhancing girls' education through stronger national commitment. All focus on the fundamentals of recognising, accepting and systematically enforcing the right of girls to be in schools and to learn there. Most specifically, they reinforce the importance of:

- co-ordination in programme implementation within ministries of education and with other government sectors (particularly those of national finance, economic and social development planning, and health);
- education systems capable of addressing deficiencies in the training, supervision and compensation of teachers, leading to higher professional morale and commitment; and
- stronger, more coherent, systems for monitoring and evaluation as means of bringing data on educational inequity and poor quality (especially with respect to girls and other excluded children) to public policy attention and to generate demand for change.

### Importance of a Gender Focus

A key emerging theme of the evaluations is that of more explicitly focussing on gender in all national policy; of consistent and unequivocal expressed commitments to gender equality in all matters. Constituting almost a mantra, success in girls' education intervention is becoming recognised as a direct function of keeping the issue of gender *per se* at the forefront of all national socio-economic agendas, not simply as one aspect of education quality. Lacking this emphasis risks actions becoming too general, of incorporating so many aspects of exclusion that girls' participation as such is lost in the shuffle.

One implication of this is that the situation of girls needs to become more unambiguously the bottom-line. Projects are succeeding where they ask specifically where the girls are, how they are doing and why they are not staying in school. The

assumption that girls will automatically benefit as school systems improve is not proving accurate. Factors of school quality, relevance and accessibility are necessary conditions of gender equality, but are not sufficient. They are resulting in increased numbers of girls enrolling, but they are producing even better rates for boys. References to growing gender gaps are consistent across many of the AGEI country studies<sup>9</sup>. Even actions to improve such demand factors as family resources and women's education are less than effective in raising girls' participation rates where they are not explicitly addressing gender equality in matters of assigning household responsibilities, of sexual behaviour and of role expectations.

A final factor here concerns the development of nationally promoted and recognised gender-based labels. Concept-focusing terminology (PAGE, girl-friendly schools, even AGEI) is proving an effective means of public sensitisation. It is mobilising acceptance of complex, sometimes threatening, ideas such as gender equality even where the "how to" of follow-through is not quite there. Such labelling is not without risk, however. In itself, it is rarely changing behaviour. Realistically, a label is appropriate where it captures attention, creates awareness and mobilises energy. It is inadequate where it remains little more than an information-dissemination exercise. Substantive action needs to underlie the form and, where it does not, labelling is actually impeding integration of gender innovation. In Zambia, for example, intended implementors are hiving off the concept as something apart from their "real" work instead of adapting it into that work, and prospective change agent teachers are not reaching out to share their learning with colleagues.

### Seamless Systems

Jomtien's call for an "expanded vision" as the necessary condition of education for all implies a certain seamlessness in an education system. Creating and maintaining porous borders among the various facets of education provision is requiring action at the national policy level to establish necessary regulatory structures, provide the funding and supply the human resources. Inclusive education for girls means moving with greater energy toward operationalising seamlessness through the elimination of the artificial boundaries separating types of education programmes and methods of learning. Ending the categorisation of alternative, nonformal programmes and community schools as somehow less than legitimate and, in consequence, denying them access to equitable public resources, is being recognised increasingly as a core of realising EFA, not simply a stop-gap.

Willingness of national policy-makers and capacities of ministries to create nonformal programmes as professionally credible parts of the system are especially critical issues for girls. Alternatives such as community schools are providing more of the flexibility girls need to accommodate their domestic responsibilities and the pressures of

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<sup>9</sup> Country studies were conducted in many of the AGEI partner countries. These were used as input to the overall AGEI/MTR.

childbearing and early marriage. Experiences from a number of countries, including Kenya and Zambia, note the value of lowering and raising the entry and exit age limits in order that girls can complete school before puberty and come back after marriage. AGEI project experience highlights the importance of such programmes giving communities a say in curriculum content, especially with respect to issues of language of instruction, the values espoused and the relevance of skills taught -- all factors of special concern for girls.

In Africa, too, the importance of facilitating the passage of children between community/nonformal schools and the formal system is becoming starkly clear. Developing "bridging strategies" which allow girls who drop out of school, or never attend, to come back and be part of a recognised national programme is fundamental. A three-year training programme in Guinea, for example, is enabling adolescent girls to enter conventional primary and/or secondary school by giving them a grounding of basic learning skills. COPE in Uganda is similarly seeking ways of bringing rural children, including girls, into the system through a nonformal programme. Based on core elements of the formal curriculum and making efforts to associate the teachers of both systems in joint planning and assessment activities, the programme is making some progress in the bridging ideal of creating education as an integrated system.

Overall, however, both quality and quantity of bridging initiatives remain limited. The push and legitimacy necessary for such innovations to take root must come from policy commitment at the top, a commitment not yet widely in place. It needs to be supported, at least in part, by donors who keep both dimensions of a seamless learning environment clearly in their own agendas; and by systematic actions and adequate resources of an enabling bureaucracy, aimed consistently at "reaching the hitherto unreached".

### Multiple Linkages and Integrated Action

A focus on the national policy environment is a necessary condition for ensuring cross/sub-sectoral and integrated action. It is at this level where linkages between specific gender-affirmative action and overall national education reform must be agreed, rules of engagement set and budget management co-ordinated before action at the bottom can realistically be sustained and maintained. National action in Ethiopia, for example, is dealing with the persistent gender gap and low enrolment through a broadly synchronised girls' education policy, donor co-ordination and multi-level capacity strengthening. A wide range of actions to eliminate fees, create teacher resource centres, support in-service training on child-centred methods, cluster schools and foster family income generation "have already given results" in reducing girls dropping out between grades 1 and 2 (AGEI/MTR: 17). Swaziland's integrative emphasis includes improved pedagogy, the quality and gender-sensitivity of teaching methods, and teachers' capacities to monitor their behaviour respecting subsequent learning by both boys and girls. In Benin, despite a poor economic situation, achievements have been realised through a combination of

community involvement in school management and Ministry improvements to monitoring and evaluation as well as teacher supervision.

Outcomes in realising girls' education are proving more sustained and comprehensive where multi-sector effort reduces broad exclusionary forces against girls/women and reinforces specifically inclusive ones. Collaboration at the local level in health, family income security, child protection and care is being enabled through similar action at the top. Sustaining girls' participation into the mainstream of society involves addressing multiple barriers. The "magnitude of obstacles in education", especially for girls, is such that "measurable impact" is being realised most often where project actions (such as those of PAGE) "are augmented by other systematic and system-wide initiatives" (Mumba: 1).

One area of particular crisis with respect to such integrated action is that of HIV/AIDS. Despite the particular risks being faced by girls, education projects targeting them continue to be developed in large measure independently of the implications of the epidemic for them, their affected teachers and their families. Inter-ministerial cooperation, government-NGO linkages, networking among community organisations are essential to information sharing, interactive and flexible use of resources and joint action on issues such as orphaned children, discriminatory and abusive behaviour, teacher burn-out and interrupted student attendance. They are not effectively happening in most cases. Use of gender-tailored and non-threatening tools such as drama, cultural events and peer-learning groups, by combined education, health and social service agencies, remain limited.

### Decentralisation

Comprehensive and integrative action at the national policy level is essential for realising the shared responsibility and mutual accountability of EFA, as required by the CRC. It is also at the core of realising an effectively decentralised education system. National perspectives need to be there to enable a broad understanding of the range of barriers affecting girls access and persistence, to mobilise the various resources needed for removing these barriers, and identifying those people and institutions responsible for taking action. A national view is also needed for effectively monitoring all such actions and actors. It is nowhere disputed in the evaluations that immediate, direct and empowered local input into the decisions and management of schools is necessary for girls' participation. Nor is it disputed, however, that a viable balance between these local rights and responsibilities and those of a strong and active national government (and of each stage of the system in between) must be maintained. "Empowering local communities" cannot mean "disempowering governments or local authorities, who must continue to play a vital role in managing education, advocating for and demonstrating new practices, and ensuring equitable policies for the unreached" (Ghana #2:65).

This balancing is proving far from easy. Governments are needing continually to be challenged by communities on their obligation to "supply the requisite political will" with respect to "setting national objectives, mobilising resources, maintaining educational

standards" for gender equality (AGEI/MTR: 19). An underlying concern implied in the evaluations is that the drive of central governments toward localising responsibility for education is obligating increasing numbers of vulnerable communities beyond their capacity to "carry the load". As central authorities withdraw, communities are too "often being called on to contribute too much to their children's schooling in terms of monetary and labour contributions". Unless community participation is accompanied "by a systematic enrichment of (its) human, financial and institutional resources, the morality of demanding inputs such as a building materials, teacher salaries and textbooks from poor rural communities is dubious" (Ibid: 20).

The experience of the move to greater decentralisation is so far mixed. The importance of consistency, of actually following through with the principle of local decision-making, is clear. Experiments by the Central African Republic in support of community schools -- a programme aimed at the flexible and relevant local delivery typically most effective for girls -- suggest strongly that intervenors must listen carefully to the communities and girls involved. In this case, girls' participation is suffering to the extent the considerable local priorities given to trade training, to accommodating young women over 14, to schedules better-attuned to agricultural schedules and to morally and culturally appropriate curriculum are not being well addressed by a system not yet fully decentralised.

One form of decentralised programming being more frequently used is pilot projects. Focussed largely on access, many are proving successful in bringing more girls to school by restricting the geographic range of intervention and allowing actions to be locally inclusive and tailored. There are also notes of caution, however. Success is less clear in terms of retaining girls to completion; durability is limited by not taking into account systemic weaknesses and strengths. A Ghanaian analysis defines the problem in terms of "a neglect for quality in pursuit of equity". Changes at the immediate local level are not reaching out to address the fundamental issues of how to improve in-school management, reform the in-service training of teachers or provide for publishing project-generated books and getting them into children's hands (Ghana #3:15).

Despite such cautions, decentralisation of responsibility for girls' education continues to be an important condition in enabling horizontal collaboration at local level: among local ministry offices, directly and through provincial counterparts; across sectors; between government and civil society. It should not imply fragmentation. The more authority local agents have to act on their own discretion in generating and using resources, planning and making operational decisions, the more potential there is proving for be for their acting together in responsive and adaptive education programmes tailored to the particular needs of girls and their families in that context. The effectiveness of PAGE's FamilyPac, initially limited by high illiteracy levels among the parents, is expected to be enhanced through efforts in some provinces to link with literacy programmes of the Ministry of Community Development. The Moroccan AGEI has benefited from open and regular communication, agreed roles and responsibilities for decision-making and an expressed commitment to girls participation among all implicated actors in strengthening collaborative action. In other cases, local control is

promoting better donor co-operation to bring their respective agendas more effectively together.

Space for community-based affirmative action (with or without resources from the centre) is clearly a critical factor in enhancing the focus on girls' education. In Benin, this is being achieved at least in part because of the attention given to district level management coupled with training in data collection and monitoring. Importantly, it is also being "fuelled by community level analysis and plans of action" (Benin/MTR: 21). This suggests the potential for demand-driven decentralisation, as communities become more capable of assessing their own barriers to quality education, deciding on appropriate action and articulating resource needs to central government agencies and donors.

References are relatively few as to the effects or effectiveness of community responsibility for financing. One exception, the local surcharges applied in the primary education project in China, is noted but not analysed. The Zambian Ministry of Education is in the process of decentralising responsibility for planning, budgeting and reporting on PAGE, according to the framework of the school grants. Guided by the District Education Officers, schools are expected to determine and implement priorities for increasing girls' participation, suggesting another point of entry for interventions seeking to strengthen the capacity of the system at local levels in gender analysis and management. In the Zambian case, implementation of the idea is faltering where schools and DEOs have not been given the training needed for such analysis and, from there, for developing the workplans required for mobilising the budgets.

As with progress in development in general, progress in realising decentralised control is not being achieved by "trickle down". It is the facilitated, transparent and purposive giving up and taking on of responsibility at each level of the political and social governance structures which are making the difference. These are complex, uncertain and iterative processes with which, unfortunately, none of the evaluations dealt in depth.

#### Creating a National Knowledge Base

Community-level needs assessments and situation analyses are improving. More participatory, thorough and accurate, these activities are proving increasingly better at revealing precisely which children are being excluded and, from there, mobilising appropriately targeted remedial action. Systems-level analyses, however, are progressing less well. On the whole, they remain too sporadic, uncoordinated and relatively superficial to reveal very much about persistent and systemic gender exclusion. The result is interventions, which lack the breadth and depth of knowledge about the capacities and gaps in the system as a whole to ensure effective planning and sustained action. Several projects with potentially strong impact are being limited because the resources needed to build on the strengths and fill the gaps of the system are not being identified and made available either by the projects or their collaborators.

The AGEI appears to be making an important contribution to redressing some of these weaknesses. At both regional and country levels, education advisors and officers

are highlighting the need, and providing the technical assistance, for better data collection on the situation of girls in school. They are also supporting the application of these data to better-focussed interventions. The MTR, however, notes the continuing challenges of improved policy analysis and programme monitoring, especially the "lack of time" being given to "review and reflect on issues like the conceptualisation of girls' education, the measurement of impact, the targeting of girls and the development of qualitative indicators" (AGEI/MTR: 45).

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Following from this, it is clear that coherent, systematic and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation are at the heart of effective girls' education interventions. They provide the data, which reveal what, is happening, and why; by so doing, they can create an increasingly realistic picture of what gender-based exclusion looks like and what works in overcoming it. Situating girls and their learning in context, mobilising their participation and facilitating systems change all imply well-founded baseline analyses, formative monitoring and regular outcome evaluation. Interventions which are doing these well, and which are facilitating reflected discussion by those implementing and using the innovation on what the main input, outcome and performance criteria and indicators should be, are clearly proving the most effective at strengthening the quality and effectiveness of the changes they are producing.

The problem with such M&E is that it is too rarely happening, problems largely of limited capacity and priority in both governments and intervenors. Among the African interventions, for example, the AGEI/MTR finds "...poor capacity for collection, analysis and reporting of data by the ministries and a general lack of conviction on the part of some country offices of the importance of the process" (iv). Weaknesses in quality, narrowness of scope and limitations in quantity of data on gender in education (indeed in education generally) are producing situations in which knowledge of basic patterns and trends on such key issues as participation and achievement for at-risk and excluded children, often girls, is simply not available.

Especially disappointing in pilot projects, but true also of interventions in general, insufficient recognition is being given to their potential as experiments to be proven. Few, it appears, are undertaken with explicit implementation analysis plans; many lack detailed baseline data or agreed progress indicators. PAGE is theoretically an experiment of a dozen potentially critical girl-friendly interventions, none of which has yet been tested. The coupling of gender-sensitivity training with "continuous assessment" teaching strategies in Swaziland is similarly of still-uncertain value, "the monitoring and evaluation demands" it created "not prepared for" (Swaziland: 5) Whether the project is actually designated an experiment, or more simply the implementation of an innovation, it is a clear loss that so few resources and time are being given in most cases to tailoring inputs and "mapping the outcomes" in ways which reveal reach, use and effects.

## Making Excluded Girls Visible

Without such comprehensive, systematic and accurate knowledge of the state and status of girls and their education, both are remaining in many cases too invisible to impel strong affirmative action. It takes well-informed national level actors to identify, track and accommodate children who are not turning up; these same authorities are key to generating the data which will make them well informed. The millions of girls not being reached by schools are the same millions not receiving adequate nutrition, health care and protection because they are unseen by such authorities, those duty-bearers required to act on their behalf. Communities are proving increasingly effective watchdogs in identifying specific children, but this is not enough. National systems are crucial to identifying and presenting overall patterns of exclusion and they are in many cases falling short.

## **2. The School**

### **Introduction**

Irrespective of efforts to create opportunities for learning at a distance, in non-formal settings and using technological alternatives, the traditional school remains in each country the core expression of its commitment to children's education. The physical accessibility and safety of the school, the sense of psychosocial security it provides and the quality and relevance of its pedagogy are fundamental in determining its status as a welcoming learning environment. These criteria determine whether and how any child, and especially girls, will participate. They especially determine the participation of the most vulnerable. The incentive provided by an enabling school environment alone is not sufficient to draw in and retain girls; the socio-cultural and economic disincentives keeping them away and pulling them out are frequently compelling. It is, however, clear that the failure of schools to provide such incentive will surely keep them out.

Recognising this, increasing attention is being given by many national systems and international donors to the concept of the "child-friendly school" as at the core of realising inclusive and universal basic education. Child-friendliness is a purposively comprehensive and integrative conception of the school. It is one, which promotes inclusion by creating a physically safe, emotionally secure and healthy environment for all children and their teachers. It enables effective learning for children of all capacities and backgrounds through a strongly child-oriented philosophy based on relevant curriculum and continuing support to the professional development and well being of teachers. It seeks to be sustainable through active partnership with families in setting and monitoring standards of quality and content for their children's education. In all of this, child-friendliness frames a concept of a school with particularly important implications for girls.

## **Findings and Lessons from the Evaluations**

### The Child-friendly School

The vocabulary of the child-friendly school as such was not yet strongly developed at the time of most of the projects included here. Nevertheless, the underlying principle of schools needing to be more welcoming and supportive to girls is certainly evident as an "assumed" fundamental condition of their participation. While few detail the range of in-school qualities now associated with child/girl-friendliness, several confirm their importance generally.

A key such quality concerns the language of instruction. All children are losing where the language they face in the classroom is foreign, typically delivered by teachers of cultures other than their own. Girls continue to be especially vulnerable, often having less exposure to a social environment beyond their immediate families and so with less self-confidence in dealing with the unfamiliar. Efforts to increase girls' attendance in remote provinces of China remain hampered by "the language problem (which) retards quality improvement in both teaching and learning" (China: 101)

School infrastructure is another "friendliness" factor, of course, and one for which girls constitute the critical barometer of quality. They tend to be first to respond by non-participation to a lack of potable water and good sanitation facilities, insufficient or broken furniture, unsafe or unhealthy buildings and an insecure personal environment. Attention to these dimensions continues to be seen as a necessary condition for securing girls' attendance, although not the defining ones. Failure to provide them is proving enough to keep girls away, but their provision is not enough to keep them in schools where teaching is poor and they do not learn.

### The "halo effect" of Girl-friendliness

Schools attempting to be good for girls by ensuring appropriate physical facilities, relevant learning materials and effective teaching, and freedom from abuse are not surprisingly turning out to be equally good for boys. As a result, many are producing increases in enrolments of both boys and girls, increases which -- given the various community and policy barriers impeding girls' participation -- are failing to close the gender gap. In some cases, such as Ethiopia, the gap is widening. The implication, of course, is not to reduce the focus on school quality, but to maintain specifically focused and sustained attention to ensuring that the other two environments are also specifically enabling for girls.

### Teachers, the Ultimate Necessary Condition

Schools, which are ultimately to draw girls in and enable their success, are schools, which are proactively welcoming as learning environments. They are those which expect

to ensure the best learning performance of each girl, enhance her life skills, encourage her aspiration, and develop her sense of self-worth and capacity as an individual and as a member of her society.

Teachers are clearly at the core of creating and maintaining such schools. Especially in rural areas, they are often the "sine qua non of sustainable education for girls"; the "cornerstone" of ensuring sound pedagogy; the "interface" between the family and the wider society (Morocco: 73). As an enabling factor in all effective interventions, strengthening the capacities of teachers to be reflective and respected professionals is proving key. Experience of the CAR indicates that both communities and education systems need to monitor and support teachers to ensure they are ready and able to deal with gender. In Ghana, while school food programmes and enrolment drives are increasing initial numbers, gains are being lost where quality is not improved -- "quality" in this case defined as improving teachers' capacity to develop local learning materials and use learner-oriented methods (Ghana #3:30)

For PAGE, its "biggest success" is considered to be the change produced in teachers' attitudes toward girls, and the follow-on impact this is having on their improved behaviour toward students in general -- and on students' interactions with one another. Such change is happening even though classroom materials are not regularly available, nor are most teachers helped to use them. Thus, although many teachers feel it "all requires too much effort", they do see their efforts to develop materials and collaborate with peers as making the school "more girl-friendly". Teachers are being engaged as partners in the change process, not merely its conduits (PAGE/MTR: 6).

There continues to be evidence that female teachers are a positive inducement to girls' participation. Less clear are the reasons for this i.e. how a teacher's gender *per se* is the defining variable in helping girls stay in school and learn better. Intervening variables are appearing to matter. At least in the case of a China girls' project, much of the positive impact from female teachers is coming as much from their enthusiasm at being recruited and encouraged as from their gender as such. The conditions under which social class, culture or geography (e.g. rural/urban) might equally matter are not clear. These questions are important to answer, however, as communities and education systems are trying to assess the costs and benefits of putting female teachers into rural and marginal schools -- where appropriately gender-sensitive and pedagogically trained male teachers could more easily go.

### Teachers' Support and Supervision

Teachers cannot be expected to create girl-friendly schools on their own, especially where the surrounding environments are not supportive. Gender-sensitive pre-service education is critical, but over the long-term. Assigning teachers the central place in sustaining gender-oriented innovations in the immediate term, in a sustained way, is consistently coming to mean their being provided professionally competent in-service supervision. Eritrean teachers, for example, rank such training as their first priority, over

better salary and materials. The innovations of PAGE are being hindered where facilitated in-class opportunities for teachers actively to practice with gender-sensitive materials and jointly explore ways of handling the single-sex classroom are not being provided (Zulu: 19).

Particularly positive in this respect are mechanisms enabling teachers to mentor one another. Education resource centres, teacher associations, school clusters and teacher networks are all being tried, in various formats and in many countries. Sub-cluster teacher training in Bangladesh is one example of this, and is resulting in higher girls' attendance and fewer drop-outs as teachers are becoming better able to share experience, support one another in the classroom and use materials more effectively. Overall, the approach is producing a sense of schools *per se* as more "child-welcoming" (Bangladesh #2).

The value inherent in peer-based sharing of ideas, experience and moral support is clear. Also important is its greater affordability. Rarely will education systems have sufficient technical resources to make formal supervision viable on its own. Teacher-to-teacher professional linkages, especially among female teachers, is being recognised as probably the only way for sustained support to quality teaching. A not unimportant by-product of these linkages is encouraging more women to become, and especially to remain teachers.

A further promising advance in teachers' professional development, one with particular potential also for better monitoring of school-based change, is the "continuous assessment" methodology being introduced in Swaziland (AGEI/MTR: 17). A form of diagnostic pedagogy, CA is helping teachers exercise greater control over the impact they have on students by developing skills systematically to assess their teaching in terms of its effect on learning outcomes. Of benefit to classrooms generally, the approach is seen as especially positive for teachers' interaction with girls where complemented by gender-sensitive training and materials.

### Congruence in Teacher Training

One caveat to the overall positive assessment of the CA approach is its labour intensity, the considerable time and effort required both for teachers to learn and practice and for trainers to supervise application (AGEI: 17). It is not a unique finding, however. Most projects, certainly when working under tight donor schedules, are facing pressures to produce results over short time frames. It is also clear, however, that no intervention aimed at levels of change of the kind underlying gender equality is doable other than by well-facilitated reflective practice. One-off, lecture-based workshops can be effective in generating new awareness; they are rarely producing sustained attitudinal or behavioural change. The emergence of intensive and continuous *systems* of in-service training is especially worthy of note in this regard, indicating an effort to move away from minimalising the complexity of teachers learning as professionals.

Support to teachers also means taking a holistic perspective, recognising that training itself can be "highly variable"; dependent on the quality of the trainer, the way it is organised and how it is followed up (AGEI: 22). Substantive inputs to developing new behaviours are but one of many factors impinging on life in classrooms. Salary levels and conditions of service may not be sufficient to determine what teachers do, but they certainly count and are undermining even good training efforts. Strengthening capacities of teachers to support girls means also meeting their basic survival

needs. It means raising their status -- in the case of Ghana, for example, ending the stereotype of teachers that they are "weak, lazy and less capable or intelligent, or that they create a less positive (learning) environment" (Ghana #3:37).

### Bringing Girls Together

Providing opportunities for girls to support and encourage one another is similarly proving an effective way to sustain participation. Especially important in the case of the more at-risk girls is facilitating their adaptation into the culture of the school. In the early grades most specifically, girl-girl mentoring is suggested as having a positive effect in keeping girls in school, one perhaps more powerful than scholarships. Peer support, carefully monitored, is proving a good means of drawing on the experience and less-threatening demeanour of older girls to give younger and newer students a sense of security and protection in the school setting.

The most explicit strategies for promoting stronger associations among girls continue to be those based around their physical separation from boys. In cases where a community's culture opposes boys and girls studying together, the introduction of separate schools is proving effective, at least in the short-to-medium term. At the same time, the importance of dealing with the multiple dimensions of exclusion is clear; effectiveness is not a function of separation alone. It is important, simultaneously, that complementary efforts address barriers of distance (situating schools close to girls' home communities), a girl's household obligations and teen-pregnancy (flexible schedules allowing them to stay enrolled while helping at home), security and propriety (hiring qualified female teachers) and costs (providing financial incentives).

On a smaller scale, and perhaps one which is more sustainable, gender-segregated classrooms are also proving to have some success. In PAGE, the strategy is less a matter of addressing cultural prohibitions against mixed classes than of giving girls their own space for self expression, free from boys' harassment. No comprehensive data are available to indicate what, other than the separation, might be contributing to or limiting the effectiveness of these classes; nor are there data on what the boys are doing or learning in theirs. There are, however, initial indications from girls' own reports and teacher comments that single-sex classes are enabling girls to be more assertive, relaxed, ready to speak up and to explore new ideas. Coupled with the academic focus, efforts to encourage girls in activity outside the classroom are also proving beneficial. Especially

where built around traditional sports and other extra-curricular activities, they are "seen as essential in building their self-esteem and confidence" (Zulu: 26).

Determining the circumstances under which these classes work for specific subjects or all, for all or only higher-grade levels, in all schools or just those with large numbers of classes and teachers needs still to be done. Fuller inputs from families are needed to address, for example, the concerns of some that separating boys and girls in school fails to prepare them for a real, gender-mixed, world. In this respect, these interventions have still to explore whether and how separate classes can enhance dealing with such gender-sensitive issues as reproductive health, sexual behaviour and gender relationships.

### **Incentives**

Incentives remain a key issue in girls' education interventions, assumed to be an effective way to assist girls and their families overcome especially the cost barriers to participation. They also remain, however, a strategy surrounded by questions of focus and means of targeting, of long-term effectiveness and of potential risks.

One such risk is of projects being defined too narrowly around a single incentive and, in consequence, failing to ensure a sufficiently comprehensive view of exclusionary pressures in the system or for the child. Scholarships provided through the girl-mentoring project in Zimbabwe are bringing more girls into school, but are not realising broader impact. There are "no reported efforts to work with the wider community on issues of girls' education or opportunities". Families are "clearly relieved to have one less set of school fees to pay", but seem neither to be giving girls additional study time nor to have changed attitudes regarding their education (Zimbabwe: 2). Nor is change evident among school staff; headmaster "views regarding girls' and boys' performance and capabilities were disappointingly traditional and biased towards boys.... (adding) pedagogical or emotional support to girls (viewed by some) as unacceptable favouritism, thus ensuring that the status quo is likely to be maintained".

Incentives may be putting the development of local responsibility at risk by being "too successful" in the immediate term. Again in Zimbabwe, this is one interpretation of parents preferring to draw on the project's scholarship support rather than look to a less-well endowed Department of Social Welfare, and of their failing to mobilise the community's "collective responsibility for the education of needy children.... one of the disturbing findings of the evaluation (being) parents' lack of faith in community-based actions designed to support needy children". In both cases, sustainability is being put in serious question (Zimbabwe: 6-7).

Further questions concern the targeting of incentives specifically for girls, and for those girls most in need of them. In at least one case, support has been going to girls whose families are able to pay, but elect not to. In a number of cases, boys are benefiting as much as girls from such school-based incentives as lunch programmes. Thus, while participation numbers overall may go up through incentives, both the gender gap and

poverty impact remain unaffected. Again, the conclusion is obviously not that boys and better-off girls should somehow be denied the chance of higher quality schooling.

Rather, it is that the goal of moving more expeditiously and effectively to remove barriers and ease the way for especially excluded children, and for girls within that, has to be more judiciously set. This means identifying, analysing and focusing on those specific factors and incentives, which are most powerful in differentiating exclusion on the basis of vulnerability and gender. Boarding schools continue to be seen as among the most positive, pro-girl environments in terms of sustained persistence. Such actions must be accompanied, however, by broader structural changes in the school itself, to improve the quality of what is taught.

A final caution from Benin again stresses a holistic approach. With fee requirements for girls removed, their participation has gone up, but the schools are having problems to cope effectively with the greater numbers. A similar impact is evident in Zambia where PAGE has been successful in mobilising families to send their daughters, who then arrive to find neither desks nor learning materials.

### Counting and Assessing

Schools, like national systems, are generally weak in monitoring the status of children within the scope of their responsibility, including both those who are enrolled and those who are not. In many countries, there appears still to be fairly wide-spread ignorance on the part of school managers and teachers, and upwards through the system, of what is happening to the girls: where they are, what they are learning if they are in class and what they are doing when they are not. Even for schools engaged in girls' participation projects, knowledge of what effect, if any, classroom and community-based interventions are having is relatively limited, leaving little to guide improved practice.

The AGEI experience indicates that "there is still a lot of work to be done with respect to making educational data consistent, usable and accurate" (AGEI/ESARO: 5), but that some is beginning to happen. In Benin, older "big sister" students are helping to track the attendance and progress of their younger classmates, while community members "chart" activities of the school as a whole. Using participatory data collection as a capacity development tool at micro-level, local education staff are being trained "to collect and monitor school and district data on the progress of girls' education", an activity generating information about system practice as well as fostering a sense of ownership in the officers (AGEI/MTR: 21). In Ghana, strengthening PTAs and guiding 'community mapping' exercises are proving effective in enabling parents to track girls' attendance and teacher performance (Ghana #2:39). Development of 'daily activity graphs' is further helping families and communities identify those who are not regularly in school and factors blocking participation.

## **2. Families and Communities**

### **Introduction**

Quality of supply matters; good education provision is clearly necessary to girls' participation. It is not, however, sufficient. The CRC recognises families as the first and most important determinants of the protection and development of children. Jomtien confirmed education as "too diverse, complex and demanding" to expect governments to act alone. Schools and education systems may push girls out through inadequate conditions, but it is in families -- especially through mothers -- that decisions are made and resources allocated to send them in the first place. For this reason, education systems and schools must support families in coming to accept children's right to education and in finding ways of enabling girls to benefit from it.

Families have to balance priorities, of course; education benefits and costs gauged against those of health and nutrition, shelter and income. Gender, age and perceived capacity also come into the equation; girls, young children and those with disabilities find it hardest to gain a place. Developing

a better understanding of how these decisions are made is particularly important for programmes aimed at marginalised parents, those whose experience of schooling may be limited or negative, or for whom cultural and linguistic distance may make interaction with the school uncomfortable. The perceptions of these families as to the role of the school in the lives of their children will invariably influence both their encouraging girls' enrolment and under what circumstances. In particular, their perceptions are likely to influence how they interact with any interventions aimed at changing their attitudes or behaviours.

### **Findings and Lessons from the Evaluations**

#### Participation and the Complexity of Exclusion

Marginalised families make decisions on their children's education, especially for daughters, in very complex and difficult circumstances. Finding an appropriate balance among often conflicting values, priorities and perceptions is difficult in contexts of restrictive traditional cultures, subsistence-level resources and unsupportive societies. Local participation, as a concept and a strategy, is recognized by most interventions as key to ensuring relevance and acceptability; families and communities are being more often included as core players in action to bring girls to school. Finding ways to address parents' legitimate concerns for their daughters' safety and their need for help at home or in bringing in an income are becoming more common and well thought-through -- albeit not always more successfully done.

Family-based approaches are moving teachers and education officers further away from the security of traditional roles to involve them directly in communities. Though not always making a strong impact, it is proving an effective strategy in some cases. In one PAGE province, school staff are engaging traditional chiefs in public forums, with popular drama and adult literacy programmes to make the case for girls. An important aim of such outreach efforts in the CAR is to broaden the perspectives of girls, their families and communities: to help them see education as their joint responsibility with government, and that education will lead to something better e.g. future employment and healthier families.

### Recognizing Demand

One especially critical insight from the evaluations is that children's education, for both boys and girls, is important to most parents. This includes the very marginalized and resource poor. In almost all cases, girls are being kept back less as a function of being female than because being female puts them at a disadvantage in the balance of other priorities. It brings with it specific demands on time and energy, and encumbers them with specific cultural constraints. All things being equal, most families would send daughters to school, were these pedagogically good, physically safe and culturally supportive. In Egypt, daughters are held back not because parents are against their education, but because schooling is seen "primarily as a route out of the village", and "fathers and elders of the village (do) not believe girls should be encouraged along this path" (Allemano:51). In the region generally, educational investments by poor families in sons is less because they are inherently more valuable than because they are more likely to get work and support parents in old age (Ibid:37).

An important implication of this is that genuine change in attitudes and actions on the part of schools and education policies to improve supply are reasonably likely to succeed in altering the weight parents give to girls' schooling. Enhanced infrastructure, accessibility and teaching quality, coupled with broad public advocacy for gender equality and local employment generation, can serve to reduce disincentives. Interventions in the Middle East and China are succeeding where they focus specifically on answering parent concerns, through better teaching, more locally relevant curriculum, livelihood-skills training. In Ghana, education is coming to be seen by parents as a requirement of productive citizenship for all children, in an environment of increasingly positive socio-economic change. In expressing this view, parents are also showing stronger and "genuine commitment" to the education of daughters (Ghana #3:i)

Partnerships again are key. Much more than simply a matter of having parents appear at the school to pay fees and maintain the grounds, it means encouraging parents, through PTAs, local NGOs and other service agencies, to take an active part in setting priorities for education, making decisions on school management and monitoring learning quality. In Ghana, functioning PTAs are "perhaps the most dramatic improvement" brought about by the Childscope project. By being active in the affairs of the school, they are "effective in developing a community environment in which girls' education can thrive", as parents monitor attendance, visit homes of absentees and follow-up teachers' performance

(Ghana #3:39). In Benin, participatory "diagnostic communautaire" contracts teachers, parents and village councils to generate plans for how the school should be run (AGEI:15). In Zambia, interventions with communities through traditional leaders have shifted cultural practices around the nature of puberty rights, "keeping adherence to local socio-economic patterns, but trying to modify them so that girls might still attend school" (Zulu:18)

### Responsibilities of Intervention

As suggested earlier, sensitivity to the demands put on community participation remains a critical, if still fairly unexplored, imperative in community-based interventions. Family pressures against girls' participation and their perceptions of cost and benefit are usually genuinely felt and seldom unreasonable seen in context. Interventions, therefore, can easily be intrusions. They are successful where they recognize, mitigate and make worthwhile the risks and sacrifices being asked. A core criterion of Childscope, for example, includes ensuring that the "roles and responsibilities for management and quality" are fairly balanced; that families remain in control of the process rather than controlled by it.

Consistency counts. Projects asking families to make substantive changes in basic beliefs and behaviours in sending daughters to school have problems where they provide only nebulous promises of improved teaching and learning. Similarly, invitations to families to participate mean little when, as in the Guinean example asking them to assess their school's goals, their inputs are ignored. "Community fatigue and disillusionment" not surprisingly follow (AGEI/WCAR:9). Delays in delivering on school infrastructure in a Ghanaian project, with resultant "deteriorating conditions" in classrooms and supplies, are not sending the message to families that their daughters and the school matter. With no "physical evidence of change", and no apparent commitment from the system, there is little to encourage participation (Ghana #3:11).

### Need for Joint Action

School-family collaboration is proving especially critical for girls' enrolment and persistence since barriers to their participation are rarely based in the school or family alone. Problems of early marriage and pregnancy are prime examples of the need to involve girls, their families and the school in joint analysis and action. Life-skills curriculum and active-learning methods are necessary steps for enabling girls to develop self-confidence and strategies for negotiating sexual relations. They are proving most successful, however, when associated with support to schools in removing restrictive enrolment regulations denying married girls and young mothers admission; to families and communities in changing dowry traditions which force girls' early school leaving; to fathers and young husbands in understanding that pregnant daughters and wives need not stop their education; and to all those responsible for girls' well-being in finding ways to help them balance home, child-care and academic responsibilities.

## Engaging Women

Of particular potential in facilitating this capacity for participation at the local level, and thus of strengthening the "demand" side of the equation, are the increasing efforts being made to engage women as advocates and role models for girls' education. Enhancing the image of girls as legitimate learners is more often being done well through opportunities given women (mothers, teachers, community neighbours) to learn and participate: to exchange experiences, extend each other moral support, and show in publicly visible ways their own capacity to acquire and use new knowledge and skills. In China, courses for women are creating important "learning environments" in which girls' education is being fostered. "Schools are serving the community and vice-versa in vitalized two-way communication" (China:106).

In Zimbabwe, support to building capacity at the community level to promote girls' education is proving useful in engaging women and strengthening their encouragement of their daughters' schooling (Zimbabwe:8). The "strength of opinion among women about the value of supporting girls' education" is considered a significant factor in the success being realized, representing an important "entry point for the creation of sustainable community-based support systems" for bringing girls to school (Ibid:8).

In another form, women are effectively supporting women, and through them their daughters, in Benin. The creation of "mediatrices" as advisors and facilitators to the community on girls' education is fostering contact among mothers, daughters and schools, helping answer their questions and calm their doubts. Mediatrices are also proving effective in "promoting a culture of monitoring" within the community with respect to the activities of community *educom* schools (Benin/MTR:6). They are producing an "important synergistic impact ... in revitalizing not only the schools, but also the women's and community groups" with which they are working (AGEI/MTR:18,20). A key concern, however, is how they and their functions will be maintained once donor funding ends.

The success of such projects is dependent on ensuring women are genuinely active as beneficiaries, not merely passive "recipients": active in their training, on committees, as teaching assistants. It means supporting their own learning, as well as that of their daughters. Girls' education

programmes in Guinea, Morocco and the CAR all incorporate this dimension, thereby increasing women's interest in their daughters education, their own sense of security in partnering with the school, and their visibility as "learner" role models for girls. Childscope's emphasis on linking women in participatory learning and analysis activities is proving similarly effective. With the task of identifying needs and problems related to children and their schooling, and mapping community resources for addressing these, a particularly important side-benefit has been highlighting to both men and women how much women know of local conditions and their ability to assess these. In mobilizing

positive opinion on women's capacities outside the home, the exercise shows the potential value to communities of advancing girls' education, confirming both their ability to learn and to apply that learning to the advantage of the community as a whole.

### **3. Priorities, Strategies and Mechanisms of Intervention**

In addition to analyzing the substantive factors influencing girls' education, the evaluations also indicate and imply suggestions for best practice in focusing and managing interventions. This next section elaborates some of these, drawing also on the wider body of global knowledge about girls' education. All, it is important to note, are very much mutually reinforcing and, in portraying an effective system, internally consistent.

#### Act Expressly for Girls

A clear framework and coherent action are not uniquely important to girls' education projects, but they are especially critical to them. Gender-focused interventions require actions across a variety of dimensions, local and national bodies and sub-sector elements. Such projects are particularly prone to fragmentation. It is easy to become immersed in the general (better education) and lose focus on the specific (girls' participation and success). Girls *per se* need to be central, the consistent thread guiding and monitoring policy formation and programme implementation. Assumptions, goals and progress must explicitly and persistently account for *girls'* participation, and for their absence. As long as systems accept the idea that received culture, established tradition or economic need can justify girls not being in school, they will not be there.

#### Balance Affirmative Action with Mainstreamed Reform

Overall, the evaluations thus confirm the importance and appropriateness of interventions concentrating on the most excluded and, within these, giving priority to gender equality and girls' participation. At the same time, such actions are stronger where they seek to improve the quality and accessibility of education for all children as a matter of their right and society's obligation. Effectiveness for girls is increased, in fact, where interventions combine mainstreaming of gender into existing education reform efforts. National campaigns to remove regulations against pregnant girls in school or requiring schools to have proper sanitary facilities have more lasting effect when incorporated into broader policies aimed at opening schools to any child facing special challenges and constraints to access and persistence.

In Guinea, free textbook distribution, officer training and hiring more women teachers are raising standards for all children; within such an enabling setting, affirmative action in support of girls is making a stronger impact. Similarly, action in Zambia is more effective as it couples systems decentralization and application of a sector-wide process

with the gradual integration of gender and equity interventions. Generally, advances made through affirmative action are proving more readily institutionalized and sustained where broader policies include advocacy and evaluation reinforcing elements *inter alia* girl-friendly. Affirmative actions are not being sustained where they are isolated from the system. Typically, they promote child-centred, humane and professionally sound behaviours on the part of school heads, teachers and parents which serve all children well. Synergy is key to permanent, coherent and integrated reform.

### Take a Holistic Perspective

In design and method, the more inclusive and long-term the perspective, the more likely it is that actors at all levels will be able to recognize and act on those "mundane details" which often impede, or facilitate, positive outcomes as the intervention passes through the system. The narrower the perspective, shorter the time-line and more frequent the shifting of programme priorities by governments and donors, the less scope there is for system learning and corrective action. The less room there is for new partners to be brought in (e.g. NGOs working in girls' education), for accommodating newly emerging issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS and its impact on girls' attendance), for people to acquire, apply and adapt new knowledge and skills (e.g. parents becoming effective as PTA members).

A comprehensive framework allows taking into account what are often labelled as extenuating circumstances -- those elements within an intervention environment which do not fall into the immediate terms of reference of a project but which can, and often do, undermine its eventual effect. It allows action on the lives of girls beyond the immediacy of the school, in the areas where home and school interact. Engaging girls in the context of their families and the pressures they face, facilitating transition across the cultures of family and school and adapting both cultures to accommodate conflicts are critical to effecting change. It allows an intervention to recognize and address related issues in each of the three environments so as to ensure joint action. Well-managed community mobilization enrolls impressive numbers of girls, but not considering school infrastructure leaves them nowhere to sit or materials to use. No one action on gender is proving effective without reference to the whole; this is happening only where this focus is explicit.

### Create Capacity and Institutionalize Change

Interventions promoting the kind of systemic change underlying gender equality are effective where they incorporate clear and serious attention to institutionalizing their innovations. This means, for all those involved, facilitating the opportunity to learn: to acquire, practise and adapt the new attitudes, behaviours and mechanisms of collaboration and tailored action implied by concepts of inclusive and girl-friendly education. Those expected to change themselves and the system need to be supported in understanding and operationalizing the ideas of equity into their roles as parents, teachers, education officers.

Such capacity development within a national policy and bureaucratic system is proving a critical challenge, however. Ministries are not always welcoming of what is seen as technical assistance interference; it is not generally made a core focus of projects aimed at introducing innovation such as girls' education. Nonetheless, "decisions to take specific interventions to scale or to reject them will only be as good as the rigour of the experimentation process for each intervention. Thus, the need to be systematic with the process. Sufficient information and clear guidelines must be provided to implementing groups and individuals" (Zulu:41). A similar message comes from the China girls' education project in the need for "effective schemes for execution", including defined objectives and performance indicators as means of clarifying role responsibilities and explicit plans for evaluation and training (China:107).

Human resource development is a key determinant of sustained organizational change. Where people are being asked to relate in different ways with their reference community -- policy-makers with programme and curriculum developers; these with teachers; teachers with students and parents -- strengthening their ability to analyze systems, identify indicators and monitor movement along the various dimensions of the change is important. Creating and using gender-sensitive materials, learner-oriented teaching and inclusive schools imply new knowledge and skills, on both individual and systems levels. All of this requires coherent and facilitated actions and structures through which learning and adaptation can happen.

Progress on girls' participation also requires mobilizing participation of families, communities and teachers. This happens most effectively where participation is not simply expected, where people are assumed not simply to "turn up" or adopt new methods, but where capacities for participation, risk taking and challenging current practice are facilitated. It is proving a critical lesson of decentralization, for example, gender status more effectively assessed, priorities negotiated and relevant workplans drawn up at local levels where project managers and staff at this level are supported in learning how to do these things. Similarly, skills at building partnerships often need to be developed and specific allowances made for practising them as part of social mobilization and sensitization strategies. These are not skills which schools and families can be assumed to have "on hand".

### Facilitate Adaptive Tailoring

Almost by definition, projects concerned with girls' education are happening in highly variable and largely unpredictable environments. In consequence, the degree of control which designers, managers and partners can exercise over inputs and outcomes is limited. The need for responsiveness and adaptation is absolute. Irrespective of the level of action, "patience and persistence" within a long-term and iterative perspective are critical. Promoting, engaging and mobilizing stakeholders require project designs and implementation strategies which account for the constraints and strengths of the

particular circumstances in which they find themselves. They need to leave margins for change.

Such adaptation is especially crucial in dealing with families. Typically already vulnerable, families cannot always readily accommodate the changes required in dealing differently with gender. In most project settings, it is the cultural, experiential and psychological distance of these families from the goals and methods of intervention which are invariably the greatest. In the AGEI projects, for example, uncertain subsistence-level resources, poor agriculture production and sporadic labour migration are just a few of the many other "features that affect the availability of human resources in rural environments". In Niger, literacy programmes have to be timed not simply to suit students' speed of learning, but also the impact of the rainy season on girls' ability to attend. In other cases, fee supplements and school meal programmes have to be tailored to cover periods of no farm income and little food due to prolonged drought and/or large numbers of children affected by HIV/AIDS.

### Identify Change Agents

Within this same capacity framework, it becomes important who participates. By definition, it is not "systems" which care about excluded or vulnerable children, but the relatively small number of specifically motivated individuals or groups within them who catalyze action, encourage persistence and move things forward. The role of individual commitment and capacity is crucial. The more interventions look for ways to encourage, reward and strengthen these individuals, listen to their ideas and take seriously their need for moral support as well as resources, the more effective they are.

Sustainable change eventually demands system-level commitment, of course. As projects begin to act upon systems, the more successful of them recognize and build on these change agent "champions". In Yemen, it is the teachers and educational supervisors "who show real desire and interest" because they want "to have their community's girls educated and to be proud of being part of (an) educational revolution". The project works effectively in part because it allows these people to recognize that they count (Yemen:8). Project effectiveness is limited where such people are treated as interchangeable. One project in Africa reports loss of momentum, high levels of frustration and stalled project progress where replacements for key and well-experienced staff are either too junior or lack the training to carry the activities.

### Balance National Scope and Local Reach

There is some indication that interventions at the national policy and bureaucracy level may be waning in favour of working more directly with communities and schools. Such a shift of emphasis is not without merit. Traditionally, limited attention to the participation of families and teachers has reduced impact, while the difficulties involved in identifying effective entry points and mobilizing systemic change at the national level

is often significant. Action with communities and schools can produce immediately visible, and in some ways easier, results. Feedback from teachers, parents and students is often more straightforward, engendering further action as it provides incentive to neighbouring actors.

There is need, however, for balance. While more comprehensive and sustained action at the community and school levels is necessary, it is not sufficient. Lasting impact on girls' participation is limited where local initiatives are not accompanied by attention to national policies and bureaucratic systems, in education itself and in related sectors; where national advocacy and policy do not simultaneously address issues of equity in economic and social development, links between education and work, management capacity within the bureaucracy for supporting effective teaching and producing relevant curriculum. Central systems remain responsible for EFA, including gender equality. The experience of Benin is not unique: local participation can effectively empower, but cannot be used as an opportunity to "transfer the government's burden onto the community" (AGEI:5). While requiring local roots, sustained action on girls' equality in education is necessarily a national task.

#### Make the Life of Classrooms Visible

Advocacy and action to promote girls' education need to make the often hidden life of schools open and available to broad social participation; they need to generate well-grounded information about the world of the classroom specifically as it affects girls. The extent of focussed, systematic and regular monitoring and research "inside the school walls" which might produce such knowledge remains, however, minimal. As such, it is a significant gap in addressing the particular learning needs and capacities of girls, and in recognizing differences among them. Without knowing the nature, rationale and implications of what teachers are doing and not doing in classrooms; and whether and how they are making use of intervention opportunities on behalf of girls, it is proving very difficult to know the actual value of change efforts.

Implied in all of this are the two imperatives: of ensuring direct and meaningful participation by all of those touched by the innovation, in all aspects of planning and assessment analysis; and of making these analyses action-oriented, enabling those participants to know and to do better. Without the active involvement of those expected to change attitudes and behaviours as a result of the intervention, the basis on which that and any other initiative is planned, designed and executed is almost always fatally weakened. Those responsible are less likely to buy into the process. The capacity of change agents and donors to draw lessons from across intervention experience to assess the soundness of policy and strategic approaches is reduced.

### Recognize the School as Core of Interventions for Girls

Of the three environments having an impact on girls' education, the school is where much of the interaction and synergy must be. Movement toward improving the girls' participation, and especially the quality of their learning, is succeeding where involvement at this level is direct and sustained; where gender-based interventions help teachers and other school staff to think and talk about teaching and learning as these present barriers to, or facilitate, girls' participation. Schools, in turn, need support in being able to engage with their two referent communities -- the rest of the education system and families -- in open and flexible partnership. The initiative for acting on girls' learning must be taken within the school in order to account for the specific capacities and restrictions obtaining there. Project need to serve as catalysts for this, providing school the "safety net" they require for action.

### Link Schools and the Education System

At the same time, interventions are less effective where they are "school-only" exercises. While schools are perhaps the most tangible expression of a community's expectations and hopes for its children's development, they are also the operational arm of national policy and bureaucracy systems and, in many instances, constitute the strongest bastion of protected self-interest within this structure. Teachers and educational managers can be among the most reluctant to accept suggestions and requests to change. Nor are they always in a position to do so. For teachers to change the way they understand or perform their role requires sometimes considerable risk, and considerable support.

Interventions need to locate school-based actions into the wider system so as to incorporate access to key linkages of teacher training and supervision systems, to curriculum development expertise, to facilitative policies. Such systemic supports are especially important in the context of new gender policies which may be asking teachers to change behaviours they traditionally and personally accept.

### Begin Where Families Are

An analysis of the high enrolment rates for girls in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh shows that parents share a strong "passion for education ... consider schooling important not only for their own children but for all children" (PROBE:117). Building effectively on this base requires interventions to understand and work within the decision-making processes and criteria these families use in determining their daughters' education and learning. Because families vary greatly in terms of social, economic and cultural context, and in the experiences they have had with schools, projects succeed where they are able to recognize the differences and act accordingly in building on the strengths and mitigating impediments.

This implies a wide intervention focus, taking as the point of departure the capacities and constraints families bring and, from there, working in conjunction with other sub-sectors and ministries to provide appropriate support (e.g. to develop projects which involve income generation, community development, community schools or adult education). At the same time, interventions are effective to the extent they avoid being too wide, of including such a wide range of elements and actions that the main point of the intervention -- to get girls into school and keep them there through good teaching -- is lost. There are implications for the national level in this, to develop the professional policy-making and management capacity of staff to ensure that initiatives taken locally are recognized and built into programmes.

Most especially, intervenors must acknowledge the "ethics of intervention". They need explicitly to engage in partnership with families and communities in ways which protect their culture, their psychosocial well-being and their economic security. They need to recognize the broad interests of families and actively facilitate their ownership over the process. Again, this means accounting for the fact that change does not happen automatically; it needs to be scaffolded through the provision of a wide range of flexible and interactive learning opportunities integrated into the lives of families and their children as they make the effort to engage with the school.



## CONCLUSION

The evaluations reviewed as the basis for this present synthesis describe situations of evident progress in girls' education, especially in getting them into school. At the level of the school and community, the variables most directly associated with these positive results are those which most directly address the pressures keeping girls away and pushing them out: family concerns about the security, safety and relevance of the school; cultural practices and economic conditions interfering with girls' availability for study; broken infrastructures, poor pedagogical quality and costs of the school itself. Methodologically, projects are most successful in attracting girls where they facilitate capacities and create mechanisms to enable participation and foster linkages.

Unfortunately, the evaluations also present a situation in which it is difficult to determine how lasting this progress is likely to be, either in keeping girls in school or in enabling their effective learning and successful completion. They do not, as a whole, present a level of analysis which indicates the range and relative strength of factors interacting to influence participation or persistence; nor do they assess in-class teaching and learning processes. In consequence, while it is possible to say *that* inputs and processes appear to be working toward improving the status of girls and their education in a number of countries in the mid-decade, it is not possible to say much beyond inference *how* the interventions are realizing their results or what their longer-term impacts may be. It is especially difficult to generalize beyond the immediate instances<sup>10</sup>.

A number of lessons and concerns raised by the evaluations have been noted in the previous section. Following are four points intended to reinforce these with respect particularly to implications for intervention.

- Of principal importance is the need for congruence between ends and means, between project goals and the mechanisms intended to produce them. As the priorities and strategies of intervention into girl's education become more comprehensive and integrative, so too must the tools of their delivery. The choice of girls' education intervention mechanisms must recognize the realities of their development context and provide adequate flexibility in dealing with it. They need to foster participation, create partnerships and strengthen capacities; to respond iteratively to the meandering unpredictability of social and institutional change. A shift in this direction is already happening, but needs to be further encouraged as partners pull away from time-bound and narrow projects toward more flexible, open-ended and

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to reiterate that this synthesis is limited by being removed from the data of the projects themselves. The gaps in scope and quality of information indicated are a function of what the evaluations do and do not provide; they are not necessarily indications of what the projects may or may not be doing or achieving. In this concluding section, then, the summary recommendations may, in fact, refer to actions and analyses already underway.

collaborative sector-wide programmes and "long-term participatory processes" key to progress on gender equality (AGEI:19).

- Moving toward this kind of reflected action requires also better monitoring, evaluation and research. In particular, it demands more process-oriented analysis of the conceptualization, design and implementation of interventions as fundamental to improved practice. This includes research and evaluation to explore in detail the factors which are excluding and including girls; the logic and quality of actions and linkages within projects and between them and their surrounding environment; and the implementation of policy and programme interventions. It also includes better, more systematic use of tools such as project LFAs (or their equivalent) to guide the implementation of inputs, testing of assumptions, monitoring of risk and assessment of expected results. Projects need to look beyond simply whether planned inputs are delivered, to consider whether such inputs were appropriate in the first place given the contextual realities; and whether they are doing what it was assumed they would and in what way<sup>11</sup>.
- One of the more important of these questions requiring analysis suggested by the present set of evaluations concerns the extent and quality of organizational change and learning needed by education policy bodies, bureaucratic structures and schools if they are to "do things differently" on gender. It is particularly important for projects advocating system-level rethinking and new behaviour that consideration is given to what people as individuals, and especially as groups (committees, units, schools) need to know and do in order that these changes be realized. Agreeing on project expectations, establishing indicators and assessing movement toward institutionalizing innovations are core elements in any organizational change process. Assessing existing capacities and mechanisms for supporting them should be included in situation analyses, deciding methods of intervention and measuring results.
- Finally, and somewhat ironically, two specific issues of particular note in the current evaluations around which more systematic exchange of analyses is needed concern the meaning and implications of "gender-sensitivity" and patterns of girls' exclusion.

Uncertainties remain as to what a gender-sensitive approach means in practice,

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<sup>11</sup> For example, to assess not just the fact that teacher workshops aimed at raising issues of gender-sensitivity happened or that a certain number of teachers attended, but also the quality of workshop content and methods, what lessons or skills teachers learned and were subsequently able to apply, under what conditions and with what effect on students. Without this wider focus, evaluations risk either over-estimating success on basis of assumed input effectiveness, or unfairly under-estimating the potential of a project approach which never, in fact, actually happened.

particularly in different cultures. Some examples: what gender-sensitive attitudes, behaviours, materials and regulations "look like" in the classroom, in family interactions and in community governance; how the training and deployment of teachers and school managers should happen in a gender-sensitive system; what the implications are for the gender-sensitive treatment and education of boys; what gender-sensitive systems training requires in terms of what is taught, to whom and how the information is to be used by various units.

Lists of the direct and indirect, school and non-school, factors affecting girls' access, persistence and success are numerous across country and regional contexts. Often, they are much the same. Rarely, however, are they presented in terms of the patterns in which they occur or their varying degrees of influence. To be comprehensive and systematic, policies and programmes require a sound understanding of at this level of analysis: how conditions of exclusion interact with and affect girls in different circumstances; what influences these have relative to one another; what the best sequencing of interventions to address them is; and who the key relevant actors are.



## **ANNEX 1: EVALUATIONS REVIEWED FOR THE SYNTHESIS**

**AGEI Midterm Review: Final Report**. Sept/99. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs/UNICEF adjuncts: ESAR Regional Office Visit Report. April/99; WCAR Regional Office Visit Report. May/99

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#1 "Formative Evaluation of Implementation of the IDEAL Project". Sapta Associates, Dhaka. 1999

#2 "Sub-cluster Training: An Evaluation of the Programme's Achievement". Directorate of Primary Education, Dhaka, 1996

### **Benin**

"African Girls' Education Initiative Midterm Review: Benin". 1999

### **Cameroon**

"African Girls' Education Initiative Midterm Review: Cameroon". 1999

### **Central African Republic**

#1 "Rapport d'Evaluation de l'Impact des Ecoles Communautaires" Prefecture de Nana-Grebizi. 1998

#2 "Evaluation du Genre dans le Programme de cooperation de l'UNICEF dans la Cadre de la Revue a Mi-Parcours du Programme 1997-2001

### **China**

"Primary Education Programme for Poor Areas: Monitoring and Evaluation Report 1996". Shanghai Institute of Human Resources Development. 1996

### **Eritrea**

"Evaluation of the Assistance of the Royal Government of the Netherlands to GSE/UNICEF - Basic Education Project". T Tekie. MoE & UNICEF/Asmara. 1998

### **Ethiopia**

"African Girls' Education Initiative Midterm Review: Ethiopia". 1999

### **Ghana**

#1 "Report on the Internal Evaluation of the Child-School-Community-Project (Childscope) in Afram Plains". UNICEF, Accra 1996

#2 "Child-School-Community-Project (Childscope) Evaluation". S Agarwal & A Hartwell. UNICEF/Accra. 1998

#3 "Evaluative Review of the Ghana Girl Child Education Project". P Cummins et al. CIDA 1999

### **Guinea**

"Evaluation des Centres NAFA en Guinee". A Hamadache et al. Conakry, MoE & UNICEF 1997

### **Kenya**

"A Rapid Assessment of Status of Girls' Education in Six UNICEF-Focus Districts". Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development. Nairobi, Kenya. 1998

### **Morocco**

"Projet Relatif a la Promotion de la Scolarisation de la Fille en Milieu Rural". Evaluation exploratoire-regulatrice. Ministere de l'Education Nationale. 1996

### **Niger**

"Appreciation Rapide sur le Projet Scolarisation des Filles". SBagnou. Niger/ACDI/UNICEF/96

### **Swaziland**

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### **Yemen**

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