

KEEPING THE PROMISE:

Five Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education

By MAY A. RIHANI
With Lisa Kays and Stephanie Psaki

AED •
CHANGING LIVES FOR 45 YEARS



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KEEPING THE PROMISE:

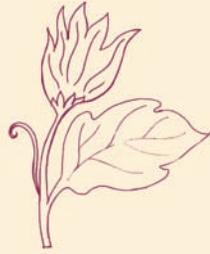
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May A. Rihani

Assisted by
Lisa Kays and Stephanie Psaki

2006





DEDICATION

*To the young girls and boys of
Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.*



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Foreword

My colleagues and I at AED are delighted to see the publication of this important report on the status and progress of girl's education and participation in the developing world. For many years, this has been a high priority of our work when collaborating with ministries of education to increase not only the participation rates, but also the quality of education and ultimately the completion rates for girls and boys at the primary level.

As the report points out, tremendous progress has been made over the past 15 years in addressing the EFA agenda. Countries are making extraordinary strides, often faster than many countries historically have been able to achieve, in addressing the needs for improved access and quality for primary education. The goal of universal primary education and other EFA goals still need to be met, and much work needs to be done.

We have realized for some time the need to focus on investment in secondary education opportunities for all children and youth — especially for girls. The data we have assembled clearly shows the dramatic “gender gap” in the availability of education for girls in most parts of the world — especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The implications for our resource planning, for managing of significant enlargements of the education system to meet these needs, and for adequate policy debate in considering the best ways to achieve a significant increase in secondary education opportunity are important issues that call for serious debate and dialogue.

The debate and dialogue must engage the whole of the education development community. This includes policy leaders in various countries, donor agencies, communities, associations which advocate for children and women's wellbeing, and NGOs like ourselves that are deeply dedicated to achieving these goals.

Without the opportunity for girls and young women to participate fully in the secondary level of education, the social and economic disparities that result can undermine the achievements made for the well-being of citizens and their participation in the global economy.

This report presents an up-to-date picture of the dialogue and actions being taken on investments in secondary education. AED is pleased to be an active participant and partner with many ministries and donor agencies. We welcome the increased interest and attention now being demonstrated by the corporate sector and its social responsibility partnerships, and by community-based organizations in addressing these critical education development needs.

I want to express my thanks to May Rihani and her colleagues for this rigorous analysis and the presentation of this report. It is my expectation that it will contribute to a dialogue with a wide range of our colleagues and partners.



Stephen F. Moseley
President and CEO
Academy for Educational Development

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I am indebted to the girls of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East whose thirst for knowledge continues to inspire me. Through my years of travels in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and as a result of working in the field of education, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with urban and rural girls both at the primary and secondary levels. I have always found their resilience, aspirations, and dreams a motivation to work harder on their behalf.

I am also indebted to the many individuals who assisted me in this research document.

I thank Stephen Moseley who encouraged me to distill my two decades of experience with girls' education, formulate my ideas, and present my analysis in this volume. Bill Smith's insights into behavioral change issues were highly instructive; the hard questions he asked helped draw out a clearer expression of important issues.

I also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of Lisa Kays and Stephanie Psaki — no one could ask for more gifted research assistants. Both of these young professionals worked closely with me to bring to the surface the important data presented in this document. I also thank Christina Files for collecting statistics and working with me on my partial initial draft.

I had many excellent readers whose input enriched this volume: Frank Beadle de Palomo provided many useful observations concerning girls' education and HIV and AIDS; Mary Joy Pigozzi offered helpful feedback on empowerment issues. I thank Jack Downey, Beverly Jones, and Patrick Fine for their constructive comments and support.

My discussions with the Center for Gender Equity staff enriched my paper. Andrea Bertone's input on anti-trafficking was very helpful as were the examples from Guinea offered by Aissatou Balde.

Lori Severens has been an excellent editor, working with her is a joy. She made my work clearer and more concise. My thanks also to Soya Djigie who produced many of the charts, and especially to Elisabeth Cherry whose patience and hard work helped format the manuscript and tables and who managed to keep up with numerous revisions without fault.

My very special thanks go to Anne Quito for guiding the excellent design and production of this document, Michelle Galley for assisting me in wordsmithing, and to Mary Maguire for her editorial contributions and for overseeing the production of this book.

I have come to understand that without the support of marvelous colleagues and staff, it is nearly impossible to complete such a research project. My thanks go to each and every one of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Rihani". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

May A. Rihani
Senior Vice President and Director
AED Global Learning Group

Executive Summary

Countries around the world have achieved huge gains in primary education, reaching a world average of 83.8 percent in net primary enrollment. However, large numbers of students still do not complete primary education, and even fewer continue on to secondary school.

Since so few children complete primary school, those who do must be able to continue their schooling. It is the only way for students and society to reap the full benefits of their initial investment in a literate, educated population. Currently, 83.8 percent of children worldwide attend primary school, but the rate drops to 59.3 percent for secondary school. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 17 percent of the girls are enrolled in secondary school. A renewed push to ensure that girls worldwide have access to secondary, as well as primary education is necessary now if the investments made are to pay off.

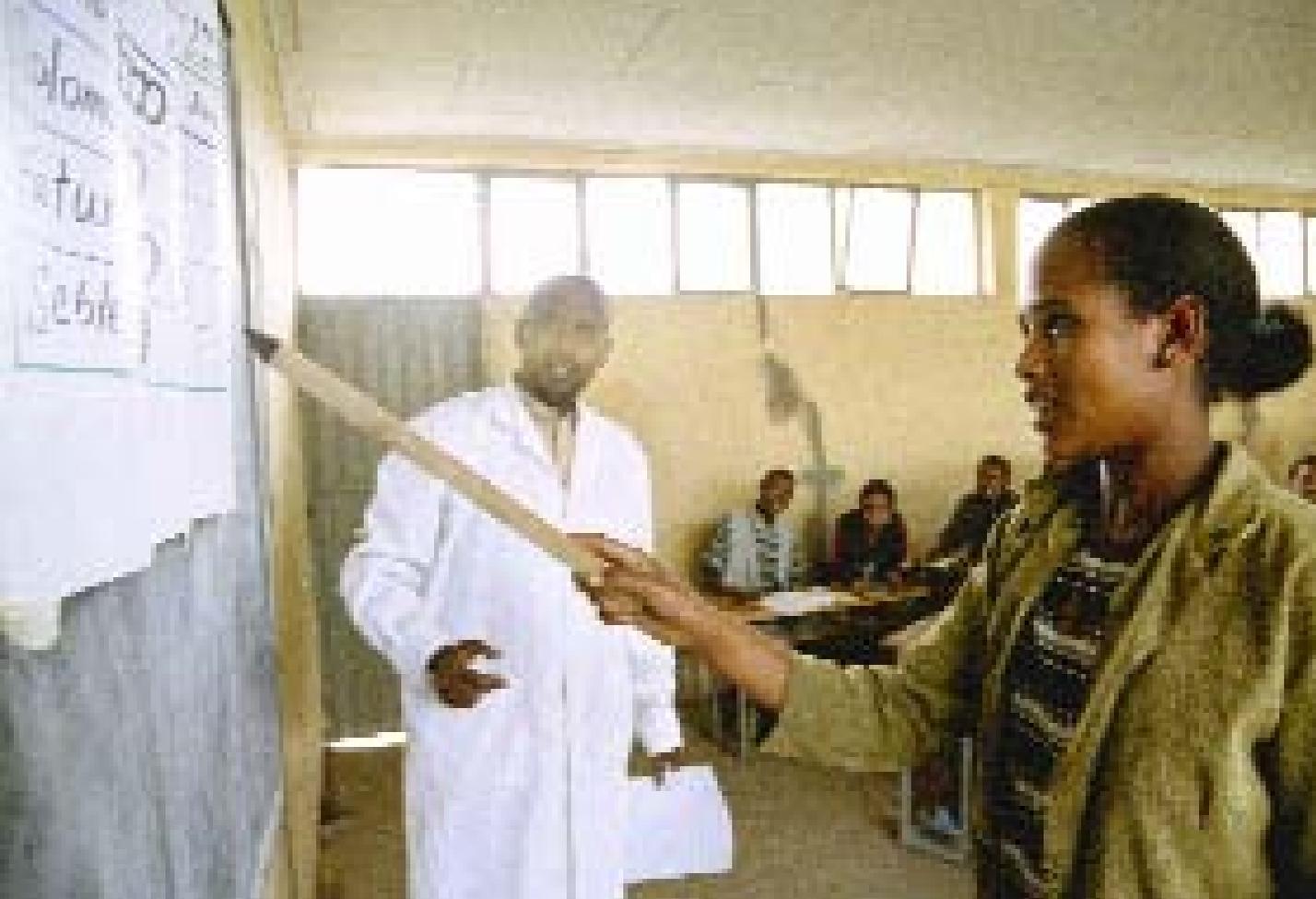
Barriers and Challenges: Why fewer girls?

- Girls suffer more from the effects of poverty because it costs more to educate a girl than a boy — it is the cost of tuition plus the “opportunity cost” or the cost to the family of the loss of her labor within the household, in the field, and at the market place. The “opportunity cost” for boys is not as high.
- The actual number of schools drops drastically at the secondary level, thereby increasing travel time for both boys and girls. Economic and safety concerns make parents reluctant to send their girls to boarding schools or to let them walk long distances to day schools. Inadequate school infrastructure, such as lack of latrines, also contributes to girls dropping out.
- Many families that cannot afford to educate all their children only allow the best-performing children to continue. If girls are tired from chores or walking, they struggle to perform well.

- Girls face inequities in the classroom and often lack female teachers as role models.
- Corruption in the classroom may include, in addition to extracting unnecessary fees and expenses from parents, pulling girls from class to assist with cooking for school functions, getting breakfast or lunch for teachers, running errands, cleaning the school yard, etc.

Keeping the Promise: The five main benefits of girls' secondary education

1. A commitment to educating girls at the secondary level will pressure communities and countries to build more secondary schools for girls — Existence of secondary schools increases primary enrollment and quality. Ensuring that all students are within a reasonable distance of a middle school that is affordable will increase parental commitment to schooling. Their involvement leads to higher quality education.
2. Girls' secondary education results in social benefits to the whole society — Secondary education equips students with critical thinking enabling civic participation and democratic change. As students pursue their education, they are less likely to engage in or become a victim of crime and youth violence. In addition, secondary education reduces the risk of human trafficking by increasing economic opportunities and making children less vulnerable.
3. Girls are a valuable health resource — Perhaps the most important benefits are found in the health field where girls and women are uniquely positioned to address some of the most significant health challenges facing developing countries. Girls' secondary education reduces infant mortality, increases childhood immunization and nutrition, reduces children's stunting, and lowers fertility rates and unwanted pregnancies.
4. Girls' secondary education can mitigate HIV and AIDS — Half of the over 40 million people living with HIV and AIDS are women and girls. Secondary school offers a valuable opportunity to catch girls when they are most vulnerable, when they can and must learn healthy behaviors. In Zambia, for example, AIDS spreads twice as fast among uneducated girls .



5. Girls' secondary education is a tool for poverty alleviation — Primary and secondary education produce high returns in terms of wage growth. Increasing the share of women with secondary education by 1 percentage point can boost the annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percent on average, according to a 100-country study by the World Bank.

Strategies for promoting girls' secondary education

- Increasing access and retention— Building more schools will reduce travel and costs and improve girls' safety. Clean, separate toilets for female students and teachers increases retention. Providing a safe environment, including reporting procedures for students and teachers, reduces sexual harassment.
- Improving equity/relevance/quality — Once girls gain access to secondary school education, they often become discouraged or drop out not only for financial reasons, but also out of frustration with a school environment where gender inequities prevail, classes are not participatory, teachers and teaching examples are biased towards males, and the curriculum is not relevant to their lives. Teachers must be trained in student-centered practices. Schools also

should seize the opportunity for HIV and AIDS prevention education and teach responsible behavior and life skills.

- Enhancing motivation and payoff — To truly value their education, students, especially girls, need to see that it will lead to a job and an income. Additional training and strong female role models can help.

Adopting the recommendations in this report—to increase access and improve retention/survival and completion rates, improve the quality by making secondary classes more relevant and more gender equitable, and increase expectations for girls' independence and success—will result in an environment that empowers girls, benefiting themselves and the world.

I.

BACKGROUND:

Gender Lens Brings a New Perspective to Educational Development

Approximately 25 years ago, a small group of international education professionals began working in the field of girls' education. At that time, some international development practitioners had come to recognize the importance of the "gender lens" in developing effective programming. Applying this lens to the education sector was a breakthrough in identifying, assessing, and understanding the realities, constraints, and solutions facing educational development around the world.

The 1990 Education for All (EFA) Conference in Jomtien, Thailand, drew the world's attention to gender discrimination and the gross inequities between girls' and boys' education throughout the developing world. At the primary and secondary levels, far more girls than boys were out of school. The next steps were clear: a gender perspective was imperative to improve the quality of education for girls and boys and to strengthen the economies and social fabric of developing countries.

Initially, the strategy focused on the demand side of the equation: educating girls to create generations of educated mothers who would insist on educating all their children — girls and boys.

But it is clear the benefits extend far beyond creating better mothers. As Kofi Annan said, "To educate girls is to reduce poverty. Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls." Educating girls strengthens economies, decreases HIV/AIDS rates and builds healthier societies. Former World Bank Chief Economist and U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers concurs, saying, "The education of girls is the single

*“To educate girls is to reduce poverty.
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is no tool for development more effective
than the education of girls.”*

—Kofi Annan, U.N. Secretary General

As of 2002, nearly 1 in 5 children of **primary school** age were out of school. Of the 115 million out-of-school children, 53 percent were girls, and 75 percent lived in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

At the **secondary level**, more than 1 in 3 secondary school-age children were out of school. Although gender-specific data are limited, it is likely that an even greater proportion of those out of school were girls.

—“Children Out of School: Measuring Exclusion from Primary Education.” UNESCO/ UNICEF, 2005

most important investment that can be made in the developing world.” By the mid-1990s, girls’ education and gender equity in the classroom had gained widespread international recognition as critical development goals among fathers and mothers in rural communities, as well as among world leaders and economists.

The Acting Commissioner for Education in Uganda, Sam Onek, described the demand: “Many parents who had more than four children [the number of children per family guaranteed a free primary education through Universal Primary Education policies] simply allocated them to relatives or pleaded with the local implementers to register them.”

As demand has increased, the need to address the supply and quality side of the equation also has become clear, leading to an understanding of the need for more schools, safe school environments free of sexual harassment, separate latrines for girls and boys, and quality, gender-balanced education.

Unfortunately, while great strides have been made in access and quality to meet this increasing demand, these strides have been primarily focused at the primary level—leaving a significant number of girls unable to achieve the promise of a quality secondary education.

II.

PRIMARY EDUCATION:

Significant Progress and the Unfinished Road

Increased demand has been at the heart of the education issue throughout the developing world, particularly in the case of primary education. Over the last 45 years, primary enrollment rates have risen dramatically in developing countries. In 1960, fewer than half of the developing world's children aged 6 to 11 were enrolled in primary school. By 2002, the world average for net primary enrollment reached 81 percent. Within this average, the percentage of net primary enrollment varies by region. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the primary net enrollment rate is approximately 95 percent. In South Asia it is 74 percent, and in sub-Saharan Africa it is 59 percent.¹ In Uganda, a national push for universal primary education caused the gross enrollment ratio for primary school to jump from 69 percent in 1990 and 80 percent in 1996, to 124 percent in 1997.²

Gender parity is possible, but it is not yet the global norm

Along with increases in overall enrollment, the gender gap in developing countries' primary enrollment rates has narrowed considerably over the last two decades.³ UNESCO's 2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report notes that 86 countries have achieved gender parity in primary enrollment. In the 1990s, two-thirds of developing countries improved on primary girls' enrollment, with Bangladesh,

1 UNICEF. *State of the World's Children 2004*. New York, 2003.

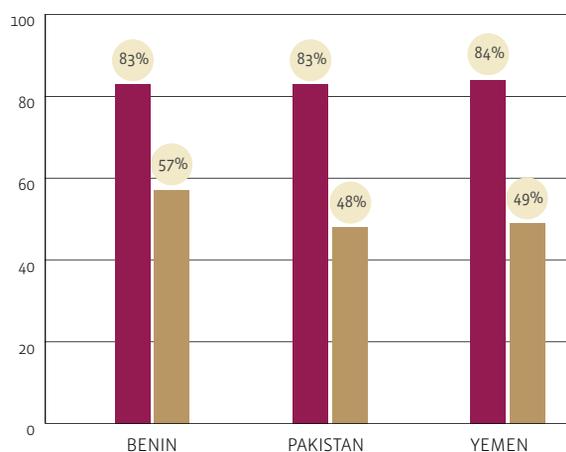
2 Kirungi, Fred. "Uganda Tackling School Bottlenecks." Africa Recovery Online: A United Nations Publication." Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol14no2/uganda.htm>. The 124 percent refers to the presence of primary school children who are overage.

3 Gender gaps measure the difference between boys' and girls' participation in education. It is possible to examine gender gaps in enrollment, attendance, learning achievement — as measured by testing, grades, etc. — and completion/survival of the school cycle — as measured by graduation. Most often, analysts study the gender gap in enrollment rates because enrollment data is the most commonly reported education data. In addition to examining the gender gap in enrollment, however, it also is important to take into account the gender gaps in learning achievement and school completion, given that they provide more in-depth information about the learning that takes place in schools.

GENDER GAPS IN THREE COUNTRIES 2000 Net Primary School Enrollment

Data Source:
UNICEF, 2005

Male Female



Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, and Nepal demonstrating the greatest improvements. Some countries, such as Morocco, made remarkable progress in girls' enrollment rates in a short time period — primary girls' enrollment increased from 45 percent in 1997–98 to 82 percent in 2002–03.⁴ Despite the progress made in reducing gender gaps by many countries, 31 of the 196 countries in the world are at high risk of not achieving gender parity in primary enrollment rates even by 2015. The majority of them are in sub-Saharan Africa.

In South Asia, Pakistan has the lowest net primary enrollment rate at 46 percent, and the number of out-of-school children is 13 million (out of 50 million children of aged 5–9 years). There are greater gender disparities as well. Girls' educational attainment in Pakistan continues to lag behind the level of education attained by boys. This is seen in school enrollment figures and in literacy levels, which reveal that large numbers of girls have limited access to even basic schooling. The overall literacy rate in Pakistan is 43 percent, but it is alarmingly low at just 18 percent for rural females.⁵ The most

⁴ UNICEF. Morocco, 2005.

⁵ Pirzado, Parvez, and Saeed Nasim. "Developing Leaders of Education in Thar Desert Area, Pakistan." Paper presented at the 8th Global Leadership Forum, Istanbul, Turkey. The Agha Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, June 2006.

serious gender gaps in Pakistan are in the rural regions of the country. A 2003 baseline survey conducted by Thardeep Rural Development Program, a local Pakistani NGO, revealed that in the Tharparkar district, the educational facilities for girls are far less than the one for boys, and that out of 3,676 primary schools in the district, only 447 are girls.⁶

Enrollment: Only half the story

The increased demand for primary education since the advent of efforts such as EFA demonstrates the inherent value of this investment, from the children who benefit to the economies that will benefit from their contribution. But enrollment only tells half the story. It explains who enters but does not reveal who advances, succeeds, and completes schooling. Survival and completion rates are key elements that, with the enabling learning achievement element, make up the rest of the picture and show whether children remain in school.⁷ The survival and completion rates for girls are lower than the ones for boys. There are several reasons why this is the case:

- Children, especially girls, are often sent home if their parents are unable to pay school fees.
- Girls face pressure to drop out to fulfill household responsibilities.
- Ineffective teaching methods resulting in poor educational quality affect girls more than boys.
- The lack of relevance of what is being taught to the daily lives of the communities has a greater impact on girls' survival in school and completion of the primary cycle.

The 2006 EFA Conference on Business and Education notes, "These dropouts represent a squandering of resources and children's time, because many probably have not learned enough to make an impact on their lives."⁸ The picture in Uganda illuminates this reality, where in some rural districts, "girls account for only 35 percent of total primary school enrollment. This is

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Survival rates measure the percentage of children starting the primary or secondary school cycle who eventually attain the last grade of that cycle. Completion rates measure the total number of students successfully completing the last year of primary or secondary school, expressed as a proportion of the total number of children of official primary or secondary school graduation age. Survival rates are a better indication of the quality of education and related issues, as they focus on children who actually enroll and reach the last grade of an education cycle.

⁸ Academy for Educational Development. "Education for All: Opportunity for Public-Private Partnerships." Report for 2006 Conference on Business and Education. Draft, 18 July 2006.

partly because girls drop out at a much higher rate than boys. While the gender gap in enrollment between boys and girls is only 1.1 percent in the first grade, by the seventh it reaches 15.7 percent.”⁹

The completion rates for sub-Saharan Africa are the lowest in the world. There, 19 countries have a completion rate of less than 50 percent, meaning that at least every second child does not complete primary school.¹⁰ In six African countries, only about one in three children will complete primary: Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Chad, Burundi, and Mali.¹¹

9 Kirungi, Fred. “Uganda Tackling School Bottlenecks.” Africa Recovery Online: A United Nations Publication. Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol14no2/uganda.htm>.

10 UNESCO. “How Many Children in Africa Reach Secondary Education?” UNESCO Institute for Statistics Fact Sheet. January 2006. Last accessed 14 June 2006. http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/EducGeneral/UIS_Fact%20Sheet_2006_02_SecAfr_EN.pdf.

11 Ibid.

III.

A BROKEN BRIDGE:

The Primary to Secondary Transition Gap

Transition rates illuminate a critical area of intervention

Since so few children complete primary school, those who do must be able to continue their schooling in order for students and society to reap the full benefits of their initial investment in a literate, educated population. The Ugandan Commissioner for Secondary Education, Yusuf K. Nsubuga, explains, “Failure to absorb the growing number of primary school leavers will undermine Universal Primary Education and broader national goals like the elimination of poverty.”¹² Unfortunately, this is exactly what is happening. Currently, 83.8 percent of children worldwide attend primary school, but the rate drops to 59.3 percent for secondary school.¹³ The transition rate to secondary school — or the percentage of children who complete primary education and continue to secondary education — is 67.1 percent for East and Southern Africa and only 52.4 percent for West and Central Africa. This contrasts sharply with 98 percent in the industrialized countries and 85 percent worldwide.¹⁴ In fact, in one out of every four African countries, just half of children enrolled at the end of primary school move on to study at the secondary level. In another 25 percent of African countries, only one in three continue on to the secondary level; and in two countries—Tanzania and Burundi — less than 20 percent of children do so.¹⁵

The reasons for this broken bridge are many. As a UNESCO fact sheet explains, “Some families cannot afford to continue sending their children to school...And in some countries, there simply are not enough places in secondary school and so

¹² Kirungi, Fred. “Uganda Tackling School Bottlenecks.” Africa Recovery Online: A United Nations Publication. Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol14no2/uganda.htm>.

¹³ Huebler, Friedrich. “Education Statistics.” Quoting UNESCO’s Global Education Digest 2005. 17 July 2005. Last accessed 13 June 2006. http://huebler.blogspot.com/2005_07_01_huebler_archive.html.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UNESCO. “How Many Children in Africa Reach Secondary Education?” UNESCO Institute for Statistics Fact Sheet, January 2006. Last accessed 14 June 2006. http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/EducGeneral/UIS_Fact%20Sheet_2006_02_SecAfr_EN.pdf.



authorities screen children through public examinations or by using other methods.”¹⁶

Most often it is girls who must give up their dreams. In sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of girls do not complete primary school, and only 17 percent are enrolled in secondary school.¹⁷ The barriers to girls’ education worldwide, and particularly to secondary education, are numerous, but among the most prevalent is a lack of access, due to the absence of secondary schools in rural communities and high fees required for admission and enrollment.

Girls and boys have the right to an education that guarantees their full participation in society and the economy. It is clear that in addition to the large investments being made in primary education, the world must make secondary education an equal priority, particularly for girls who are most often denied that right. A renewed push to ensure that girls have access worldwide to secondary — as well as primary — education is necessary now if the investments made to date are to pay off — for girls, their communities, their countries, and the world.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Sperling, Gene B. “The Case for Universal Basic Education for the World’s Poorest Boys and Girls.” Council on Foreign Relations, November 2005. Last accessed 13 June 2006. http://www.cfr.org/publication/9739/case_for_universal_basic_education_for_the_worlds_poorest_boys_and_girls.html.

IV.

SECONDARY EDUCATION:

*An Uncommon
Opportunity*

In 43 developing countries, nearly one-fourth of all the countries in the world, secondary gross enrollment rates are under 50 percent, and the majority out of school are girls.¹⁸

As education progresses, fewer children attend

Though secondary enrollment rates still lag behind primary enrollment rates, this is not an issue of demand, but of access. The global demand for secondary education has increased secondary enrollment substantially since 1990. In 1960, only one child in 20, aged 12-18, attended secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2000, the average net secondary enrollment in all developing countries was about 70 percent, ranging from five percent in Tanzania to 46 percent in India, and 76 percent in Lebanon.¹⁹ Despite increasing demand, however, access to secondary education continues to be low in much of the world. As students annually progress, access deteriorates. Upper secondary enrollment ratios are well below those for lower secondary education. Worldwide, UNESCO estimates that nearly one in four children at the lower secondary level (ages 10/11-14/15) do not go to school, and one in two children do not attend at the upper secondary level (ages 14/15-18/19).²⁰

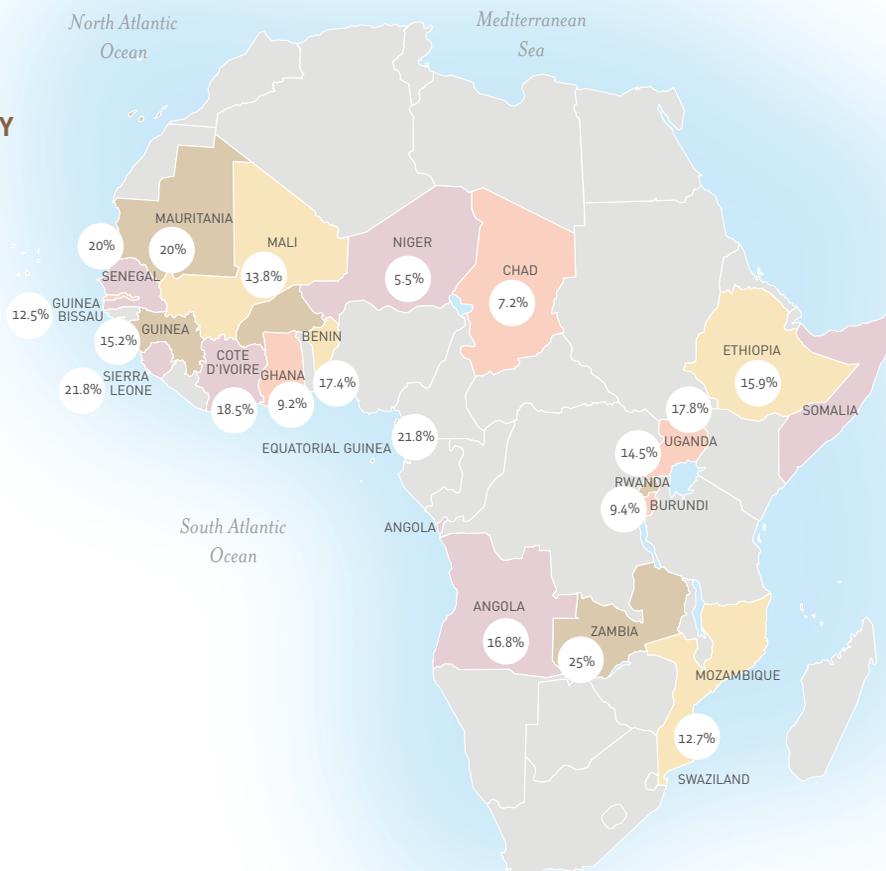
¹⁸ Mulama, Joyce. "Spare the Plough and School the Child." Interpress News Service Agency, 10 April 2006. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32835>.

¹⁹ UNESCO. EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003/04, Table 7 on secondary and postsecondary non-tertiary education.

²⁰ UNESCO. Global Education Digest 2005: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal, 2005.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHERE 25% OR FEWER GIRLS ARE ENROLLED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL, 2002/2003.

Data Sources: UNESCO Global Education Digest, 2005, and EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006.



On a regional level, enrollment ratios for lower secondary school versus upper secondary school reveal similar trends. For West Asia, the rate goes from 69 percent to 40 percent, while in East Asia it drops from 90 percent to 48 percent as children move from the lower to upper secondary levels. In Africa, lower secondary enrollment is at 45 percent, while upper secondary enrollment drops to 29 percent.

At the secondary level, gender progress but not parity

Gender parity remains an even more elusive goal at the secondary level (particularly upper secondary) in many developing countries, although there has been significant progress over the last 15 years. With the exception of Ethiopia, all developing countries where girls were at a strong secondary enrollment disadvantage in 1990 made progress over the following decade. Algeria, Bangladesh, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia achieved significant changes of more than 20 points in the gender parity index.

These advances speak to the increased demand for secondary school for girls, no doubt a result of increased access at the primary level, greater awareness of the need for girls' education, and heightened understanding of its benefits. Despite these advances, however, secondary school continues to be a rare privilege for many of the world's young women. In Malawi, 13.8 percent of eligible girls are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 25.1 percent of boys. In India, 46.7 percent of girls are enrolled compared to 58.5 percent of boys. While nearly half of the world's primary school-age population lives in countries with gender parity, only 13 percent of the world's secondary-age children live in countries with equal access to secondary school. In Uganda, for example, females make up 47 percent of total enrollment in primary school and 32 percent at the secondary level. Zawadi Ally, a female student in Tanzania, explains how girls feel if they are forced to abandon their education before it is complete, saying, "My friends may be angry, because their education will be useless."

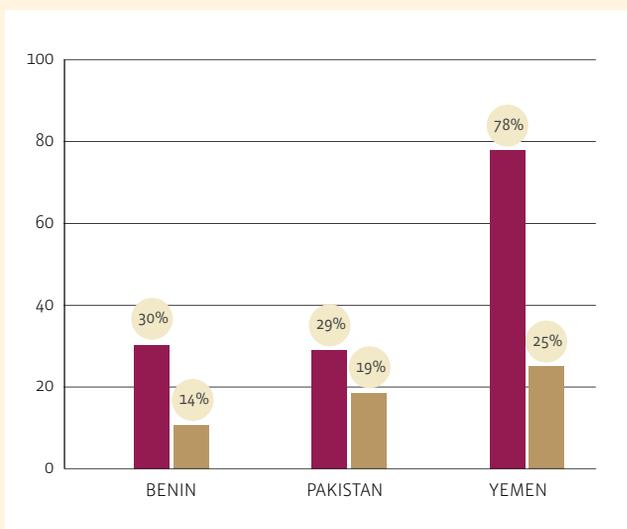
Further, the 2006 EFA Conference on Business and Education notes that:

"Secondary completion is still low in most countries, but much progress has been made. Around 30 years ago, in only 5 of the 69 countries shown did 20% of women receive a secondary high school diploma. By 2000/5, that number had risen to 29 out of 69. According to the trend projection, by 2015 secondary completion will almost double with more than 40% of the young women completing secondary in 28 of the 69 countries. Even though this is rapid progress, it is not fast enough for developing countries to break out of poverty within this generation."

GENDER GAPS IN THREE COUNTRIES
2000
Gross Secondary School Enrollment

Data Source:
UNICEF, 2005

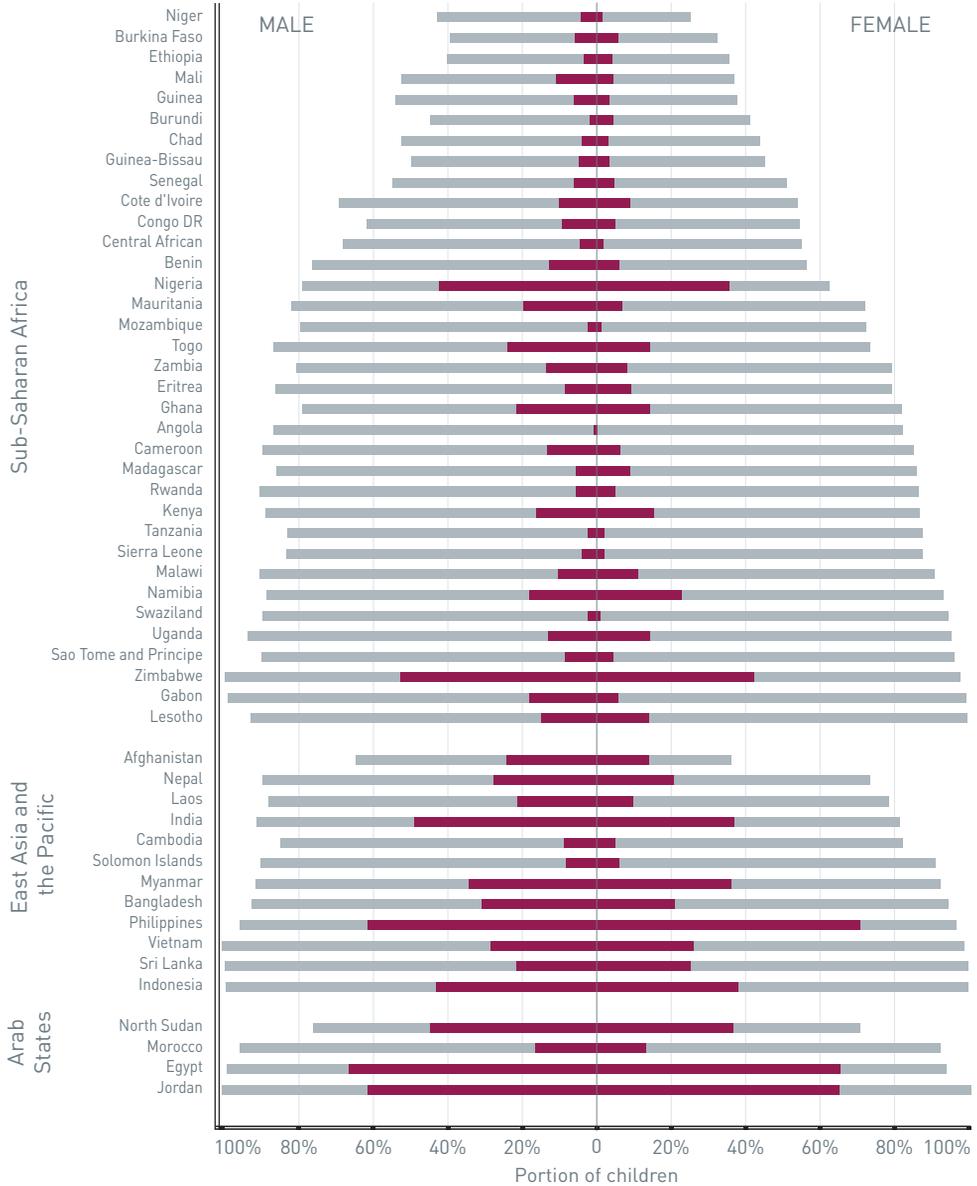
Male Female



EXPECTED SECONDARY COMPLETION (BY AGE 24)

Data Source: AED's EPDC calculations and household surveys.

Completion Attendance



The Academy for Educational Development (AED)'s Education Policy and Data Center estimates that a large percentage of the children in developing countries who enter secondary school do not make it to the last grade. The chart above shows an estimate of the percentage of boys and girls who will enter and complete secondary education, with the gray bar showing the portion of children in the country who will enter school and the red bar showing the percentage of children who will complete secondary school. The difference between the red bar and the grey bar is the dropout.²⁷

²⁷ Ibid.

V.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES:

Why Fewer Girls?

Girls often have higher dropout rates than boys for many reasons: household responsibilities; child labor; higher opportunity cost to the family; long distances to schools from girls' homes; early marriage and/or pregnancy; the threat of sexual harassment and violence in school and en route to school; lack of girl-friendly facilities (no latrines, no running water), a particularly serious problem during menstruation; gender discriminatory teaching and learning methods; and parents and communities who are not aware of the value of education for girls.

The economics of enrollment: “She doesn’t have the money to go to secondary school. There are so many like her.”

The relationship between poverty and enrollment and retention is pronounced at the secondary school level. In sub-Saharan Africa and in some South Asian countries where families are often very large and very poor, poverty is a major factor forcing families to make choices about whom to send to school, often at the expense of the girls. In particular, the need for the free labor of children, prohibitive school fees (in some countries the equivalent of four months of income for a poor family), in addition to costs such as text books, school supplies, and uniforms, prevent students from enrolling or result in them dropping out.

Girls suffer from these realities more than boys because of the opportunity costs associated with educating them. In most developing countries, girls are expected to work more than boys, and as girls are the ones who look after younger siblings, care for the household, work in agricultural fields, and sell goods at the market, the costs for educating them are actually more than the costs for educating boys.

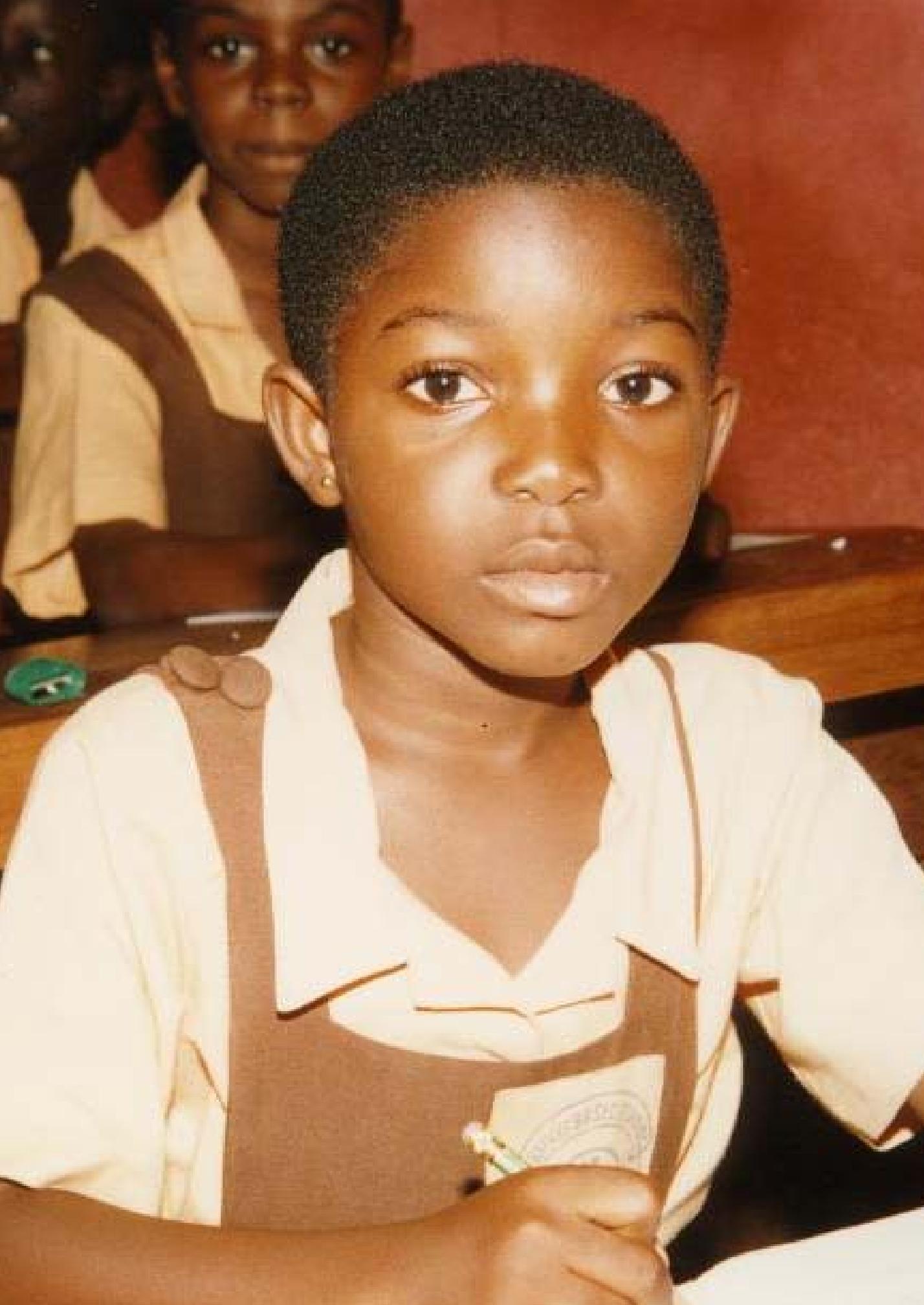
Parents recognize that the cost of educating a girl is not just the cost of tuition, it is also the cost of the loss of her labor. Poverty, then, is clearly interrelated with child labor; therefore, one of the most common reasons for children, especially girls, not to attend school is that their families need them to work. With the growing inflation in many developing countries, poor families are forced to involve all members in the income-generating activities, including children, in order to cope and manage their daily lives. "In Pakistan, in cases of extreme poverty, children may contribute up to 40 percent of family income for their survival. When there is matter of contribution towards family income, the rights of children are equally violated. There are certain activities for girls and boys separately, through which they contribute to family's economy. Girls in most parts of rural Pakistan are mainly involved in agricultural-related activities, taking meals to working elders in the field and looking after their younger siblings in case their mothers are also busy in agriculture work."²⁸

Lastly, families are more likely to view the education of a girl not as an investment, but as a loss or, at best, an investment in someone else's family. In Africa and other developing nations, women marry into and then care for their new family, while men are expected to care for and support their own parents and immediate family. In Guatemala, for example, The Population Council found that, "Early marriage did not appear to directly affect female enrollment, but related qualitative findings indicate that Mayan parents' expectations of daughters' future roles may reduce parental incentives to invest in education beyond the age of puberty."²⁹

People pursue an education for economic reasons. Graduate school in the United States and Europe is too expensive for students to attend just for fun. They make the investment in expectation of a high return in salary and job quality. Trends in the developing world are no exception. Families and nations make significant financial investments — whether in education or otherwise — because they expect them to pay off.

²⁸ Pirzado, Parvez, and Saeed Nasim. "Developing Leaders of Education in Thar Desert Area, Pakistan." Paper presented at 8th Global Leadership Forum, Istanbul, Turkey. The Agha Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, June 2006.

²⁹ Hallman, Perraca, Catino, and Marta Ruiz. "Working Paper: Multiple Disadvantages of Mayan Females: The Effects of Gender, Ethnicity, Poverty, and Residence on Education in Guatemala." Population Council: Policy Research Division, 2006. Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/wp/211.pdf>.



The economics of enrollment are therefore likely the primary determinant of whether a child, and particularly a girl, will be educated. In turn, this likely has an influence on other existing barriers to education. This unfortunate reality was noted in Malawi, where a recent *Christian Science Monitor* article on girls' secondary education states, "The dropout rate is high — not because of a lack of ambition, but of funds. Of the 100 who showed up on the first day of ninth grade, teachers have had to chase away about 70 for nonpayment of fees. Annual tuition is just \$29. But the school is stretched too thin, teachers say, to provide educational charity."³⁰ Likewise in Kenya, a 14-year old AIDS orphan, Maureen Akinyi, who is now second in a class of 75 students, has a teacher who explains to the *French Press Agency*, "We can take care of her in primary school, but what next? She doesn't have the money to go to secondary school. There are so many like her."³¹

Key to access: Location, location, location

Location and accessibility of schools also play a significant role in a child's ability to attend school. For many children, particularly throughout Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, the picture is bleak and worsens as students advance from the primary to the secondary level. Independent research conducted by the Academy for Educational Development in 2006 revealed that in the Kindia area, a rural region of Guinea, there were 681 primary schools scattered in the various towns and villages.³² For those students completing primary school, however, only 41 secondary schools were available to absorb them, meaning there would not be enough available seats and many students would have to travel great distances or board in order to attend school.

These statistics are, unfortunately, the norm in many rural communities in developing countries. The realities in Uganda, offered below, are similar to those in a number of African, South Asian, and Middle Eastern countries, including Mali, Guinea, Pakistan, India, and Yemen.

³⁰ McLaughlin, Abraham. "Monitor Readers Send Six African Girls to High School," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 7, 2006.

³¹ Debut, Beatrice. "Africa Struggles with Free Primary Education," *Agence France-Press*, 15 April 2006. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.aegis.com/news/afp/2006/AF060427.html>.

³² Balde, Aissatou. Research for the Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC, Spring, 2006.

The problem is not just the limited number of schools but also access to secondary education by various sections of society. People living in and around Kampala, the capital, and other urban centers have much easier access to secondary education than those in the countryside. Only 6 percent of children of the poorest 25 percent of families complete secondary education, compared with 22 percent from the richest 25 percent. The government is seeking to address such geographical and social imbalances. 'We are aiming to have at least one government-aided secondary school in each sub-county,' says Mr. Nsubuga. Out of about 900 sub-counties, 428 currently are without government-aided schools. Of Uganda's 45 districts, 15 have been identified as the most 'educationally disadvantaged,' accounting for less than a fifth of gross national enrollment. They will receive special attention, with a greater share of educational resources channeled to them and private funders given more incentives to invest.³³

Distance from school is a significant obstacle for many children and tends to affect girls more than boys. Economic and safety concerns make parents reluctant to send girls to boarding schools or let them walk long distances to day schools.

Parents may be forced to pay for transportation for a girl for safety reasons in cases where they would feel comfortable allowing their son to walk to school. In certain countries it is not as acceptable for a girl to ride a bicycle to school as it is for a boy. The distance between home and the secondary school becomes even more of a problem for girls, especially in rural areas, where middle and upper secondary schools are more likely to be distant from small villages. Because schooling is often more rare for girls, they are more likely to be walking to school alone or in smaller groups than boys who may have a wider peer network. While walking long distances, often through remote fields and forests away from the main thoroughfares, girls are more susceptible to sexual harassment and other forms of violence than boys, making parents cautious. In many cases, it is often deemed appropriate for girls to be accompanied by a parent or relative if the school is far from the village. In a family where this resource is not available because all adults are needed to work, this may pose an additional challenge, and this challenge is likely to increase with AIDS taking its toll on adults in Africa and Asia. Distance to lower and upper secondary school is one of the major deterrents for girls' attendance, survival, and completion of the secondary cycle in the rural areas of countries such as Egypt, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, and Yemen.

33 Kirungi, Fred. "Uganda Tackling School Bottlenecks." Africa Recovery Online: A United Nations Publication. Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol14no2/uganda.htm>.

Responses to changes in travel time or distance to schools might differ by gender even if the impacts of a change in monetary costs, e.g., a fee reduction, would not. Having a school in closer proximity thus can reduce the costs of girls' school attendance while having little or no effect on costs for boys.³⁴

The success cycle and its impact on retention

In countries where schooling is not mandatory and where beginning with the first grade carries significant financial costs, the inclination to continue to send a child to school is at least partially fueled by the child's ongoing performance. In families that cannot afford to educate all their children, the one or two children most likely to succeed at school or the best-performing children are the only ones allowed to continue. When girls must walk to distant schools after doing house chores, while boys can ride, their performance often suffers due to frequent absences or lateness, hunger, fatigue, or bad weather.

These factors combined, therefore, take on even greater importance when parents are faced with the question, "Then what?" as they often are when they consider whether to continue to send their child to school. Where the economic and social benefits of primary education—literacy, math skills, better economic earning potential, increased health benefits for families—are not always immediately tangible, and where education is viewed not as a right or obvious given but as an economic investment, whether a child will succeed, with great certainty, can play a significant role in determining whether education is viewed as valuable and worthwhile.

The quality and relevance factor

Success and retention in secondary school are even more directly tied to the quality and relevance of education than in primary schools.

The 2006 EFA Conference on Business and Education reports that, "...not all children who enter school leave with the same quality of learning. In fact, the difference between highest and lowest quality of learning can vary by a factor of three. Some of that variation is a result of differences between schools; some of it is determined by the children's background and health...A 2004 study by Crouch and Fasih found that learning scores are positively correlated with income and parental education, and negatively correlated with the percentage of children in the population...In other words, countries with higher income,

³⁴ Glick, Peter. "Policy Impacts on Schooling Gender Gaps in Developing Countries: The Evidence and a Framework for Interpretation." Cornell University, February 2006. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.cfnpp.cornell.edu/images/wp196.pdf>.

higher adult education, and lower percentages of children in the population tend to have higher learning scores.”³⁵

Those who are not engaged in learning or who are not participating actively in class will often be the students to drop out. Also, those who cannot afford the textbooks and notebooks to enable them to succeed and those who do not see the relevance of what they are learning and how their daily lives can benefit from the material they are learning also will drop out. Boys and girls may suffer from low learning if the quality and relevance of education and teaching is poor, but girls tend to suffer more because of an ingrained gender bias.

Whether or not girls are exposed to female teachers who can serve as role models is one of the greatest quality indicators. Female teachers are less likely to have gender biases against girls and are far less likely to sexually harass or otherwise demean their female students. Parents also may not be comfortable having their child taught by a man in certain traditional rural regions. The lack of female teachers in a school is a missed opportunity to provide meaningful professional female role models to young women and men on a daily basis. Countries that need more female teachers at the secondary level include Bangladesh, Egypt, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Pakistan, and Yemen. The International Food Policy Research Institute has found, for instance, that:

The detailed analysis of the impact of school characteristics on primary school enrollment in rural Mozambique indicates that dimensions of school quality, access or availability, and efficiency all work to stimulate enrollment, although the effects are small and differ somewhat by gender of child...but it is the gender composition of the teaching staff that is even more important in determining the household decision to send children to school. Both the simple proportion of teachers who are female, as well as the share of trained female teachers among all teachers are important positive determinants of enrollment rates. Raising the proportion of female teachers from 0.37 to 0.50 in the administrative post will raise enrollment rates by roughly 5 percentage points.³⁶

³⁵ Ingram, Wils, Carrol, and Felicity Townsend. “The Untapped Opportunity: How Public-Private Partnerships can Advance Education for All.” The Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC, August 2006.

³⁶ Handa, Sudhanshu. “Raising Primary School Enrollment in Development Countries: the Relative Importance of Supply and Demand.” IFPRI, November 1999. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.ifpri.org/divs/fcnd/dp/papers/dp76.pdf>.



Unfortunately, exposure to female teachers dramatically decreases for girls as they move into secondary school. In Guinea's Kindia region, there are 956 female primary school teachers out of a total of 2,971, already a low ratio. In secondary schools in the same region, however, there are only 29 female teachers out of 658 total teachers. In Mali's Segou region, the picture is similar. In primary schools, there are 646 female teachers out of a total of 1,808 teachers. At the secondary level, 159 of 799 teachers are female.

School corruption: It is not just about money

A 10-country study of classroom corruption by Transparency International has found that some of the most common forms of corruption are those that could be alleviated or prevented through greater parental and student empowerment at the local school level, such as the following:

Parents may be 'advised' to pay for private tutoring in which the teacher, after official school hours, teaches their child the essentials of the curriculum; and parents may be asked to contribute 'voluntary' donations for school infrastructure or extra-curricular activities. Failure to do so might result for example in schools withholding students' records or report cards.³⁷

Another form of corruption in certain schools is an inappropriate and inequitable form of child labor among students in order to perform work at school that the school cannot otherwise afford. The report explains:

In extremely under-funded environments, school children may be exploited as unpaid labor to compensate for teachers' or administrators' meager income, or as a direct contribution to the school's budget.³⁸

Often, the most exploited in these situations are girls because social and cultural norms allocate the distribution of domestic chores—cooking, cleaning, gardening, etc.—to girls. Further, because girls' presence in the classroom is not honored as a "right" or the norm in many school environments, it is often girls who will be pulled from class to assist with cooking for school functions, getting breakfast or lunch for teachers, running errands, cleaning the school yard, etc. Mercy Tembon, the World Bank's focal point for girls' education in the Human Development Network, explains, "Enrollment isn't the only issue adversely affected by discrimination...What girls are actually learning in school needs equal attention...In some countries, girls are given the janitorial work in

³⁷ Meier, Bettina, and Michael Griffin. "Stealing the Future: Corruption in the Classroom: Ten Real World Experiences." Transparency International, 2005. Last accessed 19 May 2006. <http://www.pambazuka.org/index.php?id=31091>.

³⁸ Ibid.

schools, while the boys are outside playing.”³⁹ This has a detrimental impact not only on girls’ school performance but also on their career expectations. Such practices in the schools not only shortens the time of girls in the classroom but also affects their morale, as the message sent is that they are more valued as servants than as students. It also makes them vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse when students attend to teachers at home. The combined impact of all of these forms of corruption is significant and extends beyond the classroom. Transparency International reports:

Corruption in education can have a devastating effect on a country’s well being. Its costs - illegal fees and bribes for admission, examination, or tuition — are a heavy burden for poor parents. Corruption...is a strain on the education budget and deprives students of the materials and learning environment they need... Students who manage to proceed with their education, despite these disadvantages, may be poorly skilled and thus add less value to the economy and public sector during their professional life. Perhaps the highest cost of corruption in education is loss of trust. If people (especially the young) come to believe that school or university admission and marks can be bought, a country’s economic and political future is in jeopardy. The education sector — rightfully — is expected to be fair and impartial. School should transmit concepts of political representation, human rights, solidarity, and the public good. Corrupt practices at schools and universities directly contradict these concepts, destroying the trust that is necessary to the development of communities.⁴⁰

Among corruption’s other consequences, destruction of trust takes a significant toll not only on a community or country’s political and social fabric but also on shutting women out of systems and institutions they should be able to turn to for assistance. From health centers and their children’s school principle’s office to ministry offices, women are less likely to approach necessary resources if they learned at a young age that they will not be treated fairly or with respect. Whether a real or perceived injustice, this, combined with a lack of economic resources, advanced literacy, and successful female role models, is an unnecessary disadvantage with which to saddle young women.

39 World Bank. “Engendering Change in the Classroom.” November 11, 2004. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20279910~menuPK:617572~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html>.

40 Meier, Bettina and Michael Griffin. “Stealing the Future: Corruption in the Classroom: Ten Real World Experiences.” Transparency International, 2005. Last accessed 19 May 2006. <http://www.pambazuka.org/index.php?id=31091>.

VI.

MOVING BEYOND:

Taking Girls and the World Beyond the Broken Bridge

Adopting a gender perspective will help to close significant gender gaps on the bridge between primary and secondary school. Improvements in girls' primary educational attainment have had a positive impact on the primary school environment for both boys and girls, and importantly have presented girls with many new opportunities that may not have been available to them or their families 25 years ago. It is secondary education, however, that will place a child in a position to gain economic and social benefits, and offer greater expectation and support to a child that ultimately result in independence and empowerment.

And yet it is at the lower secondary level — the crossroads between primary school and basic functionality in society and the true economic and social freedom and empowerment provided by secondary education — that girls are at the most risk of dropping out. Promoting and achieving gender-equitable secondary education is what will ultimately lead to the greatest socio-economic returns, enabling young women to contribute outside of their families to their communities and ultimately to the development of their countries.

Girls' secondary education and the additional dimension: Critical thinking

While education at the primary level is important to teach people the basic skills to function in society, it is at the secondary level that individuals find not only knowledge, but the empowerment to use that knowledge to alter their behavior at the individual, familial, community, and national level. A child at the primary level, for instance, may learn that to prevent malaria one should sleep under a mosquito net; however, it is only at the secondary level that the child will begin to understand the causal and scientific reasoning for this as well as the long-term economic benefits. Further, it is at the secondary level that the child will begin to feel empowered and worthy of putting these sorts of decisions into practice and to encourage others to do so.

Because secondary education produces critical thinking and analytical skills beyond functional literacy, it influences positively the knowledge, attitudes, and practice of girls and women in different social sectors: the environment, community programs and participation, democracy, family law, human rights, crime and violence, and even human trafficking.

Making her own decisions

Empowerment begins with the acknowledgement by a parent or society that girls and women need and deserve a secondary level of education — that more is expected of them than the ability to keep a good home. The very act of sending a child to secondary school implies greater expectations because of the additional costs invested in this decision.

Currently, the message girls receive is that boys should be educated at the secondary level so they can eventually earn more for their families and participate in society. The message to boys is they are responsible for their own lives, and for controlling their earnings, their career, and their future. Girls, on the other hand, learn that their futures are not in their own hands and that their potential to earn and participate is only relevant to the extent that it enables them to protect their children from disease. This, in itself, demotivates a girl from decision-making. Her confidence in her ability to make decisions is shaken before it can ever be established.

With the additional knowledge, critical thinking skills, and social reinforcement of a secondary education, girls are far more likely to make and practice better decisions regarding their lives.

Primary education is a necessary but not sufficient condition

A commonly used expression in Africa to argue or persuade others of the need for girls' education is, "Educate a woman, educate a nation." The word "nation" is sometimes replaced with "family." In either interpretation, the implication is that the value of educating a girl is her impact on her family's health, economic status, and access to education. This interpretation does not acknowledge her right to an education for her own sake or the value of educating women to be self-sufficient, economically-independent members of society.

Indeed, educating girls and women does have significant value economically for women and their children. According to the Forum for African Women Educationalists, "In sub-Saharan Africa, the social return on girls' education is estimated at 24.3 percent for basic education and 18.2 percent for secondary



education, the highest rates in the world.”⁴¹ Primary education for girls reduces poverty by contributing to lower birth rates, lower rates of child malnutrition, reduced child mortality, and slightly more efficiency while vending or shopping in the marketplace.

Each of these skills is important; however, they make a comparison between a child with a basic set of skills and one with no education at all. They are not in any way indicative of a person who has a full set of capabilities and skills in these areas, skills gained through secondary education. This is especially true in certain African and Asian countries where the low quality of primary school education means students completing primary education may not be fully literate or able to contribute economically to the fullest of their potential.

For girls of industrialized countries it is not considered “good enough” if they achieve a 4th, 5th, or even 6th grade level of schooling because it is understood that this will not enable them to be fully functioning, independent adults with the ability to contribute economically, intellectually, socially, politically, and culturally to their society. Why then, are we willing to accept this standard for developing countries? Why do we accept it in particular for African girls, yet claim we are developing a nation, freeing them from the risk of HIV and AIDS, creating a more equitable African society, and contributing to true economic development?

⁴¹ Nduru, Moyiga. “Africa: Urged to Invest in Education of Girls to Reduce Poverty.” Inter Press Service, March 22, 1999. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/edu-cn.htm>.

To make these claims, it is crucial that secondary education be accessible — financially and geographically — for a majority of, if not all, African girls, the most disadvantaged globally. It is secondary education that develops the functional and analytical literacy that will ensure an economically productive life. UNESCO reports:

The *economic returns* to education have been extensively studied, especially in terms of increased individual income and economic growth. While the number of years of schooling remains the most frequently used variable, recent studies also look at assessments of cognitive skills, typically literacy and numeracy test scores. They find that literacy levels have a positive impact on earnings beyond that of years spent in school...Using data from the International Adult Literacy Survey, one study concluded that differences in average skill levels among OECD countries explained 55 percent of the differences in economic growth over 1960–94, implying that investment in raising the average skill levels could yield large economic returns...Another study suggests that a literacy rate of at least 40 percent is a prerequisite for sustained rapid economic growth. How do the returns to investment in adult basic education compare with those to investment in formal schooling? The fact that literacy has been one of the more neglected EFA goals partly stems from an assumption that primary-level education is more cost-effective than youth and adult programs. Yet, what sparse evidence exists indicates that the returns on investment in adult literacy programs are generally comparable to, and compare favorably with, investments in primary level education.⁴²

Instead of investing in additional adult literacy programs for those who never attended or did not learn basic skills in primary school, it would be more cost-effective and beneficial in the long run to provide children with a full set of skills through secondary education. This way they can carry these skills throughout their lives, and their productivity as adults will not be compromised by making up for lost time in adult literacy courses.

The increased depth, efficacy, and provision of essential literacy skills at the secondary level explains why an investment here has an even greater multiplier effect on the health and social welfare of families, and on the social, political, cultural, and economic status of women themselves. If education for women is always viewed only as a means to an end — to guarantee health and prosperity for families — African women will never be able or expected to support themselves and contribute to their fullest potential to the economic growth and development so needed in Africa. It is, in fact, this mindset which largely limits the progress of African women in education.

42 UNESCO. Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Part II: Why Literacy Matters, 2005. Last accessed 22 May 2006. http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=43048&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

1. *The presence of secondary schools increases primary enrollment and completion and improves quality.*



VII.

KEEPING THE PROMISE:

The Five Main Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education

1.

THE PRESENCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS INCREASES PRIMARY ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION AND IMPROVES QUALITY

The presence of a secondary school within a reasonable distance of villages serves as an incentive for parents to encourage and support their children to complete the primary cycle. By ensuring that all students are within reasonable distance of an affordable middle school, parental motivation to send both girls and boys to primary school will naturally increase. The 2005 State of the World's Mothers report confirms this, stating, "Looking ahead to secondary school is an incentive for girls to attend and perform well in primary school, and reassures families that their investments will pay off. Secondary school opportunities must expand for countries to reap the full benefits of female education for national development and individual well-being."⁴³

Parental participation leads to higher quality

Lack of discipline is also a major hindrance to quality in schools in many developing countries, not only in terms of classroom behavior but also of children's practice of and knowledge of the basic skills required to learn new skills and participate fully in class. Parents often are not aware of school structures and rules, and therefore do not encourage or require them of their children. They also may not require students to demonstrate knowledge of basic skills and aptitudes at home, particularly if they are from poor families and perhaps illiterate or do not use those skills in their daily lives. If, however, parents know that their children could pursue education to a point where it would have greater economic and social rewards, not only for the individual student but also for their families—and perhaps even their parents—they are

⁴³ Save the Children. State of the World's Mothers 2005: The Power and Promise of Girls' Education. May 2005. Last accessed 14 June 2006. http://www.savethechildren.org/mothers/report_2005/images/SOWM_2005.pdf.

more likely to take an active role in ensuring that their child's performance is good. Further, because much or all of the educational system in many developing countries is exam based, with basic skills and academic ability required to pass from one phase of schooling to the next, parents are more likely to track their children's progress and demand that they keep up in class, and invest in tutors if they can afford to when success on an exam is likely to mean entrance into secondary school.

One consistent barrier to educational quality in Africa and South Asia is the lack of study time and light allowed for children to do homework and practice reading and other exercises. Girls' domestic chores often detract from their studies. In homes where education is not valued, parents often fail to create study environments and do not insist upon time devoted to studies. In areas without electricity or where electricity costs are prohibitive, many parents are reluctant to use precious resources for lights, kerosene, or batteries to supply adequate reading light once night falls.

In a situation in which lower and secondary schools exist not far away from the village or town, parents are more likely to become active in their children's school progress at the primary level. They tend to review their children's report cards and exams, insist upon study time, and make supplies and materials available in the hopes that achievement at and completion of the primary level will lead to their children moving on to middle school.

Parental involvement deters corruption

Increased parental interest and involvement in school would have a positive impact on efforts to decrease corruption in schools.

By increasing enrollment of girls in secondary schools, parents will be made aware of the impact of forced labor, sexual harassment, and other forms of corruption on their daughters' progress and hopefully lobby to eliminate them. As a female secondary student in Benin said in a study on gender-based violence in school, "I have a teacher who harasses us girls and sometimes even threatens to give us bad grades if we don't accept his advances." One of her female classmates expanded, saying, "Teachers take advantage of girls' financial situation and court them. It is because parents support their girls very little at school," she said.⁴⁴

44 Wible, Brent. "Making Schools Safe for Girls: Combating Gender-based Violence in Benin." The Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC, December 2004.

With secondary school accessible to all children, regardless of economic status or ability to pay school fees, it is likely that parents would unify, starting at the primary level, to ensure that such corruption does not prevent their children from succeeding. This motivation, however, will stem only from a strong conviction that, all other issues aside — finances, gender, etc. — the child has a reasonable chance of securing a secondary education and of improving her quality of life through a good job or greater skills.

More educated girls means more female teachers

One of these “good jobs” is likely to be that of a teacher, one of the more acceptable and respected professions for women in the developing world. By increasing the number of girls in secondary school, the pool for female primary school teachers automatically becomes larger.

Parental literacy fuels primary enrollment

One of the most effective means of increasing primary student enrollment rates is through parental literacy. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, “On the demand side, it is the education of adult household members that seems most important in stimulating child enrollment. Making household heads literate in the bottom per capita consumption quartile will raise rural primary school enrollment by 18 percent.”⁴⁵ As women are the most influential parents, it is therefore likely that increasing the number of women in any population with functional literacy would therefore increase primary enrollment among girls and boys. As presented earlier in this report, however, the most efficient way to increase the percentage of mothers with functional literacy is to ensure that secondary education for girls is a priority, and that primary and secondary education both are necessary for the development of communities and countries.

45 Handa, Sudhanshu. “Raising Primary School Enrollment in Development Countries: The Relative Importance of Supply and Demand.” IFPRI, November 1999. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.ifpri.org/divs/fend/dp/papers/dp76.pdf>.

2. *Girls' secondary education results in social benefits to the whole society.*



2. GIRLS' SECONDARY EDUCATION RESULTS IN SOCIAL BENEFITS TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY

While perhaps more intangible, the social benefits of secondary education are no less important in terms of their positive impact on families, communities, and nations. These include greater civic participation, less youth violence, and decreased human trafficking.

Agents of change — civic participation

While primary education may equip students with the reading skills to be able to vote or read a newspaper, it is a secondary education that permits them to analyze and understand political arguments. These are the building blocks to civic participation, democracy, and the empowerment to change societies. Economic empowerment at even the most basic level is likely to decrease the high levels of corruption within the current political and electoral systems in many developing countries, which flourish largely due to the extreme poverty faced by the general voting population. This perhaps explains why a cross-country study conducted in Africa in 2005 revealed that, "individuals who have attended primary school are less likely to be supportive of democracy than are those who have continued their formal education to the secondary or university level...individuals experiencing poverty are less likely to support democracy, and women are also less likely to support democracy to the exclusion of other forms of government."⁴⁶

These findings indicate that secondary education for girls would improve women's support for and participation in democracy and civil society. Secondary quality education allows the additional dimension of empowerment whereby an individual, woman or man, can make the leap from being just a member of an extended family, clan, or village to an independent individual with a voice and the confidence to participate in governance.

Off the streets — combating youth violence and sexual harassment

As students pursue their education to higher levels they are less likely to engage in or become a victim to crime and youth violence. Students who can see better opportunities for regular employment ahead and children who are in school instead of on the streets are more likely to be positive agents than negative ones.

⁴⁶ Stasavage, David. "Working Paper No. 54: Democracy and Primary School Attendance: Aggregate and Individual Level Evidence from Africa." Afrobarometer Working Papers, October 2005. Last accessed 12 May 2006. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/papers/AfropaperNo54.pdf>.

They are participants in their communities. Activities such as peer education, school clubs, social networking, etc., which occur largely at the secondary level in Africa, are likely to motivate students to carve out their futures instead of being unproductive, harming others, or becoming socially mischievous. Further, the school itself, if it meets high standards for quality and student security and safety, protects against crime and violence by providing students with adult role models to whom crime or harassment can be reported. The positive disciplinary structure of a school is also a deterrent to violence and harassment. This is particularly important for girls who are at greater risk for sexual harassment, becoming involved with “sugar daddies”, and trafficking outside of school.

Human trafficking — breaking the cycle

Child trafficking, especially trafficking of girls for labor and sexual exploitation, is an egregious violation of human rights that affects the majority of countries in the world. Whereas there are numerous root causes of why children are trafficked — poverty and the desire to earn a living, the need to support one’s family, enormous financial gains to the traffickers, political conflict and natural disasters that devastate local economies and displace people from their homes, cultural attitudes toward children and girls in particular, and inadequate national laws and regulations — it is important to note that the lack of education, specifically secondary education, fosters a conducive environment for child trafficking.

In Nigeria, for example, there is a strong correlation between the trafficking of women and girls for sex work and low levels of education, inadequate training, and lack of educational opportunities. In Nigeria, a considerable number of trafficked persons in sex work have only completed primary school or have dropped out of early secondary school. In addition to little education, these girls do not have access to vocational training. Because of their educational limitations and Nigeria’s depressed economy they cannot be absorbed by the formal job market. They are easy prey to traffickers who entice them with the possibility of a better life.⁴⁷ In Nepal, the overwhelming majority of parents of trafficked girls are illiterate, especially the mothers. International Labor Organization/International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC) rapid assessment research has shown that trafficked girls largely originate from illiterate households, particularly where there are illiterate mothers and sisters.⁴⁸ In the Burma/Laos/Thailand border areas, the ILO

⁴⁷ Panudda, Boonpala, and Kane June. “Unbearable to the Human Heart: Child Trafficking and Action to Eliminate It.” International Labour Organization, 2002.

⁴⁸ Ibid.



found that the lack of access to quality education is a major factor contributing to the trafficking of children into the worst forms of child labor. According to ILO/IPEC research, the average time that the girls spent in education in this region was only 3.3 years. Respondents to this study stated that their limited education prevented them from entering paid employment in their home country.⁴⁹ Fear of trafficking also may alter the choices that girls make about their futures. Reports from Albania, for example, document villages where nine out of 10 girls over 14 years of age expressed concerns about distances from home to school, and prefer to stay away from school because they are afraid of being trafficked as they walk to school.⁵⁰ The loss of an education reduces opportunities, influences family and work decisions, and makes children more vulnerable to being trafficked in the future.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

3. *Girls' secondary education results in a multitude of health benefits.*



3. GIRLS' SECONDARY EDUCATION RESULTS IN A MULTITUDE OF HEALTH BENEFITS

Girls and women are uniquely positioned to address some of the most significant health challenges facing developing countries, including infant mortality, childhood immunization and nutrition, high fertility rates, and unwanted pregnancies. By failing to provide education and skills-building to girls and women on how to address these and other challenges, communities are missing an opportunity to use one of their most valuable resources in addressing some of their greatest health problems. According to Save the Children, "...the more time girls spend in school, the more likely they are to grow up to be mothers who are healthy, well-nourished, economically empowered, and resourceful when it comes to the health and education of their children."⁵¹ Multiple studies show that the benefits of girls' education to family health increase in proportion to the number of years of schooling girls receive, particularly if they stay through puberty.

While better health is an end in itself, it also results in improved economic indicators for individuals, families, and societies. Using an advocacy model created by AED, a multidisciplinary team of concerned professionals found that in the next 12 years, if nothing is done to improve Mali's health care systems, 34,000 mothers and 340,000 newborns will die. According to the team these deaths translate into a loss of \$350 million over the next 12 years because of the lost productivity to the country when women die or are disabled from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.⁵²

Following are four of the positive health outcomes most strongly correlated with girls' secondary education. The next section includes a more complete discussion of girls' secondary education and HIV prevention and mitigation.

The ultimate benefit: Girls' education decreases infant mortality

Some of the most important benefits of educated mothers are in health. Reduced infant mortality is a striking example, showing how deeply a mother's literacy level affects the care she is able to provide to her children.

⁵¹ Save the Children. "The Power and Promise of Girls' Education." 2005.

⁵² The Academy for Educational Development. "AED Advocacy Models Help Combat Infant and Child Mortality." Last accessed 14 June 2006. <http://www.aed.org/Health/International/reduce-and-alive.cfm>.

During a visit to Mali several years ago, the author met with a group of parents to learn more about the low levels of school attendance, especially among girls. Among a group of approximately 25 parents, all but two were men, and most expressed skepticism about the value of education for girls. When I noted that educated women were better able to take care of sick children, a father disagreed, asking, "Are you saying that an educated mother loves her children more than an uneducated one?"

I replied, "No, absolutely not. When a child is sick, both mothers will carry their child to the health clinic. The doctor or nurse will give them verbal and written instructions on how to take care of the child. The literate mother will be able to read the instructions and follow them carefully, helping her child to get well. She will go back to the health clinic when necessary. The illiterate mother will do her best, but if she cannot remember all the detailed and varied instructions, she will not be able to read them. She may not be able to help her child, and that child might get worse or die. The illiterate mother will not go back to the health clinic because the visit was too intimidating and only somewhat useful. The father nodded and said "If you're right, we should send our girls to school."

This anecdote is one real life example of what research has proven to be true across developing countries. When mothers are educated, rates of infant chronic illness and mortality decrease in families. One Yale economist estimates that an extra year of girls' education cuts infant mortality by 5-10 percent.⁵³ And when parents understand that their daughters' education yields such important family benefits, they are more likely to send them to school.

Delayed marriage age and reduced rates of domestic violence

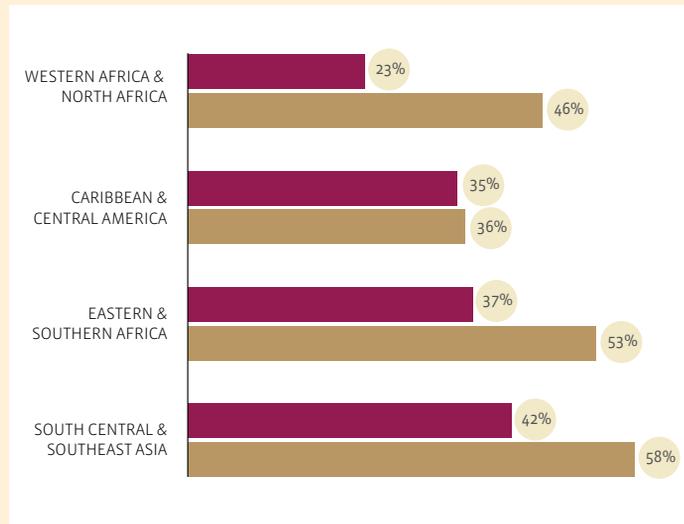
Although the legal marriage age in most countries is 18, approximately 51 million adolescent girls aged 15-19 worldwide are married. In some countries in Africa and South Asia, over 30 percent of girls in that age group are married. As the following chart demonstrates, while there have been improvements related to this issue, early marriage remains a significant constraint to girls' and women's education and health and a violation of international conventions on children's and women's rights. Research has shown that rates of early marriage decline as girls gain an education. One study found that girls'

⁵³ Schultz, T. Paul. "Investments in the Schooling and Health of Women and Men: Quantities and Returns." *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Special Issue: Symposium on Investments in Women's Human Capital and Development, Autumn, 1993.

EARLY MARRIAGE HAS DECLINED BUT IS STILL WIDESPREAD

Data Source: Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2005)

- Women ages 20–24 married by age 18
- Women ages 40–44 married by age 18



secondary education was one of the critical factors in increasing the marriage age of young girls in Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan.⁵⁴

Numerous studies also show that girls' education reduces the risk of domestic violence. One survey of 1,300 women in India, adolescent to middle age, found that women with some schooling were less likely to be recipients of domestic violence, most likely due to the access to opportunities provided by education that empower women to be less dependent on abusive partners.⁵⁵

Decreased adult and teen fertility rates

Girls' secondary education also dramatically affects fertility rates. A World Bank 100-country study found that for every four years of education that girls attain, fertility rates drop by roughly one birth.⁵⁶ An earlier 65-country analysis found that doubling the proportion of women with a secondary

⁵⁴ Greene, Malhotra, and Sanyukta Mathur. "Too Young To Wed," International Center for Research on Women, Washington, DC, 2003.

⁵⁵ Herz, Barbara and Gene Sperling. "What Works in Girls' Education." Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 2004.

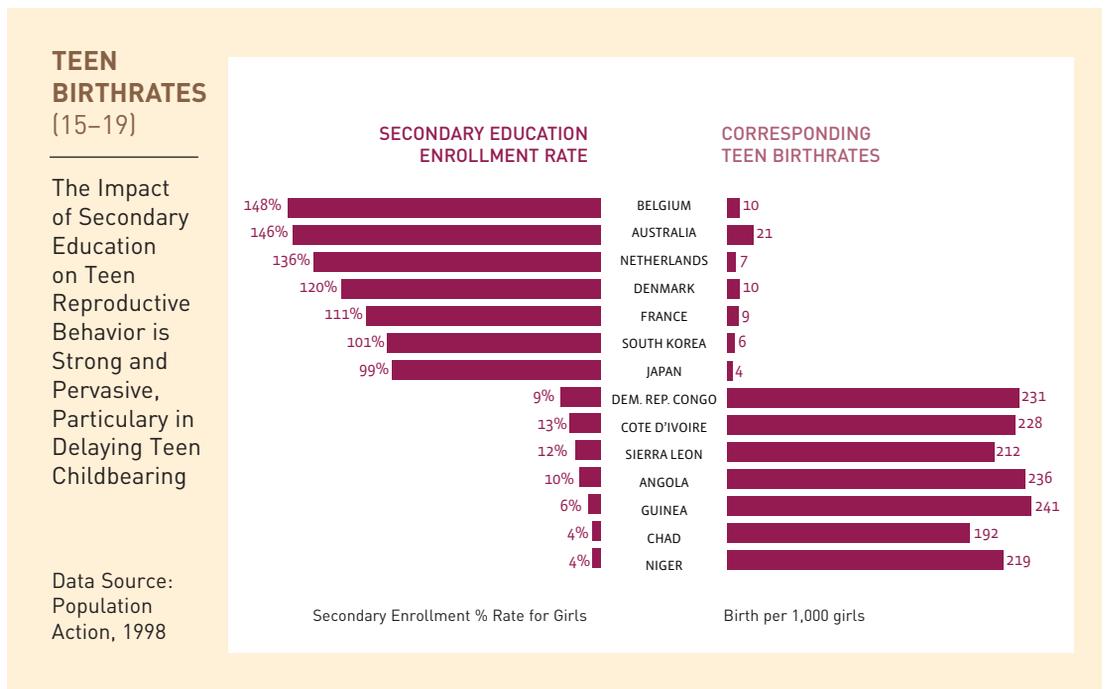
⁵⁶ Klasen, Stephan. "Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development—Evidence from Cross-Country Regressions." PRR Gender and Development Working Paper Series No. 7. World Bank, Washington, DC, 1999. Last accessed 14 June 2006. <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/prr/wp7.pdf>.

education reduced average fertility rates from 5.3 to 3.9 children per woman, concluding that, “the expansion of female secondary education may be the best single policy for achieving substantial reductions in fertility.”⁵⁷

The impact of secondary education on preventing teen pregnancies is also positive. A Population Action International study in 1998 found a strong correlation between secondary enrollment rates for girls and teen birth rates: in seven industrialized countries with secondary enrollment rates for girls of 99-148 percent, the teen birth rate averaged 10 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 years. In seven developing countries with secondary enrollment rates for girls at only 4-19 percent, the teen birth rate averaged 223 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 years — a rate 20 times that of the industrialized countries.

Improved postnatal care, immunization rates, and child nutrition

According to the 2000 Demographic and Health Survey, 34 percent of Egyptian mothers with no education received postnatal care, compared with 75 percent of those with a high school or college degree.⁵⁸ Multi-country data has

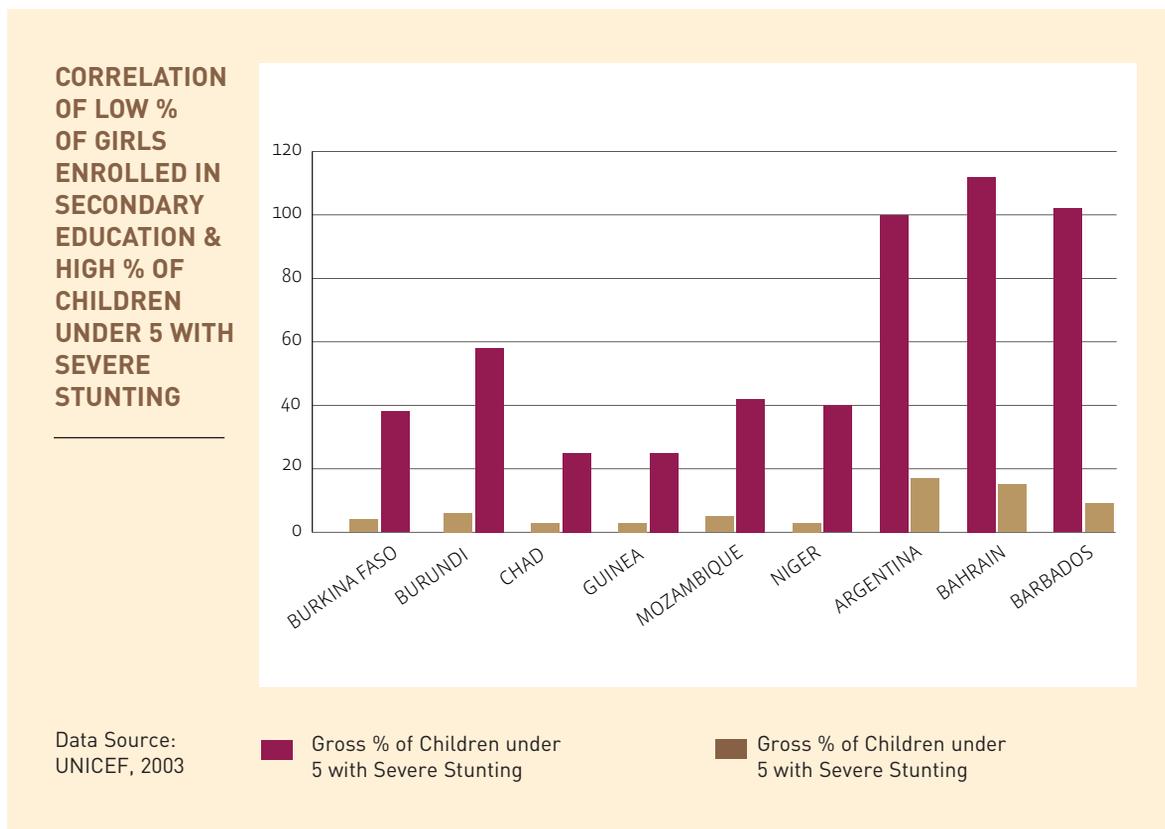


⁵⁷ Herz, Barbara and Gene Sperling. “What Works in Girls’ Education.” Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 2004.

⁵⁸ El-Zanaty, F. and Ann Way. “Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2000.” Ministry of Health and Population, National Population Council, and ORC Macro, January 2001.

also shown that educated mothers are about 50 percent more likely to immunize their children than uneducated mothers.⁵⁹

The chart below shows the results of a 2003 UNICEF study which found that countries with less than 10 percent of girls enrolled in secondary school (e.g., Burundi, Chad, Niger) had severe stunting or malnutrition rates ranging from 30-60 percent of all children under five years. Other developing and middle income countries with secondary gross enrollment rates of over 100 percent (e.g., Argentina, Barbados) had severe malnutrition rates of less than 15 percent among children under five.



59 Gage, Sommerfelt, and Andrea L. Piani. "Household Structure and Childhood Immunization in Niger and Nigeria," *Demography*, Vol. 34, No. 2, May 1997.

4. *Girls' secondary education is a strategy to mitigate HIV/AIDS.*



4.

GIRLS' SECONDARY EDUCATION IS A STRATEGY TO MITIGATE HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS estimated that by the end of 2005 over 40 million people were living with HIV and AIDS. In the 10 most affected countries, all of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, adult HIV infection rates range from 12 to 39 percent of the population.⁶⁰ The AIDS pandemic continues to grow worldwide, threatening gains made in all sectors, particularly girls' education.

The impact of AIDS on girls' education

The impact of AIDS on human and financial resources is debilitating education in many countries. While this trend affects all students, girls' position in the classroom is the most vulnerable. They are more often forced to sacrifice their education as a result of the challenges posed by AIDS.

ADULTS AND CHILDREN ESTIMATED TO BE LIVING WITH HIV IN 2005



Data Source: AIDS Epidemic Update, 2005
UNAIDS and World Health Organization

⁶⁰ UNAIDS. "AIDS Epidemic Update," December 2005. World Bank. "Education and HIV/AIDS: A Window of Hope," April 2002.

One of the major human resource-related impacts of AIDS is its effect on teachers, whose HIV incidence is reflected in projections of increases in teacher absenteeism and mortality rates in the countries worst-affected by AIDS. For example, more than 30 percent of teachers in parts of Malawi and Uganda are HIV positive. In Zambia, the estimated number of school teachers in active service who died from AIDS in 1999 was 840, equivalent to 46 percent of all teachers trained that year.⁶¹ Both teacher mortality and increased teacher absenteeism due to illness negatively affect the quality of education.⁶² The gravity of high HIV infection rates among teachers is further underlined by the phenomenon of sexual harassment against girls in school, increasing the direct risk to school-aged girls of contracting HIV.

In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 12.3 million children have been orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV and/or AIDS, a population that will continue to grow as HIV-positive parents become ill and die. In addition to losing a parent, children are affected when a parent becomes ill, their family takes in orphans, they are discriminated against because they have an HIV-positive family member, or they are HIV-positive themselves.⁶³ As family members become sick or die, girls often will drop out of school to care for them or for other family members, including younger siblings who may be able to remain in school. When the quality of education is poor or when it drops, parents stop seeing the benefits of continuing to send their daughters to school, and the economic and social constraints, such as the opportunity costs, become more important than an education with poor quality. In a recent study of 38 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, gross enrollment rates for grade I in southern African countries dropped sharply between 1980-2000, from 95 percent to 75 percent, for both boys and girls — but more so for girls — as HIV infection rates increased.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Grassly, Pegurri, Sikazwe, Malambo, Siamatowe, Bundy, and Kemal Desai. "The Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS on the Education Sector in Zambia." Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and the Partnership for Child Development, Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College, London, UK, 2003.

⁶² World Bank. "Education and HIV/AIDS: A Window of Hope," April 2002.

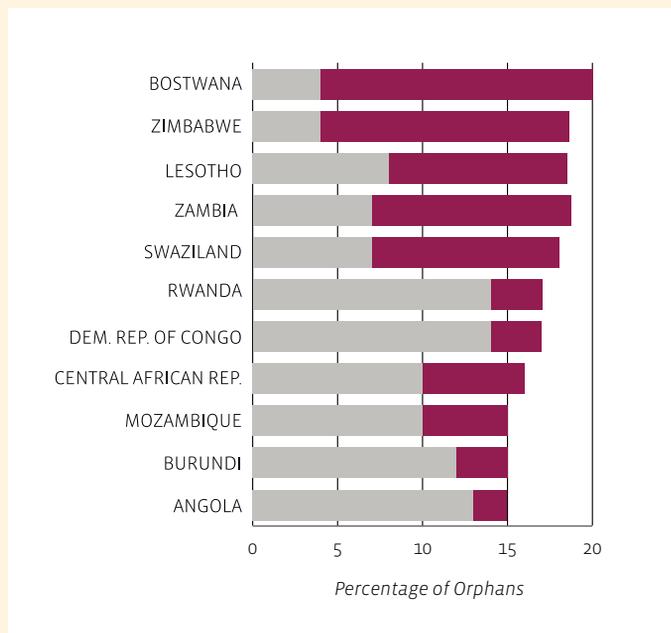
⁶³ UNICEF. "Children on the Brink 2004: A Joint Report of New Orphan Estimates and a Framework for Action," July 2004.

⁶⁴ Kjell Engle. "Coming to Grips with the Crisis: Findings from Recent Studies." AED, SAGE, Colloquium on HIV/AIDS and Girls' Education, U.S. Agency for International Development, Washington, DC, 2000.

**IN 11 COUNTRIES
IN SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICA, AT LEAST
15% OF CHILDREN
WERE ORPHANS IN
2003**

Data Source:
UNAIDS, UNICEF, and
USAID, *Children on the
Brink*, 2004, July 2004

 HIV/AIDS
 All other causes



The biases of infection: Age and gender

In Africa and Asia the primary modes of HIV transmission are through sexual contact and injecting drug use.⁶⁵ Largely as a result of this epidemiology, young adults aged 15–24 now account for half of all new HIV cases, and women and girls account for 62 percent of new infections.⁶⁶ Furthermore, half of the over 40 million people estimated to be living with HIV or AIDS are women and girls, a proportion that has been steadily increasing since the beginning of measurement of the epidemic. In some countries there is a far greater percentage of women than men infected: 20 women for every 10 men in South Africa and 45 women for every 10 men in Kenya and Mali. This gender disparity in HIV infection is partly a result of biological factors. The risk of becoming infected during unprotected sex is two to four times greater for women than for men and is even higher when sex is forced.⁶⁷ Gender inequality makes women disproportionately vulnerable, yet this is preventable.

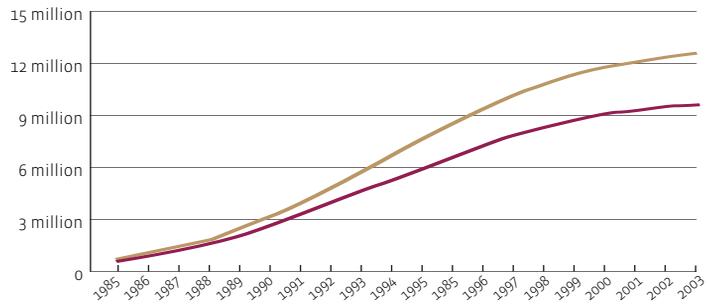
65 UNAIDS. "AIDS Epidemic Update," December 2005.

66 UNICEF. "Unite for Children: Unite Against AIDS: Why Children and AIDS?" Last Accessed 12 June 2006. http://www.unicef.org/uniteforchildren/knowmore/knowmore_28763.htm.

67 For young girls the risk can be higher as an immature genital tract can tear easily during sex, especially if it is forced or violent. UNAIDS, 2004.

**ESTIMATED
NUMBER OF ADULT
(15-49) WOMEN
AND MEN LIVING
WITH HIV IN
SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICA OVER TIME
(1985-2003)**

Data Source:
UNAIDS/WHO estimate
2004



— Women living with HIV/AIDS

— Men living with HIV/AIDS

Girls' secondary education: An effective long-term defense against HIV/AIDS

As Carol Bellamy, former Executive Director of UNICEF, stated: "Education is crucial to success against the pandemic. In fact, UNICEF remains convinced that until an effective remedy is found, education is one of the most effective tools for curbing AIDS."⁶⁸ Studies have demonstrated that the more educated the girl, the more delayed is her first sexual encounter. As indicated by the chart below, women aged 20 to 24 who had a secondary education married later, by age 20 had a lower percentage of initiated sex than women with a primary education or no education, and had a far lower fertility rate than women with less or no education.

In addition, numerous studies have further linked education and reduced sexual activity with lower HIV prevalence:

- A 72-country analysis finds that where the literacy gap between boys and girls exceeds 25 percent, HIV prevalence exceeds 5 percent – the cited breakout level.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ UNICEF. "Girls, HIV/AIDS, and Education," December 2004.

⁶⁹ Over, Mead. "The Effects of Societal Barriers on Urban Rates of HIV Infection in Developing Countries: An Explanatory Analysis", in M. Ainsworth, L. Franson, and M. Overs, eds., *Confronting AIDS: Evidence from the Developing World*. European Commission and World Bank: Brussels and Washington, 1998.

“Why are women more vulnerable to infection? Why is that so, even where they are not the ones with the most sexual partners outside of marriage, nor more likely than men to be injecting drug users? Usually, because society’s inequalities put them at risk.”

—Kofi Annan

- A study in Zambia found that AIDS spreads twice as fast among uneducated girls.⁷⁰
- A recent study in rural Uganda found that young people with some primary schooling were about half as likely as their peers with no education to be HIV-positive, and those with some secondary education were three times less likely.⁷¹

The heightened vulnerabilities of girls to HIV, coupled with the intensified impact of AIDS on adolescent girls, make secondary education for girls a particularly important tool in combating this pandemic. While information on HIV and AIDS can and should be introduced at the primary level, girls who continue onto secondary school develop two critical assets for translating information into practice: self-confidence and self-esteem. They can begin to articulate their views and advocate, for example, against early forced marriage in discussions with their parents. They can

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN, AGED 20–24, WHOM BY AGE 20 HAD MARRIED, HAD INITIATED SEX, OR GIVEN BIRTH, BY EDUCATION LEVEL

COUNTRY	YEAR	Married by Age 20			Had Sex by Age 20			Had a Birth by Age 20		
		EDUCATION LEVEL			EDUCATION LEVEL			EDUCATION LEVEL		
		NO EDUCATION	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	NO EDUCATION	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	NO EDUCATION	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
EGYPT	2000	61	53	24	—	—	—	45	39	14
ETHIOPIA	2000	72	58	32	72	56	41	48	42	20
GUINEA	1999	87	65	38	88	82	68	73	59	31
MALAWI	2000	87	81	29	90	87	62	70	69	28
NIGERIA	1999	92	56	25	85	68	54	77	47	18
TANZANIA	1999	85	60	19	91	86	60	68	57	18
ZIMBABWE	1999	95	72	43	—	78	55	81	70	35

70 Vandemoortele, J. and E. Delamonica. ‘Education “vaccine” against HIV/AIDS,’ Current Issues in Comparative Education, 2000.

71 De Walque, Damien. “How Does Educational Attainment Affect the Risk of Being Infected with HIV/AIDS—Evidence from a General Population Cohort in Rural Uganda.” World Bank Development Group Working Paper, Washington, DC, 2004.

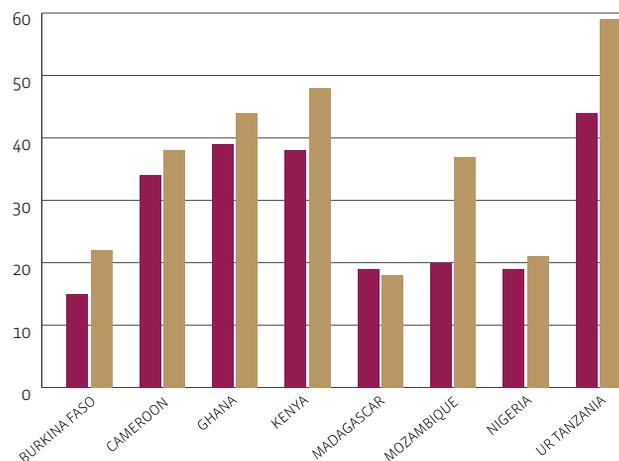
better discern accurate information from myths, understand and avoid risky behaviors, and take measures to prevent infection. Secondary school empowers girls with the analytical skills to begin to understand complicated social and medical crises like HIV and AIDS and their role in addressing them. Secondary school is an essential window of opportunity for HIV prevention education since it catches girls and boys during their point of highest vulnerability, when it is most important to address HIV prevention, healthy behaviors to prevent HIV, and ways to counteract the likely daily cues that promote unhealthy behavior. Furthermore, if girls and boys are in secondary schools, they are spending less time in the field, in the market, and in the streets, where the likelihood of encountering “sugar daddies” and other temptations for risky behavior are greater.

In addition to biological predisposition, four main social factors contribute to the rising rate of infection among girls and women in Africa, and gender inequity is the thread that connects them all. Girls’ secondary education equips them with the knowledge and skills to reduce their risk of contracting HIV. Household and individual economic need accounts for multiple dangerous practices, including early marriage, cross-generational transactional sex, and sex work.

**PERCENTAGE OR
YOUNG PEOPLE AGED
15–24 YEARS WHO
CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED
MAJOR WAYS
OF PREVENTING THE
SEXUAL TRANSMISSION
OF HIV*,
2003**

Data Source:
Demographic Health
Surveys. ORC Macro
AIDS epidemic Update,
December 2005, Fig. 4

■ Female ■ Male



* Using condoms and limiting sex to one faithful, uninfected partner, rejecting the two most common local misconceptions about HIV transmission, and knowing that a healthy looking person can transmit HIV.

- Early forced marriage by girls' parents is a common practice in many developing countries and is often based on economic need. In addition to reducing the number of family members to support, in certain cultures the bride's family traditionally receives a dowry from the husband's family. Due to widespread acceptance of male extramarital sexual relationships and the expectation of unprotected sex in marital relationships, HIV infection rates are often higher among married girls than among their unmarried counterparts. A study in Zambia found higher rates of HIV infection among married girls aged 15-19 than among sexually active unmarried girls of the same age.⁷²
- It is very common for adolescent girls in Africa to engage in sexual relationships with older men ("sugar daddies"), often for the purpose of financial gain, whether short-term (receiving money or gifts) or long-term (finding a financially stable husband). Due to the age difference and gender roles, these men often have multiple sexual partners, possibly including a wife.⁷³
- Many of the same financial factors that compel young girls to become involved in "sugar daddy" relationships drive them to voluntarily engage in commercial sex work. Many girls are often coerced into the commercial sex industry, often by immediate or extended family members in order to pay off debts.

Girls and young women with a secondary education are more likely to be able to support themselves rather than depending on a sexual partner or husband. If families are convinced that secondary education is relevant and will increase their daughters' chances for income generation in the future, they may also be willing to postpone her marriage so that she can finish her education. Finally, the confidence and self-esteem that girls gain in secondary school are valuable tools in equipping girls to negotiate with their parents to delay marriage or to resist voluntary yet risky relationships with older men. Girls' secondary education might help them transform their understanding of the concept of survival by stretching that concept from surviving in the present to surviving in the present and in the future. It is possible that through secondary education and through gaining confidence and self-esteem, girls' and young women's

⁷² Family Health International. "YouthLens: Early Marriage and Adolescent Girls." Produced through the USAID-funded Youthnet Project, August 2005.

⁷³ Luke, Nancy and Kathleen M. Kurz, "Cross-Generational and Transactional Sexual Relations in sub-Saharan Africa: Prevalence of Behavior and Implications for Negotiating Safer Sexual Practices." AIDS Mark, ICRW, and PSI, 2002.



values will change — valuing the future versus only valuing the now might become more of the norm.

Gender Norms Regarding Sexuality and Power Dynamics also play a strong role in promoting behaviors that put young girls and women at increased risk of contracting HIV. In many countries, multiple sexual partners are acceptable for men, while women are expected to remain faithful and make their bodies available to satisfy their partners' desires. Women often fear violent retaliation if they question their partner's fidelity or refuse sex. In addition, women with no or little education have little control over the norms of their sexual relationship and often have poor understanding of their bodies, and little understanding of the consequences of activities such as douching and dry sex. A study conducted in South Africa found a strong correlation between low condom use in relationships and low relationship control of women, further underlying the fact that power imbalances expose women unequally to HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses.⁷⁴

Secondary education is important in dispelling unhealthy gender norms for both boys and girls. In addition, self confidence and self esteem aide girls in asserting their own power and beliefs in some situations, and in beginning to educate their families and communities on the detrimental effects of some gender norms, including control by male partners of financial resources. When communities and countries begin to educate a critical mass of girls and women, girls then will be able to act collectively to advance behaviors that promote their own well-being and, as a result, the well-being of their communities.

Myths and Inadequate Sources of Information hinder both boys and girls (and men and women) from making informed decisions about their sexual behavior. Several years ago a myth emerged in South Africa that men could protect themselves from AIDS by having sex with a virgin; it was said to be responsible for many rapes of infants and young girl children.⁷⁵ More common myths include misconceptions about how HIV is transmitted, the belief that HIV or AIDS is a curse rather than a medical illness, the belief that someone who looks healthy cannot be HIV positive, and complex inaccurate beliefs about female reproductive cycles.

⁷⁴ Pettifor, Measham, Rees, and NS Padian. "Sexual Power and HIV Risk, South Africa: Emerging Infectious Diseases." Internet Series, November 2004. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol10no11/04-0252.htm>.

⁷⁵ CNN.Com. "AIDS Myth Fuels South Africa's Child-Rape Scourge." www.cnn.com, November 5, 2001.



While there are numerous examples of successful school-based HIV prevention programs, there are more examples of poor education systems with limited access to educational materials and ineffective teaching methods. Such situations contribute to misinformation by failing to correct myths or provide relevant information to students on how to protect themselves from HIV. In addition, for young people who cannot attend school during these most vulnerable years — most often girls — this is a missed opportunity. They are forced to depend on family or community members who may not have this information themselves. It is clear from the chart that although girls in this age group are most often at significantly higher risk of contracting HIV than their male peers, in seven out of the eight countries studied, girls have less knowledge of how to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV than do boys.

Girls' secondary education provides an important opportunity to discuss HIV prevention in more detail, including age-appropriate conversations about abstinence, fidelity in relationships, and condom use that might not have been appropriate or relevant at the primary level. In addition, it is during secondary

school that students are often going through puberty and exploring their sexuality, making the provision of an open forum for discussion of these issues even more essential. Finally, the analytical skills gained at the secondary level can enable both girls and boys to translate accurate information into knowledge and healthy behaviors, and to recognize and dispel myths.

Sexual harassment and violence against women and girls is often tolerated throughout communities, including in schools and en route to school. A recent AED study of primary and secondary schools in southern Benin found pervasive gender-based violence. Girls were frequently sexually harassed by male students as well as teachers who used the lure of money or the threat of bad grades to persuade girls to have sex with them.⁷⁶ Worldwide, up to one-third of adolescent girls report that their first sexual experience is coerced. Furthermore, multiple studies have shown that forced sex increases a woman's chance of contracting HIV.⁷⁷ In addition, perpetrators of rape and sexual assault are most often older more sexually experienced men who are more likely to be HIV positive.

The limits of girls' education alone in preventing HIV

While it is important to begin HIV prevention efforts at the primary level, secondary education reinforces more detailed health-promoting messages during the most vulnerable and receptive time for girls.⁷⁸ Even with an education, girls may not be able to avoid risky circumstances such as early marriage and sexual violence. Concerted action between women, men, girls, and boys is required to effectively address these issues of gender inequality. Even with these limitations, secondary education can be an important tool for girls and women in protecting themselves from HIV and AIDS by providing them with accurate information and skills to deal with potentially risky situations, as well as encouraging healthy behaviors when choices are available.

⁷⁶ Wible, Brent. "Making Schools Safe for Girls: Combating Gender-Based Violence in Benin," Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC, 2004.

⁷⁷ UNAIDS Interagency Task Team on Gender and HIV/AIDS. "HIV/AIDS and Gender Fact Sheets," 2004.

⁷⁸ World Bank. "SEIA Studies: Thematic Study 6: The link between health and social issues and secondary education." <http://www.worldbank.org/af/seia/thematic.htm#study6>.

5. *Girls' secondary education is a tool for poverty alleviation.*





5. GIRLS' SECONDARY EDUCATION IS A TOOL FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

In Africa, where the average annual income is \$315 (excluding South Africa)⁷⁹ and secondary school tuition ranges from \$36 annually in Botswana⁸⁰ to \$350 in Kenya (where most schools are boarding),⁸¹ secondary school can be as prohibitively expensive as a medical degree is in the United States. These costs likely do not include incidental costs such as uniforms, books, notebooks, tutors, etc. And the total cost comes without the benefit of low interest loans (or any loans at all), and often without regular employment or parental support—all of the safety nets that make it possible for those who are qualified and committed to pursue such a high-cost endeavor regardless of economic background. For girls to pursue it in Africa and Asia, education must have greater economic benefits for the woman herself, as well as for her family, than just the intangible benefits such as decreased illness or a greater likelihood that her children will go to school.

Secondary education: The key to economic and social empowerment and progress

Family health problems, which are largely alleviated through secondary education, are drains on the economy of a family and on a nation. To compensate for higher infant and child mortality rates, women will deliver eight or nine children in the hopes that five will survive. The economic productivity of these mothers is greatly reduced before giving birth and for months afterward as the mother cares for the newborn child. In addition, complications from childbirth are known to be higher in uneducated women who are unaware of ways to prevent them. They are therefore more exposed to such complications as chronic anemia, further straining a poor family. In addition, poor families with large numbers of children have much higher levels of chronic childhood illnesses.

⁷⁹ Hanke, Steve H. "Africa and Economics." *Forbes.com*. 28 May 2001. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.forbes.com/global/2001/0528/046.html>.

⁸⁰ BBC News. "Botswana Brings Back School Fees." *BBC Online*. 11 Jan. 2006. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4601360.stm>.

⁸¹ Parmon, Joe. "Middleville native's organization seeks to help Kenyans improve their lives." *Peace Corps Online*. 16 April 2003. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://peacecorpsonline.org/messages/messages/2629/2013118.html>.

At the secondary level more specifically, research has demonstrated that “primary and secondary education produce high returns in terms of wage growth, whether for men or for women. The returns to primary education have long been established, but more recent research has shown substantial benefits to secondary education as well, particularly as economies advance and modernize.”⁸² As many countries in Africa and Asia move forward, as they have begun to do with the advent of technology, the Internet, business growth, better infrastructure, etc, the benefits for women educated at the secondary level will continue to increase, just as the lost opportunity of not educating them will have a growing detrimental impact on their ability to be self-sufficient and thrive. According to the World Bank, “Sub-Saharan Africa’s low level of education among women is particularly detrimental to achieving: (i) overall economic growth, given the positive impact of women’s education on, e.g., agricultural productivity; (ii) a pro-poor distribution of this growth, since women are among the poorest and education is the poor’s most important asset; and (iii) improved health and nutrition standards, HIV and AIDS prevention, and reduced fertility levels.”⁸³ Finally, “Access to and successful completion of secondary education shapes the skills mix of the labor force, influencing international competitiveness, foreign investment, and prospects for sustained growth.”⁸⁴

Further, World Bank studies indicate that an extra year of schooling beyond the average boosts girls’ eventual wages by 10–20 percent, and a development economist has found returns to female secondary education in the 15–25 percent range. Yale economist Paul Schultz’s research has determined that, “wage gains from education tend to be similar if not somewhat higher for women than for men, and that the returns to secondary education in particular are appreciably higher for women...Increasing investments in women’s human capital, especially education, should be a priority for countries seeking both economic growth and human welfare. The case for directing educational investment to women is stronger the greater the initial disparity in investments between men and women.”⁸⁵ Additionally, “Increasing the share of women with secondary

⁸² Herz, Barbara and Gene Sperling. “What Works in Girls’ Education.” Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 2004.

⁸³ World Bank. “Education.” Last accessed 12 May 2006. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0..contentMDK:20264715~menuPK:535759~pagePK:146736~piPK:226340~theSitePK:258644.00.html>.

⁸⁴ Bregman, Jacob, and Karen Bryner. “Quality of Secondary Education in Africa (SEIA).” Association for the Development of Education in Africa. 2003. Last accessed 12 May 2006.

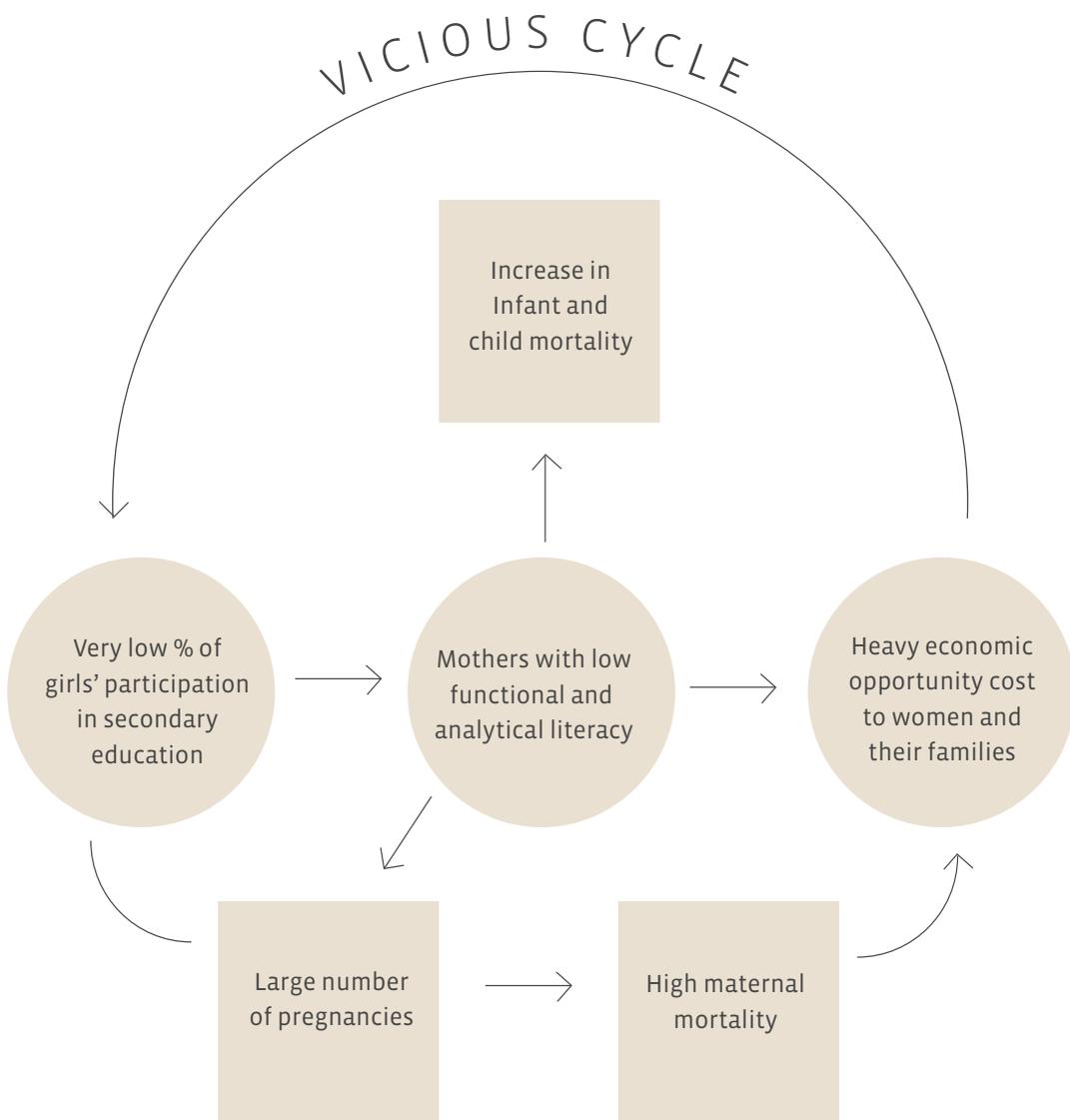
⁸⁵ Herz, Barbara and Gene Sperling. “What Works in Girls’ Education.” Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 2004.

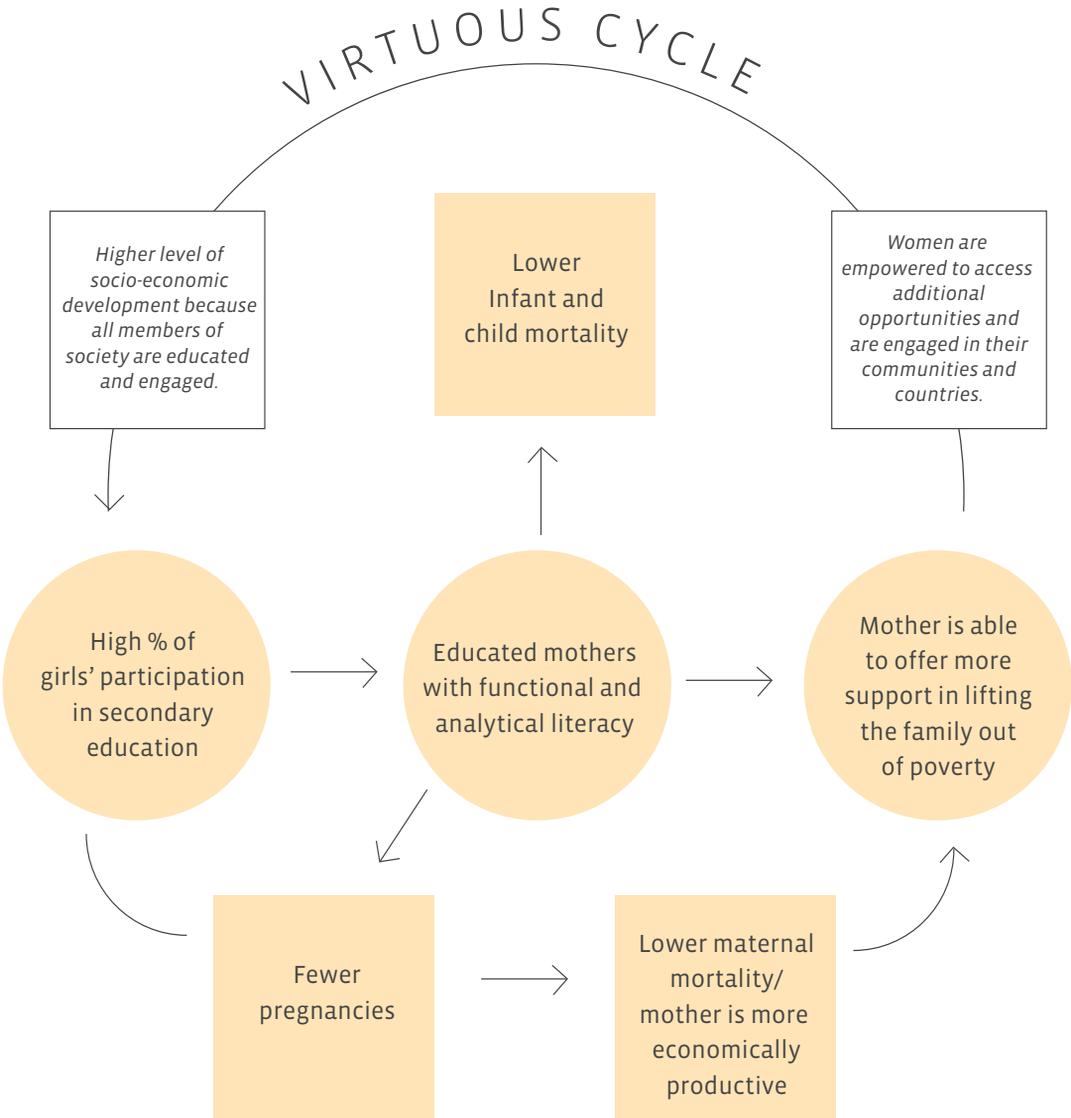


education by 1 percentage point boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points on average, according to a 100-country study by the World Bank. Such a difference means a lot, as few countries achieve per capita income growth beyond 3 percent annually, and incomes are falling in parts of Africa... societies that have a preference for not investing in girls pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income."⁸⁶ The World Bank also has found that, "Progress towards EFA puts strong pressure on secondary education. Secondary education in the developing countries barely enrolls 25 percent of the age group, as compared to an average of 60 percent for developed countries. This low capacity causes increasingly strong unmet demand pressure on secondary schools as larger cohorts complete primary education. It also puts severe constraints on countries' ability to provide the skills required to support resumption of economic growth."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ World Bank. "Education." Last accessed 12 May 2006. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0..contentMDK:20264715~menuPK:535759~pagePK:146736~piPK:226340~theSitePK:258644.00.html>.





The “vicious cycle” highlights how the lack of secondary education for women feeds an unrelenting cycle of poverty. The virtuous cycle highlights the impact education can have on lifting women and their families out of poverty.

These cycles describe the cycle of advances for women as a result of education in the private spheres of their families. As noted by Harvard scholar David Bloom and colleagues:

...higher education can lead to economic growth through both private and public channels. The private benefits for individuals are well established and include better employment prospects, higher salaries, and a greater ability to save and invest. These benefits may result in better health and improved quality of life, thus setting off a virtuous spiral in which life expectancy improvements enable individuals to work more productively over a longer time further boosting lifetime earnings.⁸⁸

While Bloom is discussing tertiary education, his findings apply to education at all levels and the increasing private and public impacts it has as individuals move through the education system. The private impact of women’s education is greater than men’s, largely because of their communal roles and responsibilities towards their families and children. The more public benefits of increasing levels education also would apply.

Looking to women to help lift their nations out of poverty, it is clear that the greater the access to education and to higher levels of education for women, the greater their potential to help foster the economic growth of their countries. Further, the more women, and by extension their families, are cut off from access to these increasing levels of education, the more disenfranchised they will become as their male schoolmates forge these pathways without them.

⁸⁸ Bloom, Canning and Kevin Chan. “Higher education and economic development in Africa.” Harvard University, February 2006. Last accessed 11 May 2006. http://www.worldbank.org/afr/teia/pdfs/Higher_Education_Econ_Dev.pdf.

VIII.
STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING
GIRLS' SECONDARY EDUCATION:

A Look to the Future

While the majority of the examples in this publication are derived from sub-Saharan Africa, it is only because the problems in education are most acute there. Asia and the Middle East face similar issues, particularly in the rural areas. The benefits of secondary education for girls and the following strategies for attaining those benefits are applicable in all of these regions.

Many conditions are necessary to increase girls' enrollment, retention in, and completion of secondary school. Among them, two are key: political will and community involvement. Political will at all levels includes the willingness to build and sustain a strong commitment to ensuring that a high percentage of girls complete the primary cycle and transition to middle school. This political will must be translated into relevant action to create opportunities for girls to complete their secondary level education, thus taking them one step closer to fulfilling their potential.

In addition to political will, community involvement is necessary to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability of interventions. Community members, including parents, teachers, religious leaders, and students themselves, must be involved in the identification of barriers and solutions, as well as in the planning and implementation of strategies that advance girls' secondary education.

MEETING A KALEIDOSCOPE OF NEEDS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

Interventions must be designed to meet the needs in each country and sometimes sub-regions within the country. The complexity of secondary girls' education and the range of potential interventions can be understood through the perspective of an African or South Asian girl. Her first challenge is access to a safe school where she can focus on her schooling without threat of violence, harassment, physical labor, gender discrimination, personal hygiene concerns, etc. Her second challenge is to find quality education that is purposeful, relevant, and meaningful so it will have value to the girl and her family as an end in itself. Finally, as education becomes more challenging and the obstacles become greater, as is the case for African and South Asian girls as they progress through the school system, girls must be given the motivation, through assurance of gainful employment for example, to continue despite family or societal pressure that may tell her that an education is of little value.

I. SHORT-TERM—INCREASING ACCESS AND RETENTION:**WIDENING THE DOOR TO SECONDARY EDUCATION**

There are a number of short-term strategies that countries, communities, and schools can put into place that will dramatically increase girls' access to, enrollment in, and retention in secondary school. These include building schools and equipping them with latrines and other necessities to eliminate a number of the barriers girls face.

Building secondary schools within a reasonable distance of every community

Building more secondary schools and providing access that does not require extensive travel or boarding would dramatically reduce concerns about cost and safety. While the intervention may be targeted at girls, boys would benefit as well. Avoiding high transportation costs or boarding fees makes attending secondary school less expensive and more cost effective for everyone, from those paying fees to the communities that lose revenue and consumers when much of their school-age population disappears to larger cities and towns to attend secondary school. Schools are also far more likely to enjoy more parental and community support and involvement when they are located closer to students' parents, thereby enhancing quality and accountability.

Latrines increase enrollment and retention for girls, as well as female teachers

Another infrastructure issue is the frequent lack of functional, clean, and separate toilets or latrines for girls and female teachers to use throughout the school day. Particularly during menstruation, this becomes a significant deterrent to girls' attendance at school, as well as leading to a loss of female teachers. Lack of separate, secure latrines also raises safety concerns for girls

when they are forced to share these facilities with male teachers or students. In Ethiopia, *The New York Times* reports:

Fatimah is facing the onset of puberty, and with it the realities of menstruation in a school where there is no latrine, no water, no hope of privacy other than the shadow of a bush, and no girlfriends with whom to commiserate. Fatimah is the only girl of the 23 students in her class. In fact, she is one of only three girls in the school who have made it past third grade. Even the school's female teachers say they have no choice but to use the thorny scrub, in plain sight of the classrooms, as a toilet. 'It is really too difficult,' said Azeb Beyene, who arrived here in September to teach fifth grade. 'I decided right then I would leave.'⁸⁹

The impact of safe, clean, accessible latrines in schools has been documented. UNICEF reports that from 1997 to 2002, enrollment rates for girls jumped 17 percent after improvements in school sanitation, and the dropout rate among girls fell by an even greater percentage.⁹⁰ In northeastern Nigeria, schools showed significant gains after funders built thousands of latrines, trained teachers, and established school health clubs.⁹¹

Creating a safe environment

For female students to feel safe in the school environment it is not only necessary for the community to acknowledge a harassment problem, it is also necessary to set up channels of reporting for students. Teachers also must be empowered to report such behavior and feel confident that appropriate action will be taken. Perpetrators must feel, from the community at large, that such behavior is socially unacceptable. One potential intervention is to train "safe teachers" to serve as resource persons to whom students can bring issues of harassment, verbal or physical abuse, learning/school environment, etc. Training can be provided for teachers, parents, students, and school administrators in the establishment of school counsels that act on reports of harassment, abuse, and environmental hazards that negatively affect student learning without jeopardizing the school's standing or reputation of the reporting student. An important part of this training would be the establishment of codes of conduct for schools and accompanying enforcement policies.

⁸⁹ LaFraniere, Sharon. "For girls in Africa, education is an uphill fight." *The New York Times*. 23 December 2005. Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2005/12/22/news/ethiopia.php>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

2. SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-TERM — IMPROVING RELEVANCE/QUALITY/PURPOSE: STAYING BEHIND THE DESK OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Once girls gain access to secondary school education, a major challenge for school completion is the quality and relevance of the education students are receiving. Girls often become discouraged or drop out of school not only for financial reasons, but out of frustration with a school environment where gender inequities prevail, classes are not participatory, teachers and teaching examples are biased towards males, and the curriculum is not relevant to their lives. For secondary educational quality and relevance to improve, governments, international donors, and communities must invest in gender-responsive educational reform which incorporates curriculum reform; teacher training reform, a student-centered learning process and inquiry-based teaching, school management reform, gender equity in the classroom and school, and a gender-based violence-free school environment.

Promoting student-centered, gender-sensitive learning

Training teachers in participatory methods of learning not only increases students' learning abilities but also increases their involvement in building their knowledge and likelihood of staying in school. As teachers learn to engage female students, students are more likely to feel that there is a purpose to continuing in school. Communities and schools can promote student-centered methods of learning by organizing workshops for teachers and school directors on strategies of teaching (group/team work, students' presentation, group research, or individual research) that encourage classroom participation, as well as regular follow-up to ensure that teachers are effectively integrating new tools and ensuring the full participation of every student in the classroom.

Seizing the opportunity for HIV-prevention education

Secondary school offers a key opportunity for providing HIV-prevention and AIDS mitigation education to girls and boys. Not only is repeated exposure to healthy behavior messages important, but this is a key age for students to receive reinforcement and guidance in translating that information into action. Through the Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program, AED's 37 local implementing partners have adopted a variety of approaches to HIV-prevention education, ranging from peer education, theater, school-based AIDS clubs, open discussions during mentoring sessions, and inviting community members living with HIV to speak to scholarship recipients about their experiences. Family Health International recently published a working paper highlighting the common characteristics of effective HIV education programs, based on a study of 83 evaluations of such programs. Among other attributes, effective



curricula, “created a safe environment for youth, focused on clear goals of preventing HIV/STI and/or pregnancy, focused on specific behaviors leading to these health goals, and gave a clear message about those behaviors.”⁹²

Increasing relevance: Teaching life skills

In terms of curriculum content, investment in gender-sensitive life skills materials, based on a 4th R in education, *responsible behavior*, must be a part of any educational reform efforts. Life skills learning materials should address local conditions and teach girls and boys responsible behavior, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-management, and interpersonal skills to allow them to acquire valuable knowledge and make positive decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities. Many schools are designing life skills programs that not only attract girls, but also keep them until they complete their studies. At Taibah Primary and Secondary School in Uganda, they “have a personal development curriculum which teaches self-awareness and communication skills and covers matters of sex, AIDS, infatuation, and use of contraceptives,” says Education Director Mariam Luyombo. “As a result, we hardly have any girl who doesn’t complete school.”⁹³

AED’s life skills lessons in Mali were welcomed by teachers, principals, and parents alike. Many parents expressed increased willingness to send their girls and boys to school and keep them in school as a result of the introduction of the life skills educational materials into the classrooms because of their relevance to the daily lives of the Malian communities. Life skills materials teach health, hygiene, HIV/AIDS, agricultural, environmental, and economic topics that are fully relevant to the priority needs of the communities, and promote practical skills and behavior change among students. These practical lessons skills also could be used to assist parents and community members outside of school.

3. LONG-TERM — PROMOTING MOTIVATION: ENSURING A PAYOFF

The lack of access to employment opportunities after graduation is a significant long-term barrier to the survival and completion of secondary school by girls. Many girls in their final year of secondary school, especially African and South Asian girls, believe that if they cannot find a job and earn an income, their education was useless. Employment opportunities in many countries are

92 Kirby, Laris, and Lori Roller. “Youth Research Working Paper No. 2: Impact of Sex and HIV Education Programs on Sexual Behaviors of Youth in Developing and Developed Countries.” Family Health International, 2005.

93 Kirungi, Fred. “Uganda Tackling School Bottlenecks.” Africa Recovery Online: A United Nations Publication.” Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol14no2/uganda.htm>.

often severely limited, even for secondary school graduates. Men are given job preference either by employers or by self-selection based on perceptions about traditional male- or female-appropriate jobs. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reports that: “Youth unemployment rates are high—56 percent in South Africa, 34 percent in Jamaica—and almost everywhere at least double the adult average. In many developing countries, gender discrimination in education and job opportunities results in higher unemployment among young women.”⁹⁴

This lack of education limits many young people’s employment prospects, especially women’s, to poorly paid and often unsafe work as domestic servants, agricultural laborers, or factory workers. In 2005, UNFPA reported that: “When they are employed, substantially more women than men work in the informal sector, which tends to offer lower wages, with less regulation, safety, and security. Women represent about two-thirds of self-employed entrepreneurs in the informal sector.”⁹⁵ Since these jobs do not require extensive education, they do not motivate investments in education at the individual, familial, or community level. More skilled, advanced job opportunities—often thought of as “non-traditional” for women—must be provided to encourage and motivate girls’ education at the advanced levels where it becomes more challenging and rigorous, financially and intellectually. The inability to directly translate secondary education into a consistent economic return represents perhaps the biggest barrier to secondary education for girls.

Providing additional training to girls

One approach to addressing this challenge is to provide additional guidance to girls outside of school hours on specific academic topics to ensure their success and to maintain their motivation to stay in school. In addition to tutoring, meetings could include training in job-related skills for upper secondary school girls and presentations by well-known community members, such as women leaders, on the importance of education. Participation in such clubs also could serve to encourage parents to see that the cost of sending their girls to school is worthwhile because the community is committed to providing opportunities to girls.

⁹⁴ UNFPA. “State of the World Population 2003: Overview of adolescent life: education and unemployment.” United Nations Population Fund. 2003. Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2003/english/ch1/page5.htm>.

⁹⁵ UNFPA. “State of the World Population 2005: Strategic investments: the equality dividend.” United Nations Population Fund. 2005. Last accessed 15 June 2006. http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/english/ch2/chap2_page1.htm.

⁹⁶ Through the SAGE Guinea project, implemented by AED and funded by USAID.



Promoting motivation: Role models inspire girls

To address the lack of career role models for girls in many developing countries, AED designed women's role model calendars in Guinea (2002 and 2003)⁹⁶, Afghanistan (2005)⁹⁷, and Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Uganda (2006).⁹⁸ In Afghanistan, 12 inspirational women were chosen for the calendar from the education, health, culture, and community development sectors. The 12 women in the calendar are intended to serve as role models for Afghan girl students who hope to remain in school, pursue a higher education, and become involved in the community. They also have the potential to serve as role models to encourage male students to respect and value women. Local implementing partners selected the 12 role models from different sectors in each of the five countries noted. The resulting calendars will be used as teaching materials by mentors and teachers, creating a forum to discuss the common challenges faced by young women in pursuing their education, and encouraging scholarship recipients to remain committed to completing their studies.

⁹⁷ Through the Afghanistan Teacher Training Program, implemented by AED and funded by the American Red Cross/America's Fund for Afghan Children.

⁹⁸ Through the USAID-funded AED's Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program.

VIII.

THE TIPPING POINT:

Toward a Critical Mass of Educated Women

Currently, girls are the exception rather than the rule in secondary classrooms. Adopting the suggestions in this report to increase access and improve survival and completion rates, make classrooms more gender equitable, and increase expectations for girls' independence and success will result in an environment that empowers girls for the benefit of themselves, their families, and their societies.

According to *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell: "The best way to understand the emergence of...trends...is to think of them as epidemics. Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do...The Tipping Point is the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point."⁹⁹ In one particularly poignant example, Gladwell discusses the impact of adult role models—professionals, managers, teachers, etc.—on youth and their educational behavior in a particular community:

When the number of professionals dropped below five percent, the problems exploded. For black school children, for example, as the percentage of high-status (black) workers falls just 2.2 percentage points...dropout rates more than double. At the same Tipping Point, the rates of childbearing for teenage girls—which barely move at all up to that point—nearly double.¹⁰⁰

This example illuminates the pull of particular ideas once they hit a critical mass among a population, and demonstrates that while a slight change in behavior or reality can have a dramatic and fast negative impact, so too can a change in the other direction have a positive one.

⁹⁹ Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference." Little, Brown and Company: New York, NY, January 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

As the *Tipping Point* for girls' education is reached in communities and subsequently, regions, the likelihood of girls going to school will increase dramatically, and behaviors and attitudes that negatively affect their ability to succeed — such as acceptance of sexual harassment — should decrease.

Currently, with girls more frequently shut out of secondary school, they are cut off from the positive pressure of a critical mass and are left to face alone the risks, from pressure to marry early to pressure to have sex with “sugar daddies” in order to meet their basic needs and the needs of their families. The story of Margaret Mwanamoiza, a Ugandan female role model in a 2006 calendar, demonstrates how having so few girls in secondary school can be a source of difficulty and of the need for a greater cadre of women to reinforce one another's goals. “One challenge was her upper primary teacher's negative attitude towards girls who excelled. ‘We were two girls who were getting better marks than boys and the male class teacher did not like it at all. Whenever we got better marks than boys in tests, he would call us abruptly, there and then, and give us another test, but still we would beat the boys.’ Excelling in these subjects earned her rejection by fellow students, especially boys who looked at her as abnormal.”¹⁰¹

Similarly, a Cameroonian female role model discusses her experiences of positive peer pressure in secondary school during the 1970s when very few girls were in school: “In secondary school, her exchanges with classmates galvanized her to pursue advanced studies. She succeeded on all of her exams, including the BEPC, BAC, and A4.”¹⁰² Her story demonstrates the positive impact that a small group of girls with similar ambitions and goals can have on one another.

Secondary education is also an extremely important experience for girls because it provides them with this social reinforcement and support from their peers — other young women facing the same decisions — at a period when they are beginning to face decisions that will truly affect their lives. While some pressures begin occurring at the primary level, it is not until adolescence when factors such as pressure to get married early or to have sex begin to surface. Writing for the *New York Times*, Sharon LaFraniere explains: “The pressure on

¹⁰¹ Wasike, Agnes. “Margaret Mwanamoiza: Chemistry and Math Teacher/Deputy Head Teacher,” AGSP 2006 Calendar: Uganda. The Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC, 2006.

¹⁰² Bako, Aissatou. “Denise Awa Ahidjo: Interpreter,” AGSP 2006 Calendar: Cameroon. The Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC, 2006.

girls to drop out peaks with the advent of puberty and the problems that accompany maturity, like sexual harassment by male teachers and parental pressure to marry.”¹⁰³ Being in secondary school at the time when these decisions begin to arise provides young men and women with the structure and camaraderie necessary to explore these issues appropriately.

According to a study prepared by The Population Council on sexual behavior in Kenya, “The sexual activity of girls — for whom early sexual relations are fraught with a number of dangers, physical as well as social — appears to be more subject to environmental influences. A home containing authoritative female role models and the support of two parents, and a school characterized by teachers supportive of girls and a gender-neutral atmosphere, appear to help minimize premarital sexual behavior among girls. On the other hand, and not surprisingly, schools where girls feel pressured to engage in sexual activity appear to be associated with more of such behavior.”¹⁰⁴

As Gladwell writes, “Look at the world around you. It may seem like an immovable, implacable place. It is not. With the slightest push — in just the right place — it can be tipped.”¹⁰⁵ For young women in Africa, in South Asia, and certain Middle Eastern countries, the push to make secondary education an accessible reality could provide that impetus for change that today seems so incomprehensible to the many girls who sit in classrooms feeling marginalized, disconnected, or afraid of being mocked or harassed, or to those who can only wonder and dream about the learning that is going on inside a secondary classroom.

¹⁰³ LaFraniere, Sharon. “For girls in Africa, education is an uphill fight.” *The New York Times*, 23, December 2005. Last accessed 15 June 2006. <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2005/12/22/news/ethiopia.php>

¹⁰⁴ Mensch, Lloyd, Erulkar, and Wesley Clark. “Premarital Sex and School Dropout in Kenya: Can Schools Make a Difference?” The Population Council, 1999. Last accessed 12 May 2006. <http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/wp/124.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ Gladwell, Malcolm. “The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference.” Little, Brown and Company: New York, NY, January 2002.



Social Benefits

Increasing
Primary
Completion

Reducing
HIV/AIDS

Health Benefits

Poverty
Alleviation

XI. FINAL COMMENTS

As with many complex issues, this report likely raises many questions. Should this be the case, it has succeeded in its goal: to stir conversation, research, and action to address the factors which hinder children's, and more specifically girls', enrollment and success in secondary school throughout the developing world. The purpose of this paper is to illuminate — through research, true stories, and analysis of the benefits of improved girls' secondary education — the need for greater investment in girls' secondary education and more strategic action to make it happen.

Among the many questions raised is that of who is responsible. Whose issue is this? Is this the responsibility of national governments and their local communities and schools? Is it the responsibility of individual donors or the entire international aid system? Will tackling this problem reduce assistance for other concerns, such as primary education, HIV/AIDS, and micro-finance programs? Will this investment pay off? And if so, to what degree? And for whom? How can we be sure that all the elements are in place for success?

These questions cannot be answered in the space here, but they do need to be answered. Further research and analysis must address the question of financing secondary education. This paper sets the stage for that discussion.

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Ms. Rihani's extensive work in girls' education and gender equity includes research work, policy assessments, innovative designs, systems analysis, and management of country programs. She is considered a leading voice on the relationship between girls' education and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

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