

Girls' Education

1. Background

The first Millennium Development target, getting equal numbers of girls into primary and secondary education by 2005, was missed. This put at risk achieving many of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) because education can help unlock progress towards many other MDGs, e.g. in child mortality, maternal health and HIV and AIDS. Although there is a need to ensure that achieving gender equality in education may require a focus on boys in some situations, in the majority of countries where DFID provides support to education, it is girls who are most disadvantaged.

Latest statistics reveal that girls' primary school figures are improving in almost all DFID priority countries in Africa and Asia. But in absolute terms, **44 million girls worldwide** remain out of school.

The highest numbers of out-of-school girls¹ in DFID priority countries are **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sudan**. **DRC, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan, Pakistan and Afghanistan** have the furthest to go in achieving **equality** between girls and boys in access to primary education

Africa remains the greatest challenge

- Out of the 44 million girls out of school, at least 20 million live in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).
- There are only estimated figures available for a number of countries in SSA in particular those affected by conflict. Evidence shows that girls face particular challenges to access safe schooling in post conflict situations. The overall numbers of girls out of school¹ could therefore be higher than 20 million.
- The total number of children out of school in sub-Saharan Africa has gone down but there are still only 89 girls to every 100 boys enrolled in primary school – lower than any other region.

The numbers of children who *complete* primary school is rising but the rates continue to be unacceptably low in many countries, particularly in Africa. The percentage of girls who complete just five years of schooling is below 60 per cent in **Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda**. Many still complete school without obtaining the necessary basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This is significant as the benefits

¹ Children of primary age not enrolled in primary or secondary school.

of education depend critically on the **quality** of education received and educational attainment.

The benefits of investing in girls' education

- Educated girls have better opportunities to earn higher wages, participate in community life and decision making and are better informed about health risks that may be relevant to both themselves and their families such as HIV and AIDS.
- Providing girls with one extra year of schooling beyond the average can boost their eventual wages by 10 to 20 per cent².
- In Africa, children of mothers who receive five years of primary education are 40 per cent more likely to live beyond age five³.

2. DFID's Current Support

In 2005, DFID published its strategy for girls' education, *Girls' Education: Towards a Better Future for all*. Across the world, it has been estimated that 94 countries have failed to meet the first Millennium Development Goal of having equal numbers of girls and boys in primary and secondary education by 2005. Our strategy marked a new phase in the UK's support to girls' education and aimed at helping to get us back on track.

In April 2006, DFID announced an increase in aid to education of £8.5 billion over the period 2006-07 to 2015-16. We are currently working with governments to develop longer term frameworks of support for education. This will include clear frameworks of action to support increased participation of girls in schools and endorses the commitment in the July 2006 White Paper to support special initiatives to get more girls into school and to develop a DFID action plan on gender equality.

Country Level Work

DFID's support to girls' education at country level is best described by highlighting the following case studies from the *First Progress Report*⁴ :

- (i) In **Nigeria**, DFID's £26 million support for the UNICEF Girls' Education project in six northern states has increased girls' enrolments in these states by 10-15 per cent in one year. The project's success was helped by including ways for communities to become involved. The Nigerian

² Psacharopoulos, G. and Patrinos, H.A. 2002 *Returns to Investment in Education: A Further Update* Washington DC, World Bank, Education Sector Unit, Latin America and the Caribbean Region (Policy Research Working Paper No 2881)

³ Summers, L. 1994 "*Investing in All the People: Educating Women in Developing Countries*" EDI Seminar Paper, No 24, Washington DC: World Bank.

⁴ DFID girls' education strategy *Girls' education: Towards a Better Future for All: First Progress Report*, December 2006 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/education/girls-education-full-final.pdf>

government regards this as a flagship project which it intends scaling up in other states with large gender disparities.

- (ii) In **Malawi**, DFID has undertaken a substantial research project on gender-based violence in schools. Almost one in five girls have been sexually assaulted and almost one in ten raped or subjected to attempted rape. A comprehensive national response to gender-based violence in schools is being developed in collaboration with a number of government ministries, NGOs and UNICEF.
- (iii) In **India**, the *Mahila Samakhyha Education for Women's Equality Programme* has played a significant role in increasing women's participation in school management and local government. The programme is also contributing directly to girls' education through support for initiatives to increase access for girls to primary schooling. DFID completed an appraisal of *Mahila Samakhyha* at the end of 2006 with a view to committing up to £35 million over the next seven years.
- (iv) In **Kenya**, DFID provided £2.4 million to support the Primary School Action for Better Health pilot three-year programme, which also embraces related issues on gender-based violence. The review of the programme has shown that the programme has had considerable success in changing behaviour among girls and boys that puts them at risk of HIV. From 2006, DFID is providing £3.5 million additional funding to scale up the programme to have national coverage within two years.
- (v) In **Pakistan**, DFID is engaged in policy dialogue on the high levels of dropout between primary and middle schools that result from both actual and feared violence against women and girls and restrictions on female mobility. DFID is supporting programmes to promote the building of boundary walls and separate latrines, and to extend stipends for middle and secondary schoolgirls and allowances for female teachers to enable them to travel safely to school.
- (vi) In **Rwanda and Ethiopia**, DFID has supported the analysis of government budgets to show the distribution by gender of public finances. Both proved to be useful tools in providing evidence of inequitable funding within the education sector, and resulted in suggestions for revised policy and budget allocations to redress the imbalance.

Working with Civil Society

Most DFID programmes to support girls' education in Africa and some in Asia work in close co-operation with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). For example in **Zambia**, DFID has supported work by the Campaign for Female Education International (Camfed) to improve girls' education in rural schools and communities. In **Malawi** support to Action Aid includes dissemination of research on gender-based violence in and around schools and implementing the Stepping Stones sexual health participatory training programme for teachers.

International Lobbying in Support of Girls' Education

- DFID is an active partner of the **Global Advisory Committee for the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI)** and acted as co-chair from 2002-6. UNGEI was launched at the Dakar World Forum on Education for All in 2000 and its function at global, regional and national level is to lobby, to share knowledge and build capacity for girls' education. DFID has been particularly successful in strengthening links between UNGEI and the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (FTI).
- DFID is combining efforts to highlight the importance of girls' education with donors who also prioritise gender. These include Norway, Sweden, Canada and Germany.

3. The Seven Things DFID Will Now Do to Support Girls' Education

A seven point plan for DFID's continuing support to girls' education has been established based on the findings of the First Progress report

DFID will help countries to:

1. Improve the quality of education so that more girls complete primary education with improved learning outcomes.

In addition to addressing the factors which affect *both* girls *and* boys, for example, the overall quality and numbers of teachers, lack of text books and a greater attention to learning outcomes in national education policy and planning, there needs to be renewed efforts to address the gender-specific causes for the high drop out rates and low learning outcomes for girls. These include violence or fear of violence; pregnancy and care giving responsibilities; and curriculum and teaching styles which reinforce gender stereotypes. In particular, female teachers have a key role in encouraging attendance, improving the education experience for girls and acting as positive role models. DFID support will also address the evidence that girls are significantly more disadvantaged within socially excluded groups affected by other forms of discrimination (such as disability, religion, ethnicity, caste and low economic status).

Action: DFID will work through long-term plans led by country governments to support specific initiatives which address the causes of high drop-out rates for girls and low learning outcomes complementing activities to promote girls' access to education, particularly those from the most disadvantaged groups.

2. Reduce the other costs of primary education (such as uniforms, books, transport), now that tuition fees have been removed in most DFID priority countries.

DFID has recently committed to increasing support to governments' long-term plans for social protection, which include cash benefits targeted at the poorest households. The potential of these programmes to offset the barrier of all the associated costs of sending the children living in these households to school needs to be explored and further developed where appropriate.

Action: DFID's support for girls' education through Ministries of Education will be complemented where appropriate with support to governments' long-term social protection strategies targeting the most excluded and marginal groups.

3. Support gender-aware HIV and AIDS programmes in schools.

A larger number of girls in school can be both an opportunity and a risk in terms of the spread of the HIV virus. In insecure school environments, girls can be particularly vulnerable to teasing and threats, intimidation, sexual harassment and rape and therefore potentially the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. However, the girls' education strategy highlighted growing evidence that educating girls can be a significant factor in preventing the spread of the virus. The 2006 International AIDS Conference in Toronto drew particular attention to the fact that gender inequality is driving the pandemic. The review has shown that DFID, particularly in Africa, is supporting a number of programmes on education and HIV, but that we need to do more to ensure there are more school-focused programmes targeting boys and girls and ensure that the curriculum addresses gender inequality.

Action: DFID's programmes in education and HIV and AIDS in schools will have a stronger gender focus.

4. Make schools safer places.

The review has shown that lack of security in schools continues to be a daily reality for girls in most of the countries where DFID provides support to the education sector. A safe environment for girls includes attention to the design of school infrastructure, in particular, water and sanitation provision. Although DFID has provided some support to tackle this in individual countries, it is an area where more consistency and a stronger voice is required.

Action : Adequate attention to girls' safety and security in school will be promoted through research and influencing policymaking and DFID support for school infrastructure programmes.

5. Expand opportunities for girls to progress to secondary school.

Meeting MDG 3 requires equal numbers of boys and girls, men and women at all levels of education. The strategy emphasised that this target would be missed without more attention to both primary and secondary schooling. The review has shown that the gender gap in education increases dramatically as children progress through the education system. Through approaches that consider the education sector as a whole, DFID is now increasingly engaging with partner governments on developing and expanding secondary education. This provides an opportunity for specific attention to ensure equality is a central part of policy development in this area. As we move this work forward, we will need to better understand both the *demand side barriers* (for example, lack of labour market opportunities for girls, prohibitive indirect costs of secondary education particular to girls – travel/accommodation), as well as *supply side factors*, i.e. adequate number of school places and appropriately trained teachers.

Action: Better understanding of the gender specific barriers to participation in secondary education will be formulated into a new policy brief for use at country level. A strong focus on gender equity will be promoted in DFID's support of secondary education through long term national education plans.

DFID will:

6. Work with other donors and the UN to make sure that gender equality is part of education sector plans and their implementation.

In Africa, the majority of countries involved in the long-term planning process in response to the May 2006 Abuja Commitment to Action are putting renewed emphasis on reaching gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2015. DFID has demonstrated a proven commitment to gender equality through its strong leadership role through the UNGEI partnership at global level and through playing a key role in ensuring that gender equality is given a stronger emphasis in the FTI. These and other partnerships also provide the potential for extending DFID support to girls' education beyond our existing education programmes in PSA countries. In particular, francophone West Africa and countries affected by conflict. These countries contain a significant proportion of the number of girls out of school globally and are amongst the least equitable in terms of enrolment ratios.

Actions: DFID's support for long-term plans for reaching the education and gender MDGs will ensure that credible initiatives are identified to enable girls to achieve their potential in primary and secondary school. DFID's engagement with UNGEI and the FTI will focus on ensuring that gender equality is highlighted in the endorsement and implementation of education sector plans.

7. Ensure that girls' education is integrated within our broader programme of increased support for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The review has reiterated the importance of a cross sectoral response to addressing the obstacles which girls face in attending and remaining in school. It is no coincidence that in countries and regions where women's rights are particularly weak, for example, Afghanistan and northern Nigeria, participation of girls in education is correspondingly low.

Action: DFID's continuing support for girls' education will be integrated with and inform wider efforts to improve DFID's overall performance on gender issues as set out in the Gender Equality Action Plan.

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