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Missed Target Triggers Call for Bold Steps - Will they be Enough?

Amy North



Credit: Geoff Sayer/Oxfam

Schoolgirls in Kenya. When fees were abolished in Kenya, 1.5 million additional children were able to go to school

2005 was an historic year. As world leaders gathered at the G8 Summit in June, and the World Summit in September an unprecedented mobilisation of global civil society came together to demand urgent action to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are met. However, although summit leaders responded with promises of new aid, they remained deafeningly silent about their collective failure to reach the first MDG target – to get equals numbers of girls and boys into primary and secondary school by 2005.

At the end of the year, a series of meetings in Beijing brought together the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Education For All High Level Group and the Fast Track

Initiative (FTI) partnership. These meetings offered a last chance for the international community to address the issue of the missed 2005 target, and hopes were high that they would galvanize the urgent action needed to ensure that, as we moved forwards into 2006, real progress on gender equality in education could be made.

The High Level Group communiqué did, for the first time, acknowledge the magnitude of the missed gender parity target. Disappointingly however, as the three meetings drew to a close, no firm action plan had been made to ensure that a fair share of the aid increases promised at the G8 summit would be invested in guaranteeing gender equitable basic

education for all. Despite this, the outcomes of the discussions that took place in Beijing, and events that have followed do offer some hope for making progress on gender equality as we move into 2006 and beyond.

Engendering the FTI

The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI), launched in 2002, is a global partnership, between donor and developing countries to ensure accelerated progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015. Despite its continued under-funding, it represents a key mechanism for supporting investment in education in countries with developed and far reaching education plans.

However, although gender equality is clearly a crucial element in the achievement of UPE, until now the FTI's ability to actively promote gender equality and gender equitable education has been limited. A review of gender in the FTI commissioned by United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) found that although there are some examples of FTI processes resulting in an improved focus on gender, the FTI does not appear to have consistently and systematically encouraged the integration of gender in national education plans. Particular weaknesses identified in FTI endorsed plans include those elements relating to going "beyond access" and achieving gender equity in terms of educational quality, not just gender parity in enrolments.

At the FTI partnership meeting in Beijing, participants recognised that the failure to make gender an integrated part of the FTI's goals, guiding principals and appraisal process is a weakness, and the steering committee resolved to implement the main recommendations that emerged from the UNGEI review.

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Recommendations on gender accepted by the FTI steering committee:

1. With support from the UNGEI Secretariat, revisit the FTI Goals and Guiding Principles with a view to including an explicit commitment to the gender equality goals and ensuring that the FTI promotes a consistent, holistic, rights-based approach to gender.
2. With support from the UNGEI Secretariat, strengthen the FTI Assessment and Endorsement Guidelines:
 - a. Mainstream gender across the six steps, ensure gender-disaggregation of all relevant indicators and include a clearer presentation of overall strategic policy objectives and main strategies for achieving these
 - b. In addition to the standard requirement to check with the PRSP, an assessment of country "readiness" to progress towards gender equality could include a review of country responses to the Beijing Platform for Action, action taken with regard to CEDAW, HIV and AIDS National Plans etc

Agreeing to the implementation of the UNGEI recommendations is a clear step forward for the FTI. The next step is ensuring that this commitment is put into practice and that the FTI process is able to add real value to country led processes to make progress on promoting greater gender equality. Moreover, if the potential for the FTI to promote gender equitable education is to be fulfilled it is crucial that it is fully funded and expanded, especially to countries where gender gaps are large. This requires donors to come forward with massive funding increases over and above the immediate financing gap, which is currently more than \$500 million for the 20 fully FTI endorsed countries alone.

Bold Initiatives: Making Education Free

It is known that user fees have a huge impact on preventing children –and especially girls- from going to school. And when fees are abolished the impact on enrolments can be enormous. In Uganda in 1995 almost 60% of children were out of school and girls, especially poor girls, were much less likely to go to school than boys. In 1997 user fees were abolished for up to four children per family, specifying that if there were girls in the family, at least two of these had to be girls. Enrolments increased by 70% overnight from 3.1 million to 5.3 million, and, by 2003 there were over 7 million children enrolled in primary school – with almost as many girls enrolled as boys. However, despite the wide recognition of the importance of free primary education to

guarantee that all children –girls and boys- are able to go to school, some kind of fees are still charged for primary education in at least 92 low and middle income countries¹.

The issue of user fees in education was discussed at both the UNGEI and the High Level group meetings in Beijing and delegates agreed that working to abolish fees, and ensuring that countries receive the support they need to be able to do this, must be a key priority in working to achieve education for all –boys and girls.

High Level Group on EFA Final Communiqué, Recommendations on User Fees:

- Countries should work with EFA partners to progressively remove both formal and informal school fee barriers, so as to enable all children, and in particular girls, to attend and complete primary schooling by 2015. They should also provide appropriate incentives to the poorest families, such as school grants, to support their children's education;
- In order to improve their capacity to maintain quality while absorbing the impact of enhanced enrolment, FTI and EFA partners will need to give prompt and long-term support to governments of developing countries that take these bold initiatives.

Since the Beijing meetings, notwithstanding some worrying setbacks –most notably the recent move by Botswana to reintroduce school fees in secondary education- global momentum around the need to get rid of fees in education has grown.

In April the "School Fee Abolition Initiative", launched by UNICEF and the World Bank to consolidate knowledge about school fees and provide guidance and support to selected countries taking bold policy measures to abolish them, is hosting a workshop in Nairobi. This will bring together learning from six countries –Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Ethiopia and Ghana- with recent experience of getting rid of fees. Meanwhile, in the UK, at the beginning of this year, Gordon Brown the Chancellor of the Exchequer pledged his commitment to free education for all, declaring that it should be "the next global cause".

It is now crucial that this momentum is built upon to ensure not only that governments take the bold step of eliminating fees in education, but also that donors commit to rapidly mobilise the financing necessary to support them when they do. This may also require looking at ways to ensure that international mechanisms such as the FTI can be made more flexible, in order to



Credit: Helen Palmer/Oxfam

A girl carries her book to school in Ghana, one of 20 countries that have been endorsed by the Fast Track Initiative

respond rapidly to countries abolishing fees. However, it is not only short term support that is required. When school fees are abolished the rapid increase in enrolments can put incredible strain on often already weak education systems. Sustained investment is crucial to ensure that education systems are able to cope with such increases, and offer quality and gender-equitable education to all students.

Quality and Equality: Teachers Matter

Well trained and sufficient numbers of teachers are key to ensuring that education systems are able to cope with increased demand, and provide quality and gender equitable education. This year Global Action Week organised by the Global Campaign for Education, will focus on the need to invest in the recruitment, training and retention of teachers in order to provide quality education for all. From the 24-30 April, millions of campaigners around the world will join to tell world leaders that 'Every Child Needs A Teacher'.

Global Action Week: Key Demands Rich countries:

- Increase aid and cancel debt
- Support countries' long-term education plans including teacher salaries
- End harmful donor conditions that prevent countries employing sufficient numbers of professional teachers

Poor countries:

- Increase public spending on education
- Ensure quality teaching by training teachers to a professional standard
- Pay teachers a living wage and give them a say in education policy-making
- Reduce class sizes and improve classroom conditions



A teacher helping her students, Tanzania

Although in many classrooms the behaviour of both female and male teachers may reproduce gender inequalities, teachers can - and many do - play a critical role in promoting gender equality. They can challenge gender stereotypes and raise awareness of gender issues, protect children against sexual harassment and abuse, encourage girls to make non-traditional subject choices and ensure equitable participation in classroom activities for both boys and girls. Female teachers in particular can be extremely important in making schools more girl and boy friendly and for improving girls' enrolment, retention and achievement.

However in the majority of countries where fewer girls than boys are enrolled in school and where girls' drop out is high, there is also a severe lack of female teachers. In sixteen sub-Saharan African countries women hold only one third or less of teaching posts and in Benin and Chad less than one-fifth of primary teachers are women. Moreover, the multiple problems faced by

many teachers, and especially female teachers, which

"The multiple problems faced by many teachers, and especially female teachers, which include low pay and poor working conditions mean that expectations of teachers to promote gender equality will not be met unless they are supported and empowered to do this."

include low pay and poor working conditions mean that expectations of teachers to promote gender equality will not be met unless they are supported and empowered to do this.

It is essential that female teachers are actively encouraged and supported, and that the conditions they need to be able to work effectively are guaranteed. In addition appropriate training and materials must be provided to both female and male teachers to empower them to be able to challenge gender inequalities both inside and outside the classroom. As Global Action Week draws the world's attention to the crucial role played by teachers, governments must be called upon to take responsibility for ensuring that teachers are supported to be able to promote gender equality through their teaching. And donors must commit to

providing the long term, recurrent funding necessary for this to happen.

Moving forward

The failure to reach the 2005 target is an urgent reminder of how far there is to go to achieve gender equitable education for all. As we move into 2006 it is crucial that this failure is not forgotten. Rather it must be used to galvanize greater action for gender equality in education.

The discussions around gender in the FTI, the momentum building around the issue of user fees, and the forthcoming focus on teachers in the Global Action Week represent real opportunities to focus attention on some of the issues that affect the ability of girls and boys to participate in gender equitable education. The challenge now is to make sure that the commitments made, and the political will generated are backed up by real action supported by the necessary funding. For this to happen it is vital that the tremendous civil society momentum generated in 2005 is built upon

to ensure that, as 2006 progresses, governments and world leaders are held to account and

obliged to take seriously their on-going responsibility to ensure that by 2008, all girls -and boys- have access to a safe, welcoming and gender equitable place to learn.

For more information on the Fast Track Initiative see www1.worldbank.org/education/efafti/

For more information on UNGEI see www.ungei.org

For more information on the High Level Group see http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/global_co/policy_group/index.shtml

For more information on Global Action Week see www.campaignforeducation.org

¹According to research by Katarina Tomasevski. See www.right-to-education.org for a list of countries where primary education is not free

Letter from the Editors

This month Global Action Week, organised by the Global Campaign for Education, focuses on the need to invest in teachers in order to achieve quality education for all. To mark this, this first issue of *Equals* in 2006 includes a special focus on teachers. On page 4 teachers from South Africa explain how they are tackling HIV/AIDS in their school, while on page 5 teachers from the "We Can" campaign in South Asia explain their role in challenging violence against women. And, on page 11 we hear about a special award for female science teachers who, despite working in difficult circumstances are making a huge difference to the lives of other girls and women.

2005 brought tragedy with an earthquake in South Asia which claimed more than 80,000 lives. Five months on Sidra Minhas assesses its impact on the lives and education of girls and women (page 6). Elsewhere in this issue, participants who took part in a Beyond Access workshop on gender, education and the media reflect on their experiences (page 7), and we hear back from a national conference on gender parity in Turkey (p10). Reviews include the Beyond Access Programme Insights papers, launched in January, and an assessment of gender in the 2006 Global Monitoring Report.

The Beyond Access project moves into a new phase in 2006. Despite funding from DFID, who generously supported the first phase of the project, coming to end, the project's work will carry on, and we are exploring exciting new opportunities to ensure that learning from the project continues to contribute to the development of better policy and practice for gender equality in education. We will be publishing *Equals* at quarterly intervals, and hope that it continues to provide a valuable means of sharing information, new ideas and initiatives. We hope that you enjoy this issue and, as always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

Amy

Amy

Sheda

Sheila

Elaine

Elaine

Talking with Teachers

“Talking about the facts of life” – HIV and AIDS in the classroom

The global HIV/AIDS crisis has devastating effects for education systems. Yet we know that education can play a critical role in fighting the epidemic. In this “Talking with Teachers” two teachers from a secondary school in a township near Durban, South Africa tell Deevia Bhana, Debbie Epstein and Elaine Unterhalter about how they are addressing HIV and AIDS in their school.

Mrs Sibongile Mvambo is a teacher with 17 years experience.

“The thing is as teachers the only thing I think that we have to do is to tell the kids about HIV, give them all the information as we are doing. Give them the condoms because we have accepted they are sexually active, that we cannot deny. And tell them to take these condoms, and tell them that they must believe in themselves you know. Because one of the things, they want to prove it that a person loves them by sharing their body with that person. So there’s that they don’t believe in themselves, especially

the girls, and these boys they’re easily able to influence them to

share the bed with them at a very early age. We do talk a lot, but I think one of the things is that some of the solutions are beyond what we can do in the school. After we have preached a lot about HIV and the use of condoms, they still come to school pregnant.

“I think as teachers alone we cannot do anything by ourselves.

There must be the support that we get from the parents, because most of the time these kids they spend only 7 hours with us, and after that they go home and we don’t know what happens afterward.”

Mrs VG Zulu is a teacher and counsellor from the same school. She says that the “family and school have to work hand in hand” if what they teach is to be effective.

“Teaching HIV and AIDS, we have gone out of our way. We have gone even the extra mile of bringing condoms. Because we bring condoms, other people can think we are saying they must have sex, but we start with abstinence. However the rate of pregnancy at school tells us that there’s no abstinence. To try and protect them we’d rather put the condoms here and tell them that “here are the condoms, protect yourself”.

“We can work towards changing the situation as the Life Orientation is doing, educating the child, giving the child the information and trying

to instil in them that they’ve got to be responsible for any decision

that they are taking. In Life Orientation, we should be trying to give them the skills and techniques of dealing with any problems or real situations in life, telling them not to accept gifts as something which would make them think that they are loved.

“When I teach them about sex I tell them that I’m talking about the facts



Credit: Deevia Bhana

Mrs VG Zulu outside her school

of life. I would tell them the facts rather than saying “if you have a boyfriend and he touches you’ll fall pregnant”. No, you must tell them “if you sleep with a boy, once you have reached menstruation, or even before you’ve reached menstruation -you might sleep with a boy yet you were supposed to get menstruation maybe the next week- then the fertilization takes place and you fall pregnant.” We talk about HIV and AIDS, we talk about sex, we tell them about decision-making, being informed.

“We inform them as much as we can. It’s one of the schools in which we are proud that we try to empower them as much as we can, both of them, boys and girls, because it is not only about the girls. Even the boys, they are affected by HIV and AIDS, therefore we also empower them to use the condoms to protect themselves against different diseases. We are proud that no child can tell you that they are not taught about HIV and AIDS. They are informed. There’s nothing that they do and can then say it is because I didn’t know.

“We have even taken that extra mile of trying to help find this strength of talking about something, which we were not told. Our parents told us values and morals and myths, but to them we tell them facts.”

Talking With Teachers

“There is nothing personal about domestic violence” –

The ‘We Can’ Campaign

The ‘We Can’ Campaign is a six year, six country initiative that hopes to bring about a fundamental shift in the attitudes and beliefs that support violence against women and enable a collective and visible stand against it in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

By 2011, the campaign will reach and influence 50 million ordinary men and women across South Asia to oppose violence against women. To achieve this aim, over five million ‘Change Makers’ - people who will work to change attitudes among men and women in their own communities – are being mobilised. In some areas the campaign depends on teachers to initiate and support attitudinal changes among the students and their parents. In this “Talking with Teachers”, teachers involved in the campaign as Change Makers explain how they are challenging violence against women and promoting gender equality.

Educating Parents

For Anjali Rani Devi, a teacher at the Rebeqa Habib Girls High School at Tulsighat in Gaibandha, Bangladesh tackling domestic violence has required educating parents:

“Our school has 20 teachers; five have already become Change Makers for the ‘We Can’ campaign and others are keen to join in. I take my role as a Change Maker rather seriously. While teaching my class, I noticed one of my students to be withdrawn and sad. She often looked extremely distressed. I took her aside one day and gently questioned her. She broke down and told me she was unable to focus on her studies as her parents squabbled all the time and her father physically abused her mother. I spoke to her about the campaign and in turn asked her to speak to her parents. I was accosted the next day by her angry father. He was indignant that I had spoken to his daughter about ‘personal’ matters. But I

stemmed his outburst arguing that there was nothing personal about domestic violence. I informed him that it was badly affecting his daughter’s studies. Hearing this, he calmed down. I then told him about the campaign and importance of a violence free home for his wife and child. He actually thanked me after that and my student tells me that there are no ugly scenes at home now. All I can say is that on my part I educated a student’s parent on the negative fallouts of domestic violence and it worked.”

Challenging Forced Marriage

The need to work with parents in order to tackle gender issues affecting students and their education has also been experienced by seventeen year old Uma Devi, a teacher in Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh, India. She explains:

“I wish to recount the case of a student whose mother was forcing her into marriage. When I protested she asked me whether educating her daughter would guarantee that she would find employment and that she would share her earnings with her. I reasoned with her this may not happen but it would ensure that her daughter can fend for herself in times of distress. “If your daughter is unhappy in her marriage and dependent on her husband for everything, you will be in an unenviable position yourself. But if she can take care of herself she will at least not be vulnerable or dependent on you,” I said. Her mother seemed to see my point. I also told her that her daughter was too young to be married. Other than being a crime with legal implications attached to it, she will have trouble if she conceives right away as the hip girdle is small and unformed at this stage. This convinced the mother and she has cancelled the marriage.”



Credit: The ‘We Can’ Campaign

Anjali Ravi Devi, a Change Maker with the ‘We Can’ Campaign.

A Process of Empowerment

Elsewhere in India, teachers from the Women’s Development Cell, Sofia College in Ajmer explain how they have been able to use participatory forums to encourage discussion of gender issues:

“The Women’s Development Cell began as an initiative to kick start a series of awareness workshops for our students. It has progressed to being a forum that conducts weekly sessions on issues such as ending violence against women, human rights and sexual harassment. Students also discuss how they can participate and strengthen the ‘We Can’ campaign. It is our responsibility as lecturers to go beyond education and text books and raise awareness on such issues. A coordinated awareness drive is a process of empowerment. It will enable us to effectively fight the indignities that women face. We have so far received an extremely positive response to the campaign and many of our students are eager to join.”

To find out more the ‘We Can’ Campaign go to www.wecanendvaw.org or email secretariat@wecanendvaw.org

The ‘We Can’ Campaign logo



Viewpoint

Changes for Women and Girls in the wake of the South Asian Earthquake

Sidra Minhas

Approximately five months have passed since the 7.8 Richter earthquake that killed over 80,000 people in the northern parts of Pakistan. It rendered millions homeless and thousands injured. Women and girls were particularly defenseless and this vulnerability became especially obvious when the story about children and women becoming victims of violence immediately after the earthquake broke. The majority of these women have been used to the segregation of the sexes in society, and in the aftermath of the tragedy they were suddenly exposed to the reality of life in the public sphere.

Thousands of women were widowed and injured by the earthquake, and their challenge now is to build a new life. They

have to deal with their own trauma and distress and care for their children. In this context, the need to bring some sense of normality to the life of the affected people –including women and children– was recognized by relief efforts. By late October, the first tent school opened up in Muzaffarabad, a city which was 90 percent destroyed by the earthquake. These tent schools will provide the basis for rebuilding the educational system. Various NGOs and international organizations are making efforts towards the rehabilitation of women and children – for example, UNICEF is supplying learning materials such as school-in-a-box kits and school bags and is training teachers, and organizations such as Save the Children have started “safe spaces” for children’s protection and emotional recovery.

Continuing Challenges for Girls’ Education

The gender segregation prevalent in the earthquake region has deprived many women of education, healthcare, and their own means of livelihood - some rural areas in the North West Frontier Province have less than 2 percent literacy for girls where as in other areas in Azad Jammu and Kashmir it is 26 percent. This segregation also restricts relief activities from reaching women and girls. Parents are not in favour of allowing their daughters to go to school with boys unless taught by female teachers

and the lack of female teachers has been a constant strain after many were lost in the earthquake. Few, if any, women are willing to move from other areas to work in the affected areas due to social restrictions. Additionally, a large number of victims, including many girls and women, need counselling to help them recover from the trauma and qualified female psychologists and counsellors are few.

The Silver Lining

Despite these difficulties, where relief efforts have been able to break through the system of gender segregation, there have been some unexpected benefits afforded to

“Women are learning sewing and maths skills, visiting doctors for the first time, and learning how to take better care of themselves and their children. Perhaps most important is the growing sense of self-reliance among the women, many of whom will have to cope on their own.”

women and girls in the aftermath of the tragedy. Some of the restraints that had previously prevented girls from going to school were

lifted in the relief camps and many parents, when presented with the option, eagerly agreed to send their daughters to school. Women are learning sewing and maths skills, visiting doctors for the first time, and learning how to take better care of themselves and their children. Perhaps most important is the growing sense of self-reliance among the women, many of whom will have to cope on their own. Social spaces like sewing centres have allowed women to feel part of a community and their aspirations are growing. Some women are planning to create their own sewing centres, not only to make money, but also to socialize with friends.

What the Future Holds

As the affected area is characterized by high gender inequality there is a need for gender analysis to be at the centre of reconstruction in order for it to be “Gender Equitable”.

Advocacy for women and girls’ education continues to be needed on a constant basis as many men still resist it. Alongside international relief efforts, many local NGOs have started schools in camps and villages. However they have little experience of education, and most have no experience at all of education in emergencies, let alone girls’ and gender-equitable education in emergencies. Educated women need to be encouraged to



Credit: Mirjam van den Berg/OXFAM

A girl washes a water container in a camp in Muzaffarabad

take up teaching to fill the need for qualified female teachers and teacher training is needed to increase the standard of teaching. The emotional needs of girls who have undergone such trauma need to be accommodated within a new educational curriculum especially designed for them.

Exposure to education and other facilities in the camps is also changing attitudes among women, as they demand the same when they move back to their villages and homes. These needs will have to be met so that change is fostered and sustained. Consequently, more quality educational institutions will need to be built, keeping in mind that some parents will still insist on their daughters being sent to single sex schools and, until otherwise indicated, such requests will have to be catered to.

Sidra Minhas is from Lahore, Pakistan. She graduated from the Institute of Education in 2005 with an MA in Education, Gender and International Development. Her research interests include gender, education and development with specialist country interest in Pakistan.

Education Campaigners take Gender into the Media

On the 8th and 9th of December 2005, a Gender, Education and the Media workshop was organised by the Beyond Access Project, in collaboration with ANCEFA (the African Network Campaign on Education for All) in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshop brought together civil society organisations and media practitioners and it sought to support civil society groups and members of national education coalitions in Kenya and East Africa develop their work with the media on gender and education issues. Here two of the workshop participants reflect on the workshop and the issues it raised.

Buoro Edward

The gender, education and media workshop was an eye opener. It removed the clogs in our eyes and enabled us to look at things through a pair of gender lenses. The facilitation and information shared ensured that gender issues were explored and enabled participants to draw on their own similar experiences.

Activities such as “Snakes and Ladders: The Game of Girls Education” and reading and critiquing newspaper articles, television stories and other texts helped participants analyse how at times gender biases run deeply into our everyday lives. It is such assumptions that put the girl child at a disadvantage when they are confined to derogatory cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation, early marriages and household chores that are traditionally undertaken by girls and women. On the other hand, boys are sometimes pulled out of school particularly among the pastoralist communities to undergo traditional rites of passage that keep them out of school for long periods of time.

One of the main issues discussed was the misrepresentation of gender by the media, policy makers and sometimes even lobby groups while undertaking advocacy work. The mass media is in a very strong position to influence public perceptions and sustain or deter public interests on a cause or issue. Therefore building and maintaining partnerships with the media may be able to help influence the agenda they set and it could entice them to provide a forum for debate and dialogue. Professional training of reporters and editors on gender issues is also critical and will go a long way towards avoiding gender stereotypes in media reporting.

Ways of working with the media successfully include:

- Conduct content analysis in order to determine potential media houses that you can work with.
- Embrace the five Fs, (Fast, Factual, Frank, Fair and Friendly).
- Keep up to date with media trends, techniques and technologies.
- Facilitate journalists’ access to relevant information and data (having some journalists in your team can help).
- Establish regular communication with media gatekeepers, for example by conducting media briefs with editors.
- Inform, educate and entertain while packaging your information appropriately to attract the media.
- Empower target audiences to speak for themselves before the media.

I must end by underscoring that it is critical to share information and learning or best practices. Through coming together and sharing experiences we are able to learn skills on how to deal with various issues around gender. Documenting experiences and practices will enable more people to share information and learn from one another. In the future workable and successful media strategies should be disseminated to enhance and strengthen gender campaign and advocacy strategies.

Buoro Edward is programmes manager for Daraja: Civic Initiatives Forum, Kenya

Priscilla Nagurai

As an educator I have particularly looked at the EFA goals 3 (equitable access) and 5 (gender equality) and wondered how these can be achieved. How can we achieve gender equality bearing in mind that gender insensitivity particularly in the form of discrimination against women is a key social factor slowing down development?

How about targeting teachers by introducing ‘gender studies’ in the Teacher Training Curricula? Teachers in the field can go through an in-service course to ensure elimination of gender abuse at school level and within the community. I know, through experience, that schools can be a centre of harassment of girls through for example, stereotypes of allocating duties to boys/girls to portray girls as weaker and boys as stronger. Schools should be more than just an education centre. The classroom should be arranged in a healthy way and be child centred. Lesson plans, teaching aids, gestures and the language used should be gender responsive.

What about the media? The way news is reported can either ‘kill’ or ‘empower’. The media has a role to play by highlighting the plight of the girl child, and should be selective in the choice of words and terms it uses in order to reduce stigma and promote gender equality. The media must play a role in creating an enabling environment to improve equal opportunities for both sexes.

Priscilla Nagurai formerly worked with Dupoto E-MAA and now manages a girls’ rescue centre



Workshop participants analyse media coverage of gender and education issues

Credit: Amy North

Review

What does the Global Monitoring Report say about Gender?

Unesco (2005)
ISBN: 92-3-104008-1
Pages: 447

Amy North

Literacy

This year's Global Monitoring Report focuses on literacy and highlights the fact that the majority of the at least 771 million illiterate adults worldwide, continue to be women. Worldwide only 88 adult women are considered literate for every 100 adult men and the disparities between men and women are even higher in many low income countries. The focus on literacy and adult learning is then extremely welcome. However, given that literacy continues to be so highly gendered it is disappointing to find that gender is not fully integrated into the core of the report's analysis.

Some efforts have been made to incorporate an understanding of gender into the text, for example when discussing literacy practices. However these are sporadic, and there are clear areas where, despite being a key issue, gender is not addressed. For example, in the discussions around literacy

programmes in multi-lingual contexts, there is no analysis of the very strong relationship that often

exists between gender, language and literacy. Discussion of the gender dimensions of training and the career structures of trainers -an important issue in many literacy programmes- is also lacking. Elsewhere, although the issue of empowerment -especially women's empowerment- is addressed, this is not situated in a broader analysis of the relationship between literacy/illiteracy, power and gender inequalities.

The use of gender-disaggregated data does enable gender to be considered in the report's statistical analysis of literacy trends. However the statistics used, and the interpretation of them made, are somewhat limited. The



report paints a relatively rosy picture of improvements in gender parity of literacy level at a global level noting that the Gender Parity Index has increased from 0.78 in 1970 to 0.88 now. However, this 12% gap in literacy levels, while significant in itself, is not reflective of much larger gender gaps that persist in the countries where literacy rates are lowest - and hence literacy needs greatest. Moreover the figures on which the report's analysis is based do not say anything about the outcomes of women's -and men's- participation in literacy classes, and they do not facilitate a deeper understanding of the connections between literacy and wider gender inequalities.

Progress towards EFA and "Headline Messages"

In its general assessment of progress towards EFA goals, the report highlights the comprehensive missing of the 2005 target to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary school. However the data itself, and in particular, the "Headline messages" associated with it can, in some instances, be confusing.

A clear example is the headline message for gender parity at secondary level, which claims "115 countries (out of 172 with data) still have disparities... with boys being under-represented in nearly half, in marked contrast to the primary level." This could have been phrased differently to reflect the fact that, at a global level, girls continue to be outnumbered by boys in secondary school by a ratio of 53:47 and much larger disparities persist in favour of boys in many of the poorest countries of the world, where girls' absolute participation in secondary education is often shockingly low. As the GMR acknowledges, it is in fact, with the

exception of some low and middle income countries, generally in high-income and "high achieving" countries that girls outnumber boys in secondary school.

The figures used, and the report's analysis of them are also revealing of the dangers of basing an assessment of progress towards gender equality primarily on parity figures. The case of Bangladesh illustrates this clearly. It is cited in the GMR as a country off track to meet to meet the gender disparity target by 2015 because it now has marginally more girls than boys in secondary school. However, in terms of exam results a 12% gender gap in favour of boys persists. Meanwhile, women's literacy remains extremely low, and Bangladesh is ranked 79th out of 80 countries included in the Gender Empowerment Measure.

Moving towards parity and equality

A closer analysis of the GMR data that looks beyond the "headline messages" clearly reveals that, as well as the urgent need to address adult illiteracy, particularly that of women, there is also still a huge amount of progress that needs to be made in order to get as many girls as boys into both primary and secondary school, especially in some of the world's poorest countries. The data and some of the GMR's analysis of it suggests that healthy and well developed school systems and the removal of user fees can be very important to enable this progress to be made.

However it is important to also look beyond simply getting women onto literacy programmes or girls into school, passing exams and completing their education. There is a need to ensure that girls' and women's educational experiences, as well as those of boys and men, promote the transformation of wider gender inequalities, and are empowering to them, equipping them with the skills they need to flourish throughout their lives. It is disappointing that the GMR tells us little about progress towards the type of education necessary for this to happen.

The 2006 GMR is available at <http://portal.unesco.org/education/en>

Review

“Direction and Strong Messages” - the Beyond Access Programme Insights Papers

Review by Sarah Hildrew. Based on a workshop at Save the Children UK with Katy Webley, Helen Pinnock, Tina Hyder and Sarah Hildrew

Beyond Access have produced a much needed resource with their ‘Programme Insights’, Education and Gender Equality series, launched in January 2006. Its timing is crucial to keep gender on the table following the world’s failure to reach the gender parity target in 2005. Yet the real strength of the series is that no one has looked at these issues in such an accessible format before, whilst still recognising the multiple levels at which efforts to achieve gender equality in education need to be targeted. The result is a package which is broad reaching, but which breaks down the topic of ‘gender’ in a way that enables readers to access aspects of particular relevance to them. Rather than providing a comprehensive plan of action for working on gender issues, the papers provide an introduction and an overall framework, as well as useful pointers for a range of actors from southern governments and those

seeking to influence them, to donors and NGOs. In particular, by giving direction and strong messages, the series empowers actors to lobby on gender issues.

The series begins with an excellent paper framing the issues, and with a particularly useful definition of key terms and identification of global initiatives. This is valuable introduction to gender issues but also serves as a useful reminder of core messages for those already working in this field. In the following papers, the series goes on to identify some of the most important areas where action could lead to significant progress towards achieving the gender equality MDG, especially political will, gender-responsive budgeting and developing capacity.

Paper 3 provides a particularly effective introduction to the issues of gender equality within adult basic education. It presents us with an important reminder of the need to ensure basic education opportunities for women and the contribution of education to women’s empowerment. Other highlights of the series include an inspiring examination of the pivotal role of central leadership (paper 5), which certainly prompts further

debate and consideration of how to hold key players to account; and more practical guidance, examples of good practice and recommendations based on a clear analysis of gender-responsive budgeting (paper 7).

The papers are presented in user-friendly and accessible language, which helps to reach a wide audience. This is assisted greatly by the use of interesting and varied case studies to illustrate points, as well as targeted recommendations to help guide future work. There are other tools which may also have been useful, such as taking the reader through a practical example of applying gender-responsive budgeting in order to illustrate the discussion on budgeting in education (paper 7). Some papers, such as number two (Gender Equality in Schools), do also seem to be more aimed at governments or theorists, and could be seen as less relevant for practitioners.

A quality of the series is that it recognises, through paper 4’s focus on nomadic and pastoralist children (Beyond the Mainstream),

that the expansion of one model of education is not enough to include all children. However, it is not clear why the series has identified this group above and beyond all other excluded groups and we hope that the Programme Insights series will go on to also include work on other groups. Similarly, although it is useful that paper 8 looks at the issues within a geographical context, (in this case Africa, as paper 9 will do for South Asia), more consideration of the specific context of Africa, would be helpful.

Both a strength and a weakness of the series is the breaking down of such a complex and multilayered concept such as gender. The bitesize nature of the papers enables the reader to dip in and out, but it can be difficult to get an overall picture and to understand the interaction between themes.

There are also some key areas which would merit expansion. Whilst paper 6 provides a useful analysis of the deep-seated ‘blocks’ within state systems and large institutions, the wider picture of developing capacity,

“The papers are presented in user-friendly and accessible language, which helps to reach a wide audience. This is assisted greatly by the use of interesting and varied case studies to illustrate points, as well as targeted recommendations to help guide future work.”



and particularly the role of communities, is missed. Other areas for development could include: education in emergencies; HIV/AIDS; children’s participation; and early childhood care development.

In summary, the ‘Programme Insights’ Education and Gender Equality series is a timely, practical and thought provoking tool, with resonance and use for a variety of audiences. Save the Children UK will be circulating it to all our staff, and believe it will be a valuable tool for training sessions and in the mainstreaming of gender issues. There is room for the series to grow and develop, something that Save the Children UK would strongly support, and we look forward to the future work of the Beyond Access Project.

Sarah Hildrew is Education Team Coordinator at Save the Children UK

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Helen Pinnock is an Education Advisor at Save the Children UK

Tina Hyder is a Diversity Advisor at Save the Children UK

*The Programme Insights Papers are available at:
http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/education/gender_education.htm*

Conference Comments

Millennium Development Goals and Gender Parity: 1st National Conference

Report by Esin Aksay, the Education Reform Initiative

“Millennium Development Goals and Gender Parity: 1st National Conference” was convened in December 2005 in Ankara, Turkey as part of the project “Raising Status of Women” which is funded by the European Union and run by the Association for Supporting and Training of Women Candidates, the Education Reform Initiative and the Mother and Child Education Foundation. During the conference, participants from government agencies, civil society and universities discussed “The Civil Monitoring Report”. The first annual report on gender disparities, the Civil Monitoring Report was drafted by provincial and national Civil Monitoring Groups, comprised of civil society representatives. The result is a unique source of local knowledge and local needs.

The theme of this first session was “stakeholders are discussing”, reflecting the need for a participatory and democratic culture of policy-making in evaluating barriers to girls’ access to and completion of primary school. In Turkey, events such as this are critical for amassing political commitment and political understanding through mutual learning and exchange of ideas at different levels.

Gender disparity in Turkey, particularly in education, has its roots in a wide-range of socio-economic and cultural factors and therefore a comprehensive and radical structural change in policy-making processes as well as implementation is necessary. In this regard, the conference was an important tool for disseminating local information, incubating ideas for further action and renewing dedication and commitment to the MDG goals. The conference also enabled comprehensive discussions with policy-makers and bureaucrats responsible for devising education policies.

As the Civil Monitoring Report emphasizes, Turkey has a rather controversial socio-economic and cultural outlook as a country facing EU membership, and the problem of girls’ schooling is a serious challenge. To achieve the MDG goals, there is a need for increased political commitment, a new understanding of policy-making that includes all stakeholders, and structural reforms in addition to short-term campaigns targeting girls. The Civil Monitoring Report draws attention to issues such as language, poverty and regional disparities and underlines the lack of flexible policies and

practices in accommodating local needs and circumstances to overcome the variety of socio-economic and cultural barriers to achieving gender parity in the four provinces.

Lack of adequate support during the early years for children who do not speak Turkish and poverty came up as two important concerns during the discussions. The language barrier, mainly not having competence in Turkish when starting primary school, has repercussions on both quality and access to education. On the quality side, it hampers the intellectual and personal development of students. This, in turn, increases the insecurity of children as regards their academic ability, and the probability of them dropping out of school. The latter is certainly a serious barrier to girls’ completion of primary school especially in the East of the country. Another big concern is poverty since it directly affects enrollment rates. Benefiting from people-to-people exchanges and enabling local experience are vital to mainstream gender issues into long-term structural change.

New Report on Gender and Education

From UNGEI/UNESCO:

‘Scaling Up’ Good Practices in Girls’ Education by Ramya Subrahmanian

Summary by Kathryn Wiggins

Starting with the MDG and EFA goals related to girls’ education, “scaling up” uses success in some projects as the catalyst for accelerating progress. Referring to real examples from Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia, the report’s argument pushes for a move from simply counting how many girls access education to looking at equality in their experience of education and how this leads to equal opportunities in society.

The vision is for the conditions which provide the context for change in individual situations to be created as the basis for larger programmes. Reforms such as setting targets for the enrolment of girls which have been used to try to meet the MDG/EFA goals are acknowledged as a beginning.

However, alongside this, the report advocates more reforms of institutional systems, placing gender in the centre of policies. Thus a diverse range of partners are required, bringing governments, NGOs, donors, national and international civil society organisations together to create multiple initiatives. Within this, communities must not be sidelined but centrally involved.

Which projects will be effective when be scaled up? This is complex: it is not as simple as making something small big. Instead, different methods are promoted. Some projects may be enlarged, other initiatives may be linked together, or national policies may be implemented.

The need for political leaders and others who will drive change is vital, as there are barriers to be faced and difficulties in marrying diversely organised systems. It is this facet of managing programmes effectively, however, that the report is keen to emphasise as vital. Added to this, the need for careful financial planning in partnerships is essential, as is the need for systematic research, monitoring and analysis of each programme. It is when all these actors come together in meaningful, strategic initiatives that the chance for real change will be created.

The report is available at <http://www.ungei.org/resources/>

Weblinks

The GAP Report

The Gender Achievements and Prospects in Education (GAP) report is a multi-media project designed to assess progress towards gender parity in education by 2005 and universal primary education by 2015.

<http://www.ungei.org/gap/>

The Right to Education Project

The right to education project website, set up by Katarina Tomasevski, Ex Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, contains a range of materials on the right to education including an interactive database showing countries' practices regarding user fees in education.

www.right-to-education.org

Ensuring a Gender Perspective in Education in Emergencies

This document from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children gives guidance on how to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into education programs in humanitarian emergencies.

<http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/EdGenderTool.pdf>

Deadly Inertia: A Cross Country Study of Educational Responses to HIV/AIDS

This report from the Global Campaign for Education finds that Ministries of Education are shockingly unprepared to respond effectively and minimise the devastating impact of AIDS and that the international donor community has also failed to deliver leadership and political commitment.

<http://www.campaignforeducation.org/resources/Nov2005/ENGLISHdeadlyinertia.pdf>

Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya

This study from UNESCO Nairobi sheds light on underlying reasons for persistent gender gaps in education in Kenya.

<http://www.education.nairobi-unesco.org/>

Children out of school: measuring exclusion from primary education

A new report from UNESCO and UNICEF shows that 115 million primary school-age children are out of school - or almost one in five - of the children worldwide in this age group.

<http://www.unesco.org/education/>

News

The Alexander Prize

Mary Harris

The Commonwealth Association for Science Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME) makes awards for projects which convey the social and human context of science, technology and mathematics. The CASTME Alexander Prize, which is also supported by the Association for Science Education, is especially for women. It is awarded to a woman or group of women who has made a significant contribution to encouraging the scientific, technological or mathematical education of girls or women in situations of scarce resources.

The first award, in 2003 went to Mary Gyang from Ghana, for her work as a science teacher where there was no tradition for science teaching, particularly for girls who did not go to school. Mary used available materials, mostly junk, to teach basic understandings of science. She spent her own time and royalties from her

writing, in order to reach street children and neglected women.

Hawa Jiloh Koroma, from Sierra Leone, Alexander Award winner in 2004, also started work as a science teacher, mobilising parents to help raise funds for girls who had no access to science education. Later, as a warden at Bo teacher's college, she became involved in health issues, as well as adult literacy and backyard gardening projects for poor women. The curriculum she developed for her skills-training centres for 'girl-mothers', included masonry and bricklaying, in a deliberate move away from traditional gender stereotypes and towards practical self-sufficiency.

In January 2006 Elizabeth Nxele, a biology teacher working in a deprived area of Cape Town was awarded for her work in setting up a lunchtime Environmental Club. In the

sandy, wind blown environment of the school, grass now grows and the children's skills in growing vegetables are being transferred to the shantytowns where most of them live.

CASTME is now seeking Alexander prize nominations for 2007. If you know of any woman or group of women, who is working to help other girls and women improve their understanding of science, and really having an effect on their lives, please nominate them so that they can be publicly rewarded.

For information about the CASTME awards go to www.CASTME.org or write to The CASTME Awards Co-ordinator, LECT, 7 Lion Yard, Tremadoc Road, London SW4 7NQ, UK. All applications will be considered for the Alexander Prize.

Letters

I was elated to have received copies of your publication ("Newsletter for Beyond Access: Gender, Education and Development").

Thank you for sending them down for use in our country programme. Recently we organised a Resource Centre to serve in knowledge management. These materials will help equip it to update our staff, partners and the general public with relevant information on poverty eradication and human rights advocacy. We look forward to continued correspondence with your organisation.

Once again, my sincere appreciation,

Yours truly,

Akintounde Abimbola
Resource Centre Personnel, ActionAid
International Nigeria

WRITE NOW!

Do you have a particular view that you want to raise in Equals or a comment to make about the newsletter in general? Write to the editors at the contact address given on this page

The views expressed in this newsletter are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the project, their partners or sponsors.

Contact Details

Beyond Access was set up in January 2003.

Its main aims are:

- To contribute to achieving MDG 3 – Promoting gender equality and empowering women – by generating and critically examining knowledge regarding gender equality and education.
- To provide appropriate resources to share and disseminate for the purpose of influencing the policies of government departments, national and international NGOs and international institutions including UN agencies.

Please contact us with any comments or enquiries:

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Forthcoming events

22-23 April	World Bank and IMF Spring Meetings	
24 April	World Poverty Day	
24-30 April	Global Action Week: "Every Child Needs a Teacher"	www.campaignforeducation.org/action/action.html
3-6 May	Annual General Meeting of the Asian Development Bank	
10 May	European-Latin American Summit Vienna, Austria	
11-13 May	International Policy Conference: Violence against Girls in Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	http://www.crin.org/violence
15 May- 2 June	42nd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child Geneva	http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm
15 May- 2 June	CEDAW 35th Session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women UNHQ, New York	http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/35sess.htm
17 May	World Debt Day	
25 May	Africa Day	
31 May- 2 June	World Economic Forum on Africa, Cape Town, South Africa	http://www.weforum.org
16 June	Day of the African Child	
21-24 June	6th CIVICUS World Assembly: Acting Together for a Just World, Glasgow, UK	www.civicassembly.org
22-24 June	Challenges and Possibilities in Gender Equity Education Second International Conference in the Asia-Pacific Region Taipo, Hong Kong	www.civicus.org/new/event_info.asp?id=312
July	7th World Group on EFA Paris, France	http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/index.shtml
July	G8 Summit St. Petersburg, Russia	
July	International Sociological Association Conference Durban, South Africa	