

Girls' education: towards a better future for all essay sample

[Education](#)



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Girls' education: towards a better future for all

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Foreword

' To be educated means... I will not only be able to help myself, but also my family, my country, my people. The benefits will be many.'

MEDA WAGTOLE, SCHOOLGIRL, ETHIOPIA

At the turn of the millennium, the international community promised that by 2005, there would be as many girls as boys in school. Later this year, when leaders from around the world come together to take stock of the Millennium Development Goals, there will be no escaping the fact that we have collectively failed to keep this promise. Despite much progress, a child without an education is still much more likely to be a girl than a boy.

This strategy is a first step to get us back on track. It acknowledges that we all need to do substantially more to help girls get into school. It reminds us of the value of education for lifting nations out of instability and providing a more promising future to their people. And regardless of whether they live in a wealthy or poor country, nothing has as much impact on a child's future wellbeing as their mother's level of education. We do not need complex international negotiations to help solve the problem of education. We just need to listen to governments, local communities, children, parents and teachers who know what challenges remain. And we need to provide them with enough funding to put their ideas on education into practice.

To this end, we plan to spend at least £1. 4 billion over the next three years. This money will provide additional support to governments and more resources to strengthen international efforts to coordinate action on girls' education. The example set by countries like Malawi, where the Minister for Education announced free schooling and immediately increased enrolment rates, shows just what can be achieved when there is a clearly defined plan of action and enough political will to implement it. In 2005, the UK will hold the Presidencies of the G8 and the EU. We will use our leadership role to make achieving gender parity in education a priority for the international community.

Girls' education: towards a better future for all

As Meda Wagtole's words make clear, keeping our promise on girls' education will not just give girls better prospects; it holds the key to giving their families, communities and countries a better future as well.

Summary

There are still 58 million girls worldwide who are not in school. The majority of these girls live in subSaharan Africa and South and West Asia. A girl growing up in a poor family in sub-Saharan Africa has less than a one-in-four chance of getting a secondary education. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to get as many girls as boys into primary and secondary school by 2005 is likely to be missed in more than 75 countries.

We need to make much better progress. There is growing international commitment and consensus on what can be done to improve girls'

education. This strategy sets out the action DFID will take and the leadership we will provide, with others in the international community, to ensure equality of education between men and women, boys and girls.

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We will work to narrow the financing gap for education. Over the next three years, DFID plans to spend more than £1. 4 billion of aid on education.

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We will work with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to strengthen its capacity to co-ordinate action on girls' education.

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We will use the UK's Presidencies of the G8 and EU and our role as co-chair of the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) to push gender equality in education up the political agenda.

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We will support the efforts of governments in developing countries to produce plans that prioritise girls' education. This will include providing financial help to those wanting to remove school fees.

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We will work with our development partners to increase educational opportunities for girls; civil society will be a key partner in this work.

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We will increase our efforts to promote awareness within the UK of girls' education in poor countries.

Educating girls helps to make communities and societies healthier, wealthier and safer, and can also help to reduce child deaths, improve maternal health and tackle the spread of HIV and AIDS. It underpins the achievement of all the other MDGs. That is why the target date was set as 2005. That is also why in 2000, at the Dakar Conference, donors promised that every country with a sound education plan would get the resources it needed to implement it. Progress has been hampered by a number of factors: a lack of international political leadership, a global funding gap of an estimated \$5.6 billion a year for education, a lack of plans and capacity within national education systems to improve the access to and quality of schooling for girls, and locally many poor families who simply cannot afford to send their children to school. This paper marks a new phase in the UK's support to girls' education. Now is the time to act.

Introduction

Education matters

In September 2000, 188 heads of state from around the world signed the Millennium Declaration and established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While most goals aim to achieve significant progress in development by 2015, one goal was to be achieved by 2005 – gender parity in primary and secondary education. But, more than 75 countries are likely to miss this goal. We are falling well short of our promise.

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Women are at the heart of most societies. Regardless of whether they are working or not, mothers are very influential people in children's lives. Educating girls is one of the most important investments that any country can make in its own future.

Education has a profound effect on girls' and women's ability to claim other rights and achieve status in society, such as economic independence and political representation. As the following examples demonstrate, having an education can make an enormous difference to a woman's chances of finding well-paid work, raising a healthy family and preventing the spread of diseases such as HIV and AIDS.

For every boy newly infected with HIV in Africa, there are between three and six girls newly infected. Yet, in high-prevalence areas such as Swaziland, two-thirds of teenage girls in school are free from HIV, while two-thirds of out-of-school girls are HIV positive. In Uganda, children who have been to secondary school are four times less likely to become HIV positive. 5

Introduction

Education is a right – but it is still beyond the reach of many For all these reasons, girls' education has long been recognised as a human right. Past international commitments include addressing gender equality within the education system, the first step to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women (see Annex 2). This right to education is denied to 58 million girls, and a further 45 million boys, even at the primary school level. 6 More than 75 countries are likely to miss the 2005 MDG target for gender parity in

primary and secondary enrolments. 7 One-third of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. On current trends, more than 40 per cent of all countries with data are at risk of not achieving gender parity at primary, secondary or both levels of education even by 2015.

These figures hide significant variation across continents, across countries, and across communities.

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There are 23 million⁸ girls out of school in sub-Saharan Africa, distributed across more than 40 countries. A further 22 million out-of-school girls are in South and West Asia, yet the majority of these are concentrated in just two countries: India and Pakistan.

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In Niger, less than one-third of all school-aged girls are enrolled in primary school. By contrast, in Rwanda more than four out of every five girls are enrolled in primary school.

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In Mali, the proportion of girls enrolled in primary school is around six times higher in the city of Bamako than in the more remote areas of Mali.

There is an alarming difference between the numbers of girls attending primary and secondary school. The vast majority of school-aged girls in sub-Saharan Africa are not enrolled in secondary school, because the relatively

high costs of secondary education are acting as a major disincentive for poorer parents. In Pakistan, the gross enrolment rate for girls in secondary education is 19 per cent. 9 In Niger, Tanzania and Chad it is only five per cent. There are exceptions to the rule, but generally in countries where girls fare poorly in primary education compared with boys, they do even worse in secondary education, as illustrated by the graph in Annex 3. Nevertheless, countries are making progress, sometimes dramatically so.

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In Bangladesh, equal numbers of girls and boys now enter secondary school. In 1990, there were only half as many girls as boys in secondary education.

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Nepal has nearly nine girls for every ten boys enrolled in primary school, compared with seven girls for every ten boys in 1990.

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In Kenya, over 1 million extra children have enrolled in primary school since the removal of school user fees in 2003.

A timely strategy

This paper is a first step to identifying – and implementing – the actions that will allow us collectively to keep the promises we made. 10 It serves as a reminder for us to speed up the work we are doing in education. Examples of our work in education include:

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Supporting education in Nigeria where there are 7.3 million children of primary age out of school, of whom 62 per cent are girls. 11 The federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria is implementing an education programme with support from UNICEF and DFID to achieve gender parity and universal basic education. DFID is providing a £26 million grant, which will directly benefit girls as well as boys in six northern states.

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Allocating £10.8 million to the government of Kenya initiative SPRED III (Strengthening of Primary Education), which aims to reduce the burden of the cost of primary education on parents. In the first year of this programme, enrolments increased from 5.9 million to over 7 million and are still rising.

Listening to local people has been an invaluable way of identifying the main constraints that keep girls from entering school, remaining in school, and learning effectively. Our country experience is also providing us with concrete evidence of how governments are overcoming these challenges. We are using this evidence of what works as the basis for the actions we intend to take to speed up progress on girls' education.

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Introduction

DFID's experience in tackling girls' education is drawn from the 25 priority countries where our work is focused. Our education effort in these

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countries is aimed at supporting governments to provide education for all, particularly for girls. These 25 countries contain nearly three-quarters of all girls who do not have access to basic education as shown in Figure 1. 2.

Global support for development, while on the rise, remains well below what is needed to make achieving the MDGs a reality, particularly in countries that are unable to work towards poverty reduction. International bilateral support for education amounts to about \$4 billion a year, with much of this money going towards secondary and university schooling. International support for basic education is less than \$1 billion a year – less than \$2 a year for every school-aged child in the developing world. We need to do better. And we can do better.

Figure 1. 2: Distribution of girls out of school in DFID's 25 priority countries

What prevents girls from getting a quality education?

In many countries and communities in both the developed and the developing world, parents can take it for granted that their daughters receive a quality education. Yet in many other places around the world, providing every child with an education appears to be beyond reach. There are five main challenges we identify that make it difficult for girls to access education. These include:

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the cost of education – ensuring that communities, parents and children can afford schooling;

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poor school environments – ensuring that girls have access to a safe school environment;

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the weak position of women in society – ensuring that society and parents value the education of girls;

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conflict – ensuring that children who are excluded due to conflict have access to schooling; and

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social exclusion – ensuring girls are not disadvantaged on the basis of caste, ethnicity, religion or disability.

These challenges are not exhaustive, but they are recurrent themes in many countries. They constitute additional hurdles girls need to overcome to benefit from quality education. As donors, we need to support countries in meeting these challenges. Ours is a supporting role, not a leading role. And our support works best if it is based on countries' own national strategies to reduce poverty and make progress in education. In particular we need to support countries to have in place the essential elements of quality education for girls (see Box 2. 1).

What prevents girls from getting a quality education?

Box 2. 1

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Essential elements of quality education for girls

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Schools – is a school within a reasonable distance; does it have proper facilities for girls; is it a safe environment and commute; is it free of violence? If not, parents are unlikely to ever send their daughter to school.

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Teachers – is there a teacher; are they skilled; do they have appropriate teaching materials? Is it a female teacher? Are there policies to recruit teachers from minority communities? If not, girls may not learn as much at school and drop out.

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Students – is she healthy enough; does she feel safe; is she free from the burden of household chores or the need to work to supplement the family income; is there a water source close by? If not, she may never have a chance to go to school.

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Families – does she have healthy parents who can support a family; does her family value education for girls; can her family afford the cost of schooling? If not, economic necessity may keep her at home.

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Societies – will the family's and the girl's standing in the community rise with an education; will new opportunities open up? If not, an education may not be in the family's interest.

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Governments – does the government provide adequate resources to offer sufficient school places; do salaries reach the teachers; do teachers receive quality training; is the government drawing in other agencies to maximise the provision of schooling; is there a clear strategy and budget based on the specific situation faced by girls? If not, the conditions above are unlikely to be fulfilled.

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Donors – are donors supporting governments to provide adequate resources; do donors contribute to analysing and addressing the challenges girls face; are donors conscious of local customs and traditions; are donors prioritising the countries' needs rather than their own agendas or existing programmes? If not, governments may simply not be in a position to provide a reasonable chance for all girls to get a quality education.

Educating girls is costly for families

The education of girls is seen as economically and socially costly to parents. Costs come in four forms: tuition fees and other direct school fees; indirect fees (such as PTA fees, teachers' levies and fees for school construction and building); indirect costs (such as transportation and uniforms); and

opportunity costs (such as lost household or paid labour). These costs have a significant impact on whether and which children are educated.

Educating girls can incur extra direct costs, such as special transport or chaperones for safety and 'decency'. The price of attending school for the 211 million economically active children may be the family losing vital income. 12 An education may actually reduce girls' marriage prospects and raise dowry payments to unaffordable levels. Investing in sons, rather than daughters, is perceived as bringing higher financial returns for families as boys are more likely to find work and be paid a higher salary.

The high cost of education is the biggest deterrent to families educating their daughters. Many of the countries DFID prioritises for support have removed tuition fees or are working towards their removal. For example, there are no tuition fees in our Asia priority countries except Pakistan, and a number of Africa priority countries have recently removed school fees. In Africa, school fee removal has led to a dramatic increase in enrolments.

A girl does her homework on the blackboard painted on the wall of her house in Ghana. Her older sister, with baby on her back, checks her exercise book.

(© Sven Torfinn/Panos)

But it has also increased the cost of education for governments. For example, in Uganda, it is projected that there will be a 58 per cent increase in the total number of primary school students between 2002 and 2015, requiring more than double the number of teachers. Given that teachers' salaries are the single biggest cost in education budgets, this represents a

high burden. Most governments have increased both their education budget and the share that is allocated to primary education to finance these extra costs. But the challenge remains to find enough money to sustain an education of sufficient quality – while simultaneously reducing other costs that prevent children from poor families, especially girls, from enrolling.

Girls are often the first to be taken out of school to provide care for sick family members or to take responsibility for siblings when death or illness strike. 13 A sudden increase in poverty, which accompanies AIDS in the household, undermines the ability to afford school. The fear of infection through abuse or exploitation in or on the way to school particularly affects girls and may reduce attendance. Orphans seem to be at greater risk of exploitation. In the worst cases, girls may resort to prostitution to provide for themselves and the family. In Zambia, the majority of child prostitutes are orphans, as are the majority of street children in Lusaka. 14 Programmes of support are often not targeted to these most vulnerable groups.

Girls may face a poor and hostile school environment

A school environment that may be acceptable to boys may be hostile to girls. The physical and sexual violence against women that is common in many societies is reflected in the school environment in a number of countries. Physical abuse and abduction are not only a major violation of girls' basic human rights, they also present a major practical constraint in getting to school. Parents feel a duty to protect their daughters and may decide to keep them at home if they feel the school is too far away. Violence against girls and women has been identified as a key barrier to girls' education in

many DFID programmes. In South Africa, DFID supports Soul City, an educational television soap opera that raises public awareness of violence against girls and women. Within developing countries, better recruitment procedures and working conditions need to be adopted to help increase the number of women teachers, who often become important role models for the young women they teach.

Teachers need training to be effective in supporting girls and to intervene when violence is threatened. When teachers themselves perpetrate violence, early response systems need to be implemented to prevent such violence continuing. Alongside training to combat all forms of discrimination in the classroom, there needs to be an effective monitoring and inspection system that engages teachers, especially where there are violations of teacher authority. Governments also need more education officials and teachers who have the knowledge, understanding and status to ensure that girls have access to quality education. 15 Expertise is required to assess the problems and solutions for the education system according to the country context and real need, rather than the trends of the development agencies.

Girls' education: towards a better future for all

Women have a weak position in society

Within communities, girls have to overcome many obstacles before they can realise their right to an education. DFID's recent partnership with UNICEF to support the federal government of Nigeria will help overcome many of the problems girls have in gaining access to school and remaining there. Before

girls can attend school and benefit fully from their education, a number of major social constraints have to be addressed.

Girls often have limited control over their futures. Early marriage is a reality for many, where families wish for the social and economic benefits this brings. In Bangladesh and Afghanistan, more than 50 per cent of girls are married by age 18. 16 Adolescent pregnancy almost always results in girls halting their education. Girls are also more likely to drop out of school because of their domestic responsibilities, and are often discriminated against in terms of the quality of the schools they are sent to, and the costs parents are willing to pay for their education. Despite the progress being made, gender equality is likely to take generations to achieve. The UK's own history illustrates the relationship between women's position in society and the demands for better education for girls. One reinforces the other, but change comes slowly. Box 2. 3

Progress on gender equality in education in the UK

Until the 1960s, many British girls were directed towards the commercial and technical streams in secondary school, and did not acquire qualifications for higher paying employment. Until the mid-1980s, for instance, it was still relatively unusual for girls to do well in or continue studying subjects such as mathematics or science to university level. However, the 1990s saw a sharp rise in girls' performances at school. This has been linked to a range of factors, including families' prioritisation of their daughters' education, a shift in perceptions of gender linked to the women's movements in the 1960s and 1970s, government policies on comprehensive schools, promoting further

education and reform of the exam system and gender equality strategies in local education authorities and schools. Policies such as, areas in schools just for girls, strong anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, and the promotion of science and mathematics for girls were put in place. In addition, growth in the service sector facilitated demand for girls in the labour market. Currently there is concern about why improved academic performance for girls has not translated into equality in employment opportunities and earning power. 17

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What prevents girls from getting a quality education?

Conflict hurts girls most

Girls are particularly vulnerable to abuse and unequal access to schooling in fragile states. States can be fragile for a range of reasons, including conflict, lack of resources and people, high levels of corruption, and political instability. What sets these countries apart is their failure to deliver on the core functions of government, including keeping people safe, managing the economy, and delivering basic services. Violence and disease, as well as illiteracy and economic weakness, are most intensively concentrated in these areas. Of the 104 million children not in primary school globally, an estimated 37 million of them live in fragile states. Many of these children are girls. 18 Girls' absence from school may be due to fears of violence or due to the reliance on their role as carers in the family. In Rwanda, for example, it is estimated that up to 90 per cent of child-headed households are headed by girls. 19 For girls who have been victims of violence in conflict situations, trauma can impair their ability to learn.

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More than 100, 000 girls directly participated in conflicts in the 1990s, yet they are often invisible in demobilisation programmes. 20 Our humanitarian support and education support programmes in Rwanda have demonstrated the importance of education in promoting peace and protecting human resources in countries emerging from conflict. Our work in these environments is a reminder of the need to link education with attempts to build democracy, provide better health systems, offer social protection to the very poorest and develop multilingual and multicultural policies.

Tackling social exclusion

Social exclusion is an additional barrier to girls going to school. Certain groups of girls are more likely to be excluded from school on the basis of caste, ethnicity, religion or disability. In Nepal, Dalit girls are almost twice as likely to be excluded from school as higher caste girls. In Malawi, Muslim girls are more likely to be excluded than their non-Muslim counterparts. Disabled children, and among them disabled girls in particular, constitute a significant group that is denied access to education. In a recent World Bank report it is estimated that only about 1-5 per cent of all disabled children and young people attend schools in developing countries. 21 At the World Conference on Special Education Needs in Salamanca, 92 countries and 25 international organisations committed themselves to providing educational opportunities for disabled people. The challenge is to support governments to act on this commitment, and provide quality education for excluded groups. In India we have worked with the government to address social exclusion in the government of India's SSA (Education for All) plan.

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Chapter Three

Tackling girls' education on the ground

As outlined in the previous chapter, countries wanting to develop and implement a policy of promoting girls' education face a number of challenges. But for every challenge, there are examples of promising good practice that should form the basis of the way ahead. DFID will support governments to:

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strengthen political leadership and empower women;

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make girls' education affordable; and

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make schools work for all girls.

We will also support NGOs, religious and other voluntary organisations. This support will enable governments to develop poverty reduction strategies and education sector plans to improve girls' access to quality education. And we will provide increased and flexible funding to support the development and implementation of national plans. 22 DFID's bilateral funding commitments

for basic education averaged at £150 million a year up to 2001. Since the World Education Forum at Dakar and the Millennium Summit in 2000, the UK has significantly increased its new commitments for education programmes and we will continue to do so. As a result, we expect to spend an average of £350 million a year on education (a total of over £1 billion) over the period 2005-06 to 2007-08. This would roughly double the resources going directly to education programmes in developing countries since we first adopted the MDGs. In addition to our bilateral contributions, we expect to spend £370 million through multilateral agencies, bringing our total funding for education over the next three years to over £1. 4 billion. 23

Political leadership and empowerment of women matter

We will support governments in their efforts to create political leadership for women's empowerment. We know that national leaders who speak out against gender inequality can have a significant impact. Heads of government in Oman, Morocco, China, Sri Lanka and Uganda have advocated strongly in support of girls' education. Women leaders have been particularly effective. Ethiopia has benefited from the long-standing involvement of the Minister of Education, who has also been chair of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). Successes in Ethiopia demonstrate the importance of local leadership, as in Yemen, Mexico, India, and Egypt. However, political leadership needs to be accompanied by demand for change at the grassroots level. Without it, new initiatives may have little support, and policy makers may divert the resources earmarked for girls to other purposes. The example in Box 3. 1 shows sustained political support to girls' education.

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Tackling girls' education on the ground

Box 3. 1

Supporting political leadership: the case of Yemen

Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world and has high gender disparities in education. Gross enrolment rates for girls are only two-thirds as high as those for boys at primary school and only half as high at secondary school. In 2003, the Yemen government committed itself to full primary enrolment by 2015, with a special emphasis on gender equity. Girls' education is now a central element of Yemen's poverty reduction strategy and the Basic Education Development Strategy. Some of the factors, which made this possible include:

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personal commitment from prominent Yemenis, for example the first Minister for Human Rights in the 2000 government;

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sustained donor commitment, UNICEF's support to the 2000 Girls' Education Strategy being a prominent example; and

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the establishment of Girls' Education Units in the Ministry of Education at central and local levels since the 1990s.

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This led to Yemen becoming one of the countries to receive support under the global Education for All Fast-Track Initiative. DFID has been a partner in this process, providing £15 million towards the government's US\$121 million Basic Education Development Project alongside the Netherlands and the World Bank.

Empowering adult women – building their confidence and education levels – can have a powerful impact on enrolling more girls in schools. Evidence from countries such as Uganda, Nepal, Bangladesh and Ghana²⁴ shows that women who participate in literacy classes are more likely to send their children to school, keep them there, and watch their progress closely.

Supporting women's empowerment and demand for girls' education in India:
Mahila Samakhya in India

Mahila Samakhya, a programme implemented by the government of India in several states, is concerned to transform women's lives through education. The programme facilitates the establishment of Samoohs (women's groups) which provide women benefits such as education, health schemes and savings and credit. A large number of Samoohs have run campaigns for girls' education, which have increased girls' access to education. Many Samoohs have also built Jagjagis, non-formal education centres, often with boarding facilities, for girls over nine years of age.

In India, DFID supports the government of India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) education programme and has committed £210 million to the plan.

Government leadership and commitment are known to be critical to ensuring that more girls get into school. There are many examples showing how good policies on girls' education have made little difference at school level. This may be because they are not prioritised by central or local officials, or because they are not accompanied by extra resources. Political champions are needed to ensure policies that support better education opportunities for girls are translated into action.

Masooda Jalal was the only woman among 18 candidates for the 2004 elections for the presidency in Afghanistan. She is shown talking to supporters during the campaign. (© Jeroen Oerlemans/Panos)

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Tackling girls' education on the ground

Leadership is also important within communities and within schools. Teachers can be the catalysts for encouraging girls to go to school and providing them with an educational experience of good quality. This impact increases as more female teachers enter the profession, usually in response to recruitment policies that support increased participation of women. Community leaders play a dual role that is vital. On the one hand, they can inform parents and children of their rights to an education. Their complementary role is to reflect local demand for girls' education and hold schools and governments to account for delivering services. Getting the right

balance of leadership and action across the different levels is central to realising better education for girls.

Making girls' education affordable

We support governments to develop policies and plans that reduce the cost of education for poor families.

The removal of school tuition fees has resulted in a dramatic surge in enrolment of boys and girls in a number of African countries such as Kenya. We will actively work with countries to remove user fees for basic education.

Box 3. 3

Supporting the removal of user fees in Kenya

In January 2003, the Kenyan government introduced free universal and compulsory primary education for all children. As a result, in the first year of this policy enrolments increased from 5.9 million to more than 7 million, and they are still rising. Poor parents now feel they are more able to feed and clothe their children since abolition of school fees. DFID has committed £10.8 million to the government of Kenya's education plan, which aims to reduce the cost of primary education to parents.

Removing fees cannot be done in isolation. It needs to be part of a comprehensive programme that combines system reform and quality improvement. Resources are needed to compensate schools for the loss of funds and to pay for additional teachers and classrooms.

A number of stipend programmes have been started in Bangladesh and more recently in China. In China, DFID has committed about £15 million to the Gansu basic education project that helps poor girls and boys enter and complete primary and junior middle schools.

While stipends are an effective intervention, there are questions about their sustainability and the cost burden placed on an education budget. For stipends to be effective requires integration into education budgets and predictable funding of recurrent expenditure.

Income transfer programmes, such as Progresá in Mexico and Bolsa Escola in Brazil, which provide monies to poor families so that children do not miss schooling by having to work, have also had a significant impact.

Income transfer programmes in Brazil target poor families whose children are out of school and working. By providing cash to these families on the condition that schoolaged children are enrolled in and attend school 90 per cent of the time, the programme aims to reduce the high levels of drop-out of poor children. The effects have been profound: there have been sharp reductions in school drop-out rates, and child labour among those aged ten to 14 has also decreased significantly. Such programmes have a positive impact when they target working children who are girls and who often perform unpaid work within the home. What's more, by targeting mothers as recipients of the stipend, spending on the family is increased.

Making schools work for all girls

Skilled staff with the right knowledge, understanding and experience are

required in order for governments to implement successful plans for girls' education. These staff need to ensure access for girls from all backgrounds, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or disability. In particular, we support our partner governments to ensure there are teachers and education officials who are able to develop policy and curricula, monitor education, and ensure that girls have equal educational opportunities.

In our dialogue with governments, we support efforts to improve the learning environment for all, and in particular girls. A number of initiatives have an important impact on parental decisions to enrol girls.

These include:

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creating better learning environments for girls through the provision of separate latrines, employing more female teachers, and providing a more gender-sensitive curriculum; and

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providing more boarding facilities for girls where there are not secondary schools in easy walking reach of all communities.

Charities, religious and other voluntary organisations are good for girls. With about one-third of all out-of-school children living in countries where the state is unable to provide even the most basic functions, we are committed to supporting education in fragile environments. We support UNICEF, which plays a key role in these contexts. Many of the countries identified in the UN

girls' education initiative can be classified as fragile states. DFID has also recently published a policy paper on fragile states.

Non-government organisations (NGOs) also play an important role as service providers in fragile states. Save the Children UK, for example, has extensive education programmes in both countries affected by conflict and other difficult environments. Other voluntary organisations are also important. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, faith-based organisations are the main providers of education services. Box 3. 6 shows how UNICEF can be instrumental in mobilising communities and the state to prioritise the education of girls and women, even in a situation of protracted conflict. Box 3. 6

Fragile states: the Sudan Child Friendly Community Initiative (CFCI)

Sudan has one of the lowest girls' enrolment rates in the world (less than half of the school-aged population is enrolled). This can drop as low as one per cent in some areas. The CFCI programme covers the most vulnerable communities in UNICEF's focus states in Sudan. It aims to improve the situation of vulnerable communities, as measured by indicators for immunisation coverage, nutrition, access to safe drinking water, and school enrolment. The programme emphasises the need for rehabilitation that meets all the education and health needs of girls and women. The challenge will be to scale up the programme and maintain the links between central government and local structures. 25

Tackling girls' education on the ground

Even in countries where the state has significant capabilities, there has been significant growth in recent years of education provision outside the state sector. In addition to traditional NGOs, there are a number of for-profit and faith-based non-profit providers filling a resource gap. Their expansion has been greatest in the secondary sector, where state provision is weaker. In India, the rise of religious schools is often a response to the failure of the public system to reach areas where religious minorities and other socially disadvantaged groups are located. These types of providers can have a considerable impact on girls' education. Often parents are keen to send their girls to faith-based schools because of the values they promote. Given their importance, these institutions clearly need to be part of government policy to improve girls' access. Much of this provision has been unplanned and has been undertaken largely without effective state regulation. Although some countries have a form of regulatory framework in place, in practice the capacity to effectively implement this regulation is extremely weak. The challenge is to ensure that national regulatory frameworks emphasise gender equality.

Scaling-up: the case of BRAC in Bangladesh

The schools established and managed by the Bangladesh Rural Action Committee (BRAC) are widely recognised as a very successful model of gender-sensitive primary education. Since the 1980s more than 10 million children have completed lower primary. The existence of large NGOs such as BRAC lobbying on education has guided and catalysed the government's

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expansion of its own provision. A number of lessons have been incorporated into the national education plan, including more emphasis on quality, the introduction of participatory classroom practices, strengthened school management committees and the development of teacher skills.

Supporting policies that work

This section has outlined our approach to supporting governments to develop and implement credible education plans which lead to greater educational opportunities for girls.

Girls' education: towards a better future for all

As part of our ongoing discussions with and financial support to governments, we will support efforts to:

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Strengthen mechanisms to monitor gender equality in the education system.

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Strengthen community and parental participation in education policy, planning and budgeting processes.

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Remove tuition fees and other financial and non-financial barriers to access to primary education as part of a comprehensive national plan that provides

for adequate financial allocations to offset direct and indirect costs of schooling for the poor.

-

Improve life opportunities for girls by ensuring that national plans include provision of the right levels of basic and post-basic education.

-

Take appropriate measures to tackle abuse and violence towards girls and prevent the spread of HIV.

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20

Enable Ministries of Education to provide leadership and capacity to promote girls' education.

Promote non-education programmes such as clean water supply and sanitation facilities.

4

Chapter Four

Focusing international efforts on girls' education

The international community needs to speed up its efforts to support countries that have the largest number of girls out of school. We need to

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support these countries to provide good quality education for girls and all children. International efforts need to focus on:

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raising additional resources and directing them to where the need is greatest;

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improving the way resources are directed to countries so that they have the greatest possible impact; and

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strengthening key international organisations to provide more leadership on girls' education and better support at the country level.

In making progress against these goals, we need the support of groups that represent broad segments of society, both within the UK and globally.

More resources are needed

Aid and lending to basic education dramatically declined in the 1990s and only over recent years have shown sign of increasing. The Global Monitoring Report for Education for All now estimates that total bilateral resources provided to basic education by the international community amount to around \$1 billion in all developing countries. ²⁶ This compares with an estimated \$5.6 billion in additional annual financing needed to achieve education for all. ²⁷ Education can help to deal with HIV and AIDS. Investing

in education to prevent HIV will reduce countries' long-term spending on anti-retroviral drugs. The estimated \$5.6 billion annual funding gap for education equates to an extra \$50 a year for each of the 104 million children currently out of school – or \$300 over six years of primary schooling. This is the equivalent of the average price for a one-year course of anti-retroviral drugs for a teenager infected with HIV. 28 At the Financing for Development Conference in 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico, industrialised nations made significant commitments to increase their development assistance. Many countries are on track to meet their commitments, while others risk falling behind. But even if all countries were to give everything they have promised, the resources would be far from adequate to reach the MDGs. More needs to be done.

Currently, the most advanced mechanism for generating substantial additional international resources for development is the International Finance Facility (IFF). This facility could provide countries with the long-term financing and political space to take the necessary action to significantly and rapidly expand their education systems. Without the assurance of available longterm financing, countries would be unable to hire new teachers or put in place stipend programmes targeted at girls.

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DFID is also keen to see the expansion of the Education for All Fast-Track Initiative (FTI). The initiative was launched in 2002 in response to the emerging need to provide countries with additional financing in order for them to focus on education and improve their policies. At present, only 12

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countries – and fewer than 5 million of the 58 million out-of-school girls – benefit from the initiative. We will support the current plans of the FTI to include an additional 20 countries in 2005 and 2006, including those countries with the largest numbers of out-of-school girls. We will also work to raise extra funding to reach the \$1. 7 billion needed for these new countries. The UK will use its position as co-chair of the Fast Track Initiative in 2005 to push for this expansion.

Donor actions in support of country-led development

We know from experience that aid has the most impact when it supports national education plans, and when donors work together to co-ordinate assistance around a country's own priorities. Box 4. 1 shows donor co-ordination at work in Uganda. While the Uganda example is not unique, it is far from the norm. We will work closely with the OECD's Development Assistance Committee to move donors forward in harmonising their support to countries.

Box 4. 1

The benefits for girls' education of more co-ordinated international assistance: learning from Uganda

Donor co-ordination in Uganda has improved significantly in the past 10 years. Under strong government leadership, donors have made significant progress in co-ordinating their efforts and minimising transaction costs for all involved in the education sector. Pooled funds operate efficiently and are part of the national budget. Policy discussions between government and

donors result in well-planned initiatives such as the elimination of school fees. Ugandan Ministry of Education officials regularly visit other African countries to share their success in getting a large number of donors to work together.

When the conditions are right, we increasingly distribute our aid through a country's national budget. As the Global Monitoring Report (2003-04) points out, countries' preferred way of receiving donor resources is through budget support, which provides the flexibility to spend as they see fit to help implement their poverty reduction strategies. This approach allows aid to be spent on recurrent costs, such as teacher salaries and learning materials. These are critical expenses for expanding schooling opportunities for all. These costs require donors to take a long-term view to ensure sustainable and predictable flows of aid.

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Focusing international efforts on girls' education

Yet, a lot of donor support to education still comes in the form of individual project support, which often reflects donors' own timetables and procedures rather than the country's own priorities. Based on data provided by the OECD, up to 70 per cent of donor support for these projects comes in the form of technical assistance. While such assistance has its place and can be very valuable to a country, it does not in itself provide the necessary resources to fill the financing gap.

International organisations need to work together for girls' education

International leadership on girls' education is currently dispersed across a number of organisations who need to improve the way they work together. UNICEF is tasked with the lead role on girls' education. Its strategy on accelerating action on girls' education, for which the UK has provided financial support, recognises this important role, and the effective implementation of the strategy is crucial to the cause of girls' education. UNICEF is also leading the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), which is a global partnership established to raise the profile of girls' education. We will work with UNGEI to more effectively co-ordinate the actions of all agencies and civil society partners to support country-led efforts. We will work with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to create a strong position for women in society and create a safe environment for girls to realise their right to education, including active support for implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. We will work with UNESCO, to strengthen its mandate to co-ordinate international efforts on Education for All, of which girls' education is a part. While UNESCO has played an effective role in holding the international community to account for progress on Education for All, we need to support it to provide the leadership required to forge a more focused agenda to assist countries.

We will work with The World Bank, which is the single largest funder of education programmes to encourage co-ordinated support among donors to

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help countries put in place effective policies. DFID will continue to channel substantial financing through multilateral partners. We will step up this support to reach countries beyond our priority countries by: •

Supporting UNICEF, through the UN Girls' Education Initiative, to co-ordinate and improve global, regional and national action to speed up progress on girls' education in the 25 countries at greatest risk of not meeting the 2005 MDG. We will provide UNICEF with increased resources – in 2003, we provided a total of £64 million in funding.

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Using our support for the 2005 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report on literacy and the UN literacy decade to increase support to women's literacy. DFID will continue to be a core sponsor of this report.

•

Working with UNESCO to strengthen its co-ordination function and provide a forum for action focused on education for all.

•

Stepping up our support for the EFA Fast-Track Initiative over the coming three years. We will also work with partners to implement the IFF and achieve substantial progress in making girls' education a reality.

Civil society's role in building global momentum and local support

Networks of civil society organisations such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the pan-African girls' education NGO; and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) play an important role in highlighting the problem of girls missing out on education and helping to raise funds by holding national and local leaders to account. They have fulfilled this role, in part, by galvanising public opinion through media coverage.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is an alliance of teachers' unions and development organisations in 180 countries. During the 2004 GCE Week of Action, children spoke directly to politicians. In the UK, as part of a 'Back to School Day' 485 MPs, almost three-quarters of the House of Commons, visited schools and listened to children's presentations about the importance of education. The Week of Action in Africa involved the participation of the presidents and prime ministers of Djibouti, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Niger and Zambia. Through these actions, civil society coalitions have highlighted the importance of education and have influenced governments to create more educational opportunities for girls and boys. The Ministry of Education in Kenya agreed to write to schools to ensure they admit children who cannot afford uniforms. 29

DFID supports the involvement of civil society in achieving Education for All through regular involvement in consultation, through our public partnership agreements (PPAs), through the financial support we have given to Southern networks such as FAWE and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), and through our support for the Commonwealth

Education Fund (CEF), which strengthens civil society capacity in developing countries.

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Focusing international efforts on girls' education

A lesson at the Pahla Kadam residential camp school in Uttar Pradesh, India. The school has about 105 pupils, all girls, and five teachers. It offers an education to girls who are vulnerable to non-enrolment and early drop-out. They attend a one-year course, after which 95 per cent go on to attend upper primary school. (© Ami Vitale/Panos)

NGOs, religious and other voluntary organisations play a major role in the UK in raising public awareness for girls' education through development education. Their work makes children in the UK aware of the difficulties faced by their counterparts in developing countries when it comes to accessing education or campaigning for better rights. In addition to the high-profile events such as the Week of Action, many development education centres and NGOs are also providing material and teacher-training support for global education activities in UK schools. 30 All of these activities are supported by DFID.

DFID has worked with the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to incorporate development issues in the UK's national curriculum. The launch of DfES's new international strategy allows for more joined-up effort to raise awareness. In particular, the strategy commits to linking schools in the UK with partner schools in developing countries, and helping developing

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countries to increase their human resource. DFID and the DfES have recently reinforced their commitment to working together to promote international links and awareness of the UK education system and to contribute to education development overseas, particularly in Africa.

Box 4. 3

Digital Interactive Video Online (DIVO): linking girls in Ghana and the UK

The DIVO project uses digital video technology to stimulate and support dialogue exploring gender and sexual health issues faced by young women in Ghana and the UK. The participants are young Islamic women drawn from the Islamic Girls' Rights and Leadership Project in Accra, Ghana, and students from Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School for Girls in London, UK.

Phase one of the project, which ran from February to July 2004, engaged participants in digital video filmmaking sessions, and dramatic storytelling workshops. These activities enabled children in the UK and Ghana to share their stories and experiences drawn from their lives and have raised awareness of the importance of educating girls. 31

The knowledge about what works needs to be effectively disseminated and NGO and academic networks can play an important part in sharing information about good practices in education. At their best they can bring together the rigour of academic analysis, the influence of policy makers and the power of campaigning organisations. A good example of information dissemination is the <http://www.girlseducation.org> website. This DFID-supported website is already widely used by the international community, <https://assignbuster.com/girls-education-towards-a-better-future-for-all-essay-sample/>

and shares information and knowledge about what works for girls' education. Without civil society partners, progress towards our goals will not be achieved. Civil society organisations represent the rich diversity of societies and peoples and all efforts must be made to ensure those voices are heard and listened to by international and national agencies. DFID will:

Provide support to regional civil society networks, including FAWE, to participate effectively in national decision-making processes.

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Support effort to increase understanding and knowledge of the issues to inform policy decisions.

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Work with governments to strengthen capacity for consulting with civil society.

Work in partnership with DfES for UK development awareness about the importance of girls' education in Africa and Asia.

5

Chapter Five

Towards a better future for all

This paper has set out the steps that DFID will take, together with our partners, to fulfil the promises we made to meet the education and gender Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and to provide a quality education

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for girls. If we are to make up lost ground and achieve the MDGs, we have to stop talking about girls' education and start acting.

We know what those actions are, and that they need to be implemented with increased urgency and commitment.

A girl at a government-run primary school in the village of Pindsawa, Uttar Pradesh, India. (© Ami Vitale/Panos)

The evidence is clear. Where countries, for example Bangladesh, Nepal and Kenya, pursue courageous policies for girls, and where sufficient financing is available, remarkable progress can be made in the number of girls who enrol in and complete school. But we also know that even if donors can fulfil the commitments they made at Monterrey, additional resources would still be required. This is why innovative financing instruments, such as the International Finance Facility, are essential if we are to meet the MDGs by 2015.

Girls' education: towards a better future for all

But to translate money into equitable outcomes for girls, we need to go further:

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Countries need to put in place policies that create an environment where girls have access to schools and can learn effectively. This requires adequate funding by countries themselves, welltrained teachers, a school environment

that promotes girls' learning, and a social environment that values educated girls and women.

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Donors need to increase their support to education. And they need to be willing to provide funding where it is needed, based on the country's own development strategies. Without a harmonised approach where the country is in the driver's seat, we risk overwhelming education systems with our individual donor requirements.

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Donors also need to fund long-term recurrent costs, such as teacher salaries, stipends, or removal of user fees. Families often make significant sacrifices to send their girls to school. Even a short interruption in a stipend payment may make it impossible for parents to keep a girl in school. We need to match their commitment by making our support predictable and reliable over the long term.

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Global leaders need to show leadership on girls' education. We need to galvanise the political momentum in which courageous policy actions can be taken. Actions are needed that challenge the existing structures and systems that keep girls from realising their right to a basic education.

For our part, this strategy marks a real change in the resources we are providing for education. We will use our leadership roles this year, in both

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the G8 and the EU Presidencies, to move gender equality in education up the political agenda. We will work with our education partners to strengthen the leadership role of UNICEF and UNESCO, and expand the FTI to become an initiative that focuses firmly on girls' education.

We are committed to increasing our aid programme, and to using it to champion girls' education and gender equality. We will ensure that we have internal capacity to deliver on our support. We will support country-led development processes and, where needed, we will provide recurrent-cost financing to deliver on nationally owned education plans.

We must be held accountable for our actions. Civil society has an important role to play in providing expertise where needed, and challenging us to fulfil our promise to ensure that every girl realises the right to quality education. In 2006, DFID will provide an update on progress on the commitments in this strategy.

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For us to be able to keep our promises, international organisations, civil society and DFID's bilateral partners all need to redouble their efforts and work together to make ' Education for All' a reality.

Annex 1

Education and gender MDGs

Education for All Dakar goals

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and

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education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing

education for all adults. 5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to (and achievement in) basic education of good quality.

6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.