



Commonwealth
Foundation

Girls' Education: a Foundation for Development





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Abbreviations

ACESF-CA	Association des Conseillers en Economie Sociale et Familiale du Cameroun	EFA	Education For All	PNG	Papua New Guinea
ADRA	Adventist Development Relief Agency	FAWECAM	Forum for African Women Educationalists, Cameroon	PRIA	An International Centre for Learning and Promotion of Participation and Democratic Governance
AJK	Azad Jammu & Kashmir	GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SAP	South Asia Partnership
ASPBAE	Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education	GER	Gross Enrolment Rate	SAP-PK	South Asia Partnership Pakistan
AWAG	Ahmedabad Women's Action Group	GPI	Gender Parity Index	SC	Scheduled Castes
BNP Pune	Bhagini Nivedita Pratishthan, Pune	IFHE	International Federation for Home Economics	SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
CEFAN	Cameroon Education For All Network	ILO	International Labour Organisation	ST	Scheduled Tribes
CFS	Child Friendly Schools	ITA	Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi	UN	United Nations
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organisation(s)	MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme	MORA	Ministry of Religious Affairs	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
EC	Education Centres	NER	Net Enrolment Ratio	UPE	Universal Primary Education
ECC	Early Childhood Care	NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)	WSIP	Whole School Improvement Programme
ECD	Early Childhood Development	NWFP	North West Frontier Province	YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
		PEAN	Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network		

Foreword

Today in the Commonwealth an estimated 75 million children, the majority of whom are girls, are being denied their right to an education. The importance of girls' education is highlighted in a recent World Bank report, which outlines how spending on girls' education can yield the highest returns of all development investments, not only for individual girls and their families, but also for the broader community, by reducing female fertility rates, lowering infant mortality, lowering maternal mortality rates, protecting against HIV and AIDS, increasing women's earnings, and creating inter-educational benefits, which help future generations.¹ Several Commonwealth countries have made some headway with the enrolment and retention of girls in education. However, the overall progress remains patchy. This was confirmed in the Foundation's civil society review of the Millennium Development Goals in the 2005 publication – 'Breaking with Business as Usual' which highlighted the fact that many countries will not meet the education MDG by 2015 if trends continue.

Through its Sustainable Development Programme, the Commonwealth Foundation has supported the strengthening of civil society capacities, in particular on lobbying for policy change, and ensuring sustainable inclusive strategies to accelerate progress towards meeting the MDG 3: Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015. It also addresses one of the six action areas set out in the 2003 Commonwealth Edinburgh Action Plan for Education - eliminating gender disparities in education.

The aim of this publication is to provide an overview of the work being carried out with respect to MDG 3/ Target 4, which focuses on eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. It analyses the initiatives being taken on the ground by civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in four Commonwealth countries that currently appear to be

off-track from achieving this MDG goal and target by the prescribed deadline - Cameroon, India, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. The objective here is to provide a basis to develop strategies on how gender equality in education could be effectively realized, rather than to replicate the policies and practice of the various governments, agencies and CSOs. The information gathered from these national consultations provides the much needed context and specifics frequently missing in broader papers on this issue. From these consultations, it is possible to compare what has worked, what has not worked, and where governments and CSOs can go from here.

Dr. Mark Collins
Director – Commonwealth Foundation

1. World Bank (2007) 'Education', www.worldbank.org/education (accessed 31 March 2007).



Executive Summary

The objective of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women, with Target 4 being to eliminate gender disparities in education by 2015. This report examines, reviews and provides an overview of the work being carried out with respect to MDG 3/Target 4 on the ground by certain civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in four Commonwealth countries that currently appear to be unlikely to achieve MDG 3 by the prescribed deadline. The countries under consideration are Cameroon, India, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. Two CSOs/NGOs from Cameroon, three from Pakistan and four each from India and Papua New Guinea participated in this work; hence, this report is based on thirteen consultations that were conducted via questionnaire.

Achieving gender equality in education requires equality of access to and opportunity for education, together with equality of treatment once in school for girls and boys alike. Education is a fundamental human right, without which it would be very difficult for individuals to fully exercise their other human rights and wholly engage in society. Therefore, all children, irrespective of gender, should be able to expect and receive an education of good quality that would stand them in good stead for the future. In many countries, realising gender equality in education means increasing female enrolment, promoting girls' education and, in a wider context, empowering women to play an equal role in society.

In addition to outlining national civil society involvement in the promotion of gender equality in education, mention is made here of the work done on this issue by civil society in conjunction with government. Collating the information gathered from these consultations was important as this provides a context that is usually missing from broader papers on this subject. These consultations make it possible to compare strategies for promoting gender equality in education that have worked, as well as those that have not, and they also provide an insight into what needs to be done from hereon in, if MDG 3 is to be achieved sooner rather than later.

If the aims of MDG 3 are to be achieved, the key obstacles to attaining them need to be addressed, too. The consultations carried out for this work show that the factors impeding the attainment of gender equality in education could be broadly categorised into two groups covering systemic issues, such as access to education and the cost of education, and societal issues that include poverty and socio-cultural norms.

Overview

The aim of this report is to present a review of the main impediments faced by four of nine Commonwealth countries that currently appear to be unlikely to achieve Millennium Development Goal 3 (Target 4) by 2015. The intention here is not to reiterate the policies of the selected four nations' governments, nor to replicate the work previously conducted by these governments or the civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in these countries. Rather, the aim is to provide an overview and review of the main impediments faced by the four nations under consideration as they try to achieve MDG 3 – particularly in light of the fact that they seem unlikely to do so by the 2015 deadline.

The Millennium Development Goals were adopted...by all the world's governments as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century.²

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General,
1997 to 2006

Of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the specific and overall focus of Goal 3 is to “*promote gender equality and empower women*”, as defined by Target 4, which is to “*eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015*”.³

In the year 2000, 51 Commonwealth countries agreed to work towards achieving all eight MDGs by 2015, and 41 countries endorsed the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (EFA), which encompasses six basic education goals.^{4,5} Today, more children the world over are completing primary school, and even though most countries missed the 2005 target relating to eliminating gender disparity in schools, female enrolment is on the rise. However, neither Sub-Saharan Africa nor South Asia appear to be on track to achieve MDG 3 by 2015, although some countries in both regions have shown that it can be done.⁶

Achieving gender equality in education requires equality of access to and opportunity for education, as well as equality of treatment once in school for girls and boys alike. Gender parity in education, on the other hand, refers to the equal enrolment of girls and boys in school. In order to sustain and build on the gains made in improving gender parity in education, the wider issues of equality of opportunity and equality of treatment must be addressed, leading to the institutionalisation of non-discriminatory practices the world over. In other words, deep-rooted social, religious and cultural biases that have thus far limited women's participation in society, the economy and politics have to be overcome if gender equality in education is to become a reality.

A review of the latest published data pertaining to gender equality in education in Commonwealth countries yielded a list of nine nations which are falling short of the targets laid out to meet MDG 3 by 2015. These countries (in alphabetical order) are:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. Cameroon | 6. Nigeria |
| 2. Ghana | 7. Pakistan |
| 3. India | 8. Papua New Guinea |
| 4. Kenya | 9. Sierra Leone |
| 5. Mozambique | |

2. <http://www.undp.org/mdg/> (Accessed 26th June 2007)

3. <http://www.undp.org/mdg/goal3.shtml> (Accessed 26th June 2007)

4. Packer, S. & Aggio, C. (2006) *The Performance of Commonwealth Countries to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Education and Education for All (EFA) Goals*. Paper commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat for the 16th Conference of

Commonwealth Education Ministers in Cape Town, South Africa, 11–14 December 2006.

5. http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=47044&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (Accessed 28th June 2007)

6. <http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/GMIS/gdmis.do?siteId=2&goalId=6&targetId=17&menuId=LNAV01GOAL2SUB1> (Accessed 28th June 2007)

For the purposes of this report, the status of gender equality in primary and secondary education in four of the countries listed above was reviewed following consultations with civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations and also educators working at the grassroots level in related fields in these nations. The countries under consideration in this report are:

- 1. Cameroon
- 2. India
- 3. Pakistan
- 4. Papua New Guinea

A report of this nature is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, education is a fundamental human right, and so all children, irrespective of gender, should be able to expect and receive an education of good quality.⁷ This basic human right has been acknowledged by a number of international and regional conventions that have made express provision for the right to education,⁸ for without this right, realising other human rights would be very difficult indeed. For instance, no individual would be able to fully exercise his/her social, political, economic or civil rights without being in receipt of a minimum level of education first. In fact, education has even been found to provide a means by which socially marginalized persons are able to lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully in their communities Promoting gender equality in education, in many countries, means increasing female enrolment, promoting girls' education and ultimately empowering women to play an equal role in society. In order to achieve these goals, the first issue that needs to be addressed is that of the main impediments faced when trying to attain them. What must then be considered is the work done to date to overcome these impediments, taking into account both the success stories of past policies/ initiatives and also the failures. This information can be used as a platform for future methodologies aiming to promote gender equality in education.

Secondly, a review can play an important role in highlighting where these countries are in terms of achieving MDG 3 today, as well as how far they have progressed since adopting the MDGs in the year 2000. Furthermore, at this halfway point between adoption and the proposed deadline of 2015, a report such as this

can show how much further these countries have to go to achieve gender equality in education, and – considering there is a concern that many Commonwealth countries are not on track to realise any of the MDGs in the prescribed time – help to assess whether attaining MDG 3 was, indeed, actually ever feasible in the time-scale originally agreed upon.

Thirdly, the education of girls has been shown to be an important factor in achieving all the MDGs, specifically Goal 3 and Goal 2.⁹ Indeed, a recent report by the World Bank highlights the importance of girls' education by showing how “*investment in girls' education yields some of the highest returns of all development investments, yielding both private and social benefits that accrue to individuals, families and society at large*” by, for example, reducing women's fertility rates, lowering infant, child and maternal mortality rates, protecting against the infection of HIV and AIDS, increasing women's labour force participation rates and earnings, and also creating inter-generational education benefits.¹⁰ Therefore, a report like this, which reviews the main impediments to meeting MDG 3, also draws attention to the primary barriers to girls' education, thereby allowing the countries under consideration to take stock, at this halfway stage, of what still needs to be done to promote girls' education within their nation's education systems. For example, if Universal Primary Education (UPE) were to become a reality in those countries with a six-year primary school cycle (the norm in most countries of the world), all children of the age to complete primary education in 2015 would need to be enrolled in school by 2009. If gender parity in education is to be achieved in seven-and-a-half years' time, the challenges will be greatest in those countries where change would involve not only overcoming the cultural barriers that lead to gender discrimination, but also the economic and political disadvantages that continue to confront girls and women today.¹¹

Finally, in the Commonwealth alone, an estimated 75 million children still do not have access to education – and the majority of these children are girls. In fact, in many developing countries, girls continue to face discrimination when it comes to access to education.¹² Universal Primary Education is not yet universal. According to UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007, an estimated 76.8 million children worldwide – of which

57% were girls – were not enrolled in either primary or secondary school in 2004.¹³ Although there was a significant fall in the number of out-of-school children in both sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia between 1999 and 2004, these two regions still accounted for almost 70% of the global number of children not in school in 2004. The majority of Commonwealth citizens reside in these two regions of the world. Whilst sub-Saharan Africa had 38 million children out-of-school in 2004 (of which 53% were girls), South and West Asia had almost 16 million children out-of-school (with girls accounting for 69% of this number).¹⁴ A recent survey conducted by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative on the barriers to girls' education found that in the sub-Saharan African and South and West Asian regions, the most common impediments to girls' education are poverty, cultural beliefs and religious beliefs.¹⁵ Other factors include early marriage and pregnancy. Additionally, as UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report 2007 notes:¹⁶

Gender disparities...often stem from difficulties girls face in obtaining access to school. Among these obstacles are poverty and the related issue of direct and indirect costs of education, distance to school, language and ethnicity, social exclusion and the school environment. In addition, girls face cultural barriers concerning their roles in the home and in society. The challenge is to implement policies tailored to overcoming multiple sources of exclusion and to giving girls the educational support and physical safety they need to gain access to... education and complete it.

The Commonwealth Foundation, through its Sustainable Development Programme and in consultation with civil society, supports the alleviation of poverty through education and within the context of the Millennium Development Goals. Thus, promoting gender equality in education – which encompasses gender parity in education, girls' education, equality in access to education and equality of treatment once in education – is a priority for the Commonwealth Foundation when it comes to its programme and grant making activities.^{17,18}

In terms of civil society, both CSOs and NGOs can play an active role in achieving gender equality in education through advocacy and also by lobbying governments and international organisations alike to fulfil their

commitments to making gender equality in education a reality. CSOs and NGOs working in the field of education are well placed to monitor and report on progress made in attaining MDG 3 in their respective countries. Pooled information garnered from these organisations' reports and findings can be used to identify policies and actions that are sustainable, as well as challenges that have been met – and possibly even overcome – in the course of trying to meet the targets set out to achieve MDG 3. This information could be used as a base on which strategies for the advancement of gender equality in education could be developed. Any lessons learned can be shared, thereby reducing the likelihood of unnecessary replication of previous work. CSOs and NGOs are also uniquely placed in being able to engage individuals and communities alike in discussions on how gender equality in education could be realised. Information gathered from forums of this nature could be used to develop policies that further gender equality in education, with the ultimate aim being the achievement of MDG 3.

7. Article 26(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states: “Everyone has the right to education”.
8. Some examples include: Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Article 17(1) of The African Charter; and Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
9. Millennium Development Goal 2: *Achieve Universal Primary Education*; Target 3: *Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boy and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling*.

10. Girls' Education: <http://go.worldbank.org/1L4BH3TG20> (Accessed 28th June 2007)
11. UNICEF (2005) *Gender Achievement and Prospects in Education*. The GAP Report. New York, UNICEF.
12. *The Role of Civil Society in Addressing Gender Equality in Education across the Commonwealth*. A concept document commissioned by the Commonwealth Foundation, March 2007.

13. UNESCO (2007) *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007*, page 29. URL: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001477/147794E.pdf> (Accessed 8th August 2007)
14. In 1999, sub-Saharan Africa, together with South and West Asia, accounted for over three-quarters of the world's out-of-school children, with shares of 45% and 31% respectively. By 2004, their combined share had declined to just under 70%, although sub-Saharan Africa's share had increased to 50%, whilst South and West Asia's share had fallen to 19%.
15. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) URL: <http://ungei.org/infobycountry/> (Accessed 12th August 2007)

16. UNESCO (2007) *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007*, pages 39–40. URL: www.unesco.org/education/GMR/2007/Full_report.pdf (Accessed 12th August 2007)
17. *The Role of Civil Society in Addressing Gender Equality in Education across the Commonwealth*. A concept document commissioned by the Commonwealth Foundation, March 2007.
18. *Educating Girls: A Commonwealth Civil Society Perspective*. A paper commissioned by the Commonwealth Foundation, March 2007.

Results of the National Civil Society Consultations

Cameroon

Education in Cameroon

One of the few members of the Commonwealth with a strong Francophone influence, a particular feature of Cameroon's primary and secondary education is the thrust to develop the teaching and learning of English. Visits to schools reveal Commonwealth Clubs in which teachers encourage the use of the English language in learning about other members of the Commonwealth, and signs that promote the use of English.¹⁹

Education in Cameroon is said to be free in state schools and compulsory between the ages of six and twelve. However, according to ACESF-CA,²⁰ primary education is "not really free", and secondary education is dominated by private schools and fee-levying institutions. The funding for these two levels of education, therefore, comes primarily from parents, multilateral and bilateral partnerships, and the government. Government funds are also available to mission and private schools.

Most secondary schools in Cameroon have been made bilingual, with instruction in both French and English. Working alongside public schools are missionary schools, which have been extremely important in the history of Cameroonian education.²¹ Such schools are governed by various religious denominations – for example, Koranic schools operate in Islamic parts of the country, while Catholic, Presbyterian or Baptist schools function in Christian areas.²²

Nationally, efforts to attain UPE targets have led to many different kinds of education provision. Whilst some schools are in multi-storey concrete structures, others are of simple one-room wooden construction. However, all school children in Cameroon are encouraged to appreciate and respect their own indigenous cultural practices, such as dance and community drama. Hygiene and sanitation are also held in high regard, and despite financial and resource challenges, some schools are moving forward

with computer education to ensure that the country is ahead in the information technology and communication race.²³

In 1997, a total of 1,921,186 children were attending 8,514 primary schools, in which 39,384 teachers were employed. By 1999, the pupil/teacher ratio at the primary level was 69:1, and public expenditure on education was estimated at 2.6% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At the secondary level in 1994–1995, 459,068 pupils were enrolled in schools containing 14,917 teachers. Projected adult illiteracy rates for the year 2000 stood at 18.2% for males, 30.8% for females, and 24.6% overall.²⁴

There are six grades of primary school in Cameroon: SIL – *Section d'Initiation au Langage* (Grade 1); CP – *Cours Préparatoire* (Grade 2); CE1 – *Cours Élémentaire Première Année* (Grade 3); CE2 – *Cours Élémentaire Deuxième Année* (Grade 4); CM1 – *Cours Moyen Première Année* (Grade 5); and CM2 – *Cours Moyen Deuxième Année* (Grade 6). These six years of primary schooling are followed by either five years of secondary school at the first stage (leading to the O-Level examination) and a further two years at the second stage (culminating in the A-Level examination), or entrance into one of the country's technical/vocational schools, or a placement at an institute to learn a skill like typing, or an apprenticeship.²⁵

As ACESF-CA points out, in Cameroon, bursaries for education are usually provided by private enterprises, charitable CSOs, and parents (through parent organisations in schools), with the government providing "very few bursaries". Some charitable CSOs also sponsor projects that supply books or meals to school children. However, for the most part, parents bear the lion's share of the cost of their children's education, since they pay for schoolbooks, school uniforms and school meals.

19. www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=39526 (Accessed 30th August 2007)

20. *Association des Conseillers en Economie Sociale et Familiale du Cameroun* – cf. page 9

21. www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Cameroon-EDUCATION.html (Accessed 30th August 2007)

22. <http://camsu.de/66.0.html> (Accessed 30th August 2007)

23. www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=39526 (Accessed 30th August 2007)

24. www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Cameroon-EDUCATION.html (Accessed 30th August 2007)

25. <http://camsu.de/66.0.html> (Accessed 30th August 2007)

Overview of the CSOs/NGOs Participating in this Work

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

Cameroon joined UNESCO on November 11th 1960, under the jurisdiction of the UNESCO Field Office based in the capital, Yaoundé. Twenty-two schools – spread across the primary, secondary, technical and professional sectors in Cameroon – are members of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet). The core areas of education that UNESCO focuses on in Cameroon are: gender equality in education, girls’ education, the promotion of women in culture and the media, and the encouragement of women into scientific careers.

To date, UNESCO has achieved the following in its effort to promote gender equality in education: workshop on mainstreaming gender in school curricula; production of a manual, in conjunction with the Government of Cameroon, on gender mainstreaming; organisation of Olympiads to get girls interested in embracing scientific careers; and research into women, including violence against women and their role in conflict situations. On-going activities in this area include the expansion of a project known as *Scolarisation des filles et alphabétisation des femmes a l’extrême nord Cameroun*, which is concerned with educating girls and eliminating illiteracy amongst women.

UNESCO partners with the following organisations on the issue of promoting gender equality in education: Cameroon Education For All Network (CEFAN), Forum for African Women Educationalists, Cameroon (FAWECAM), and *Association des Conseillers en Economie Sociale et Familiale du Cameroun* (ACESF-CA). UNESCO also works with the Government of Cameroon on projects such as the on-going *Scolarisation des filles et alphabétisation des femmes a l’extrême nord Cameroun*.

In addition to education, in Cameroon, UNESCO works with the World Foundation for AIDS Research and Prevention in trying to develop a paediatric vaccine to prevent the HIV infection from being passed on from mother to child. Its work also focuses on promoting independence and pluralism for the media, and supporting the public radio and television service in Cameroon.²⁶

The UNESCO Field Office in Yaoundé also serves as the Cluster Office to Cameroon, Central African Republic and Chad, as part of the Central and Western Africa Cluster.

Association des Conseillers en Economie Sociale et Familiale du Cameroun (ACESF-CA)

ACESF-CA operates solely in Cameroon, in the cities of Yaoundé, Douala, Ebolowa, Bafoussam and Bertoua. At present, ACESF-CA is involved in a project concerned with introducing a gender balance into the Home Economics curriculum in schools.²⁷ Having completed the first phase of this project, ACESF-CA is now looking for a partner/partners with whom to implement the second phase. During the first phase, ACESF-CA carried out gender analyses on eight textbooks, didactic tools and also the home economics Policy of Cameroon. The resultant analyses and the methodology of this project were presented to 21 home economics inspectors and others in the field. 71 teachers – 14 male, 57 female – were given gender-sensitive training and provided with gender guides to use while writing their lessons, so that the gender balance in the content was maintained. The different levels of the home economics curriculum that were gender-sensitised by ACESF-CA were officially handed to the representative for secondary education during the National Home Economics Summit in March 2006. During the first phase of this project, various media outlets and websites published the results of this work, and ACESF-CA received three letters of encouragement from the Minister of Secondary Education in support of this project.

On the issue of gender equality in education, ACESF-CA has partnered with CEFAN as a gender activist on the Education Watch initiative, and a natural partnership exists between ACESF-CA and the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), where work on projects with a focus on gender is shared. The President of ACESF-CA chaired a symposium at the IFHE Annual Leadership Meeting in Heidelberg, Germany, in early 2008. ACESF-CA also works closely with the Ministry of Secondary Education on issues of advocacy and gender equality in education.

Gender Equality in Education in Cameroon

In both ACESF-CA’s and UNESCO’s opinion, Cameroon is not on track to achieve MDG 3/Target 4 by the 2015 deadline. However, whilst ACESF-CA feels that gender equality in education is attainable in less than 10 years if funds are available and if a very operational gender plan is put in place, UNESCO thinks the attainment of this goal is still many years away, with a lot yet left to be done considering the statistics of the past few years.

According to UNESCO, targets that have been set by the Government of Cameroon to promote gender equality in education at the primary level include increasing access and the quality of education being provided, as well as implementing school nutrition programmes that will be run in collaboration with international donors. ACESF-CA adds that the government is aiming to elaborate the formulation of educational policy, and is hoping the statistics will show a greater number of girls accessing both primary and secondary education, leading to a gender balance at both levels in due course.

Key Issues and Main Impediments to Achieving Gender Equality in Education

UNESCO considers the keys issues to attaining gender equality in education to be: access to education, quality of education, gender-sensitive curricula and the education and involvement of parents. And it believes that the key barriers to achieving this goal are: socio-cultural norms/issues, access to education, the quality of education on offer, plus the misinformation amongst both the partners and the actors in the educational environment.

In ACESF-CA’s view, the key issue to achieving gender equality in education is “*the quality of the presence of girls at school*”, and it feels the main obstacles to attaining gender equality at both the primary and secondary levels are: the lack of appropriate strategies for gender-sensitisation, the local culture, religion and the general ignorance of the added value to education that gender equality can bring. Nationally, ACESF-CA believes that the current status of gender equality in education is quite low, since the way in which the issue of gender is introduced “can make it be rejected. *People think that ‘gender’ is a borrow[ed] concept, which can’t be applied in our context*”.

The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Gender Equality in Education

As far as UNESCO is concerned, civil society has an important role to play in furthering gender equality in education in Cameroon. Indeed, CSOs have been known to provide technical assistance on projects run in collaboration with the government and other organisations that are working on promoting this issue. As a result of these joint ventures and continued collaborations, UNESCO believes that the Government of Cameroon both recognises and accepts the work being done by civil society to advance gender equality in education. However, UNESCO does not think that there is sufficient funding or the adequate mobilisation of resources in Cameroon to properly address this issue at the primary and secondary levels of school.

According to ACESF-CA, when it comes to gender equality in education, the major role played by civil society in Cameroon is in advocacy, particularly in relation to policymakers. But unlike UNESCO, ACESF-CA feels that collaboration between the government and CSOs is difficult. In fact, it believes “*only international CSOs or UN bodies like UNESCO and UNICEF work easily with government*”. It feels that the recognition and acceptance of the work done by CSOs by the Government of Cameroon is very low. However, as ACESF-CA concedes, “*this may be different if, for their field actions, these CSOs do not solicit funds from the government to work on the issue*”, and it admits that “*the few CSOs really working on the topic are not funded by the government*”.

In ACESF-CA’s opinion, the CSOs working on gender equality in Cameroon require further capacity building if they are to transform the main policies related to gender to make them more concrete, operational and a daily reality through pedagogy, didactic tools and the curriculum. And it believes a lack of recognised leadership capacity on the issue of gender equality in education contributes to CSOs in Cameroon not being encouraged to network more with one another to promote this matter. Additionally, ACESF-CA does not feel there is adequate funding or the mobilisation of resources in Cameroon to properly address the issue of gender equality. Like ACESF-CA, whose funding comes from international bodies, CSOs in Cameroon source funds for this issue themselves, and the monies usually acquired “*are not from national funders*”.

26. www.unesco.org (Accessed 30th August 2007)
27. In French, the title of this project is: *Projet d’appui à l’intégration du genre dans l’enseignement de l’économie sociale et familiale au Cameroun*.

Success Stories, Perceived Failures and the Way Forward

According to ACESF-CA, there are only a very few success stories at the primary and secondary levels of education. These include the increased numbers of girls attending school, particularly at the primary level, and the effort put into establishing/improving the toilets in schools (that is by making the facilities good and the toilets clean). The perceived failures include: the unsustainable actions on the gender problem; the low-level strategies used to bring this issue to the fore; the lack of funding to highlight the problem; and the absence of “*main tools which are needed to convince people*” of the importance of this issue. Nationally, ACESF-CA also feels that FAWECAM’s project on promoting girls in scientific studies was not as successful as it could have been, due to job stereotypes, cultural issues, and a dearth in the finances available to sustain this initiative. As for the way forward, ACESF-CA believes that if gender equality in education is to be achieved, both girls and boys need to be empowered, whilst parents and governmental decision-makers alike need to be convinced of the importance of this issue. In ACESF-CA’s opinion, “*gender equality (and gender equity) can quickly happen in our country, if funders really engage financial means to facilitate [the work of] the CSOs, who want to change the poor situation*” faced by women in Cameroon.

India

Education in India

In India, there are eight years of primary education in total: Grades/Standards I to V are called Primary School, while Grades VI to VIII are termed Upper Primary School. There are four years of secondary education: Secondary School comprising Grades IX and X, with Higher Secondary School being made up of Grades XI and XII.

As per the Constitutional Amendment of 2002, the National and State Governments together fund primary education, so that it is available free-of-charge to all children. In Gujarat, for example, the Government of India contributes 75% of the funds for free primary education, whilst the State Government contributes the remaining 25%. Secondary education, on the other hand, differs from state to state. For instance, the Government of Gujarat provides free secondary education to girls, but charges boys a nominal fee.

During Primary School (i.e. from Grades I to VIII), the Government of India – under its SSA²⁸ programme, Midday Meal Scheme, and in conjunction with local bodies – ensures that all children receive free school meals. In general, free schoolbooks are also provided at the primary level to all students. The funding for this usually comes from the State Government. When it comes to school uniforms, however, there is no national policy by the Government of India. So, while the Department of Education in Gujarat, for instance, does not supply pupils with free uniforms, in some other states, certain ministries – such as those dealing with Social Justice and Empowerment – do make this provision. There is also no national policy on the provision of bursaries for education. However, as in the case of uniforms, some State Governments do award bursaries to students. Incentives for girls are provided by some states, as are bursaries for children from lower castes and tribes. Private trusts

and individual donors are also known to sponsor poor children and those from marginalized sections of society. Additionally, in some areas, bicycles are given to tribal girls to help them access schools, whilst in other areas children are provided with travel passes to help them do the same.

Overview of the CSOs Participating in this Work

Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)

PRIA's Head Office is located in New Delhi, India. The main areas of education on which its work focuses are: Universal Primary Education (UPE), and in particular the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER); quality of education, with a focus on survival rates up to Grade 5 of primary school; and gender parity, on the issue of reducing the gender gap in primary education. PRIA collaborates with the state government on research and advocacy work, and with government agencies like the SSA on awareness campaigns.

The following are some of PRIA's ongoing and future activities, which are concerned with promoting gender equality in education:

1. Monitoring and Research:

- Identifying gender-specific constraints to education. Analysis of access to education from a gender perspective at the local level.
- Ascertaining the role of *Panchayats* (local self-governance/village councils) in delivering quality primary education. Identifying gaps and constraints for *Panchayats*.

2. Advocacy:

- Developing strategies for advocacy and interventions for the Gender-Sensitive Educational Process at the district and state levels.

28. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) is an historic stride towards achieving the long-cherished goal of UPE through a time-bound, integrated approach, in partnership with the various States of India. SSA, which promises to change the face of the Primary Education Sector of India, aims to provide useful and good quality primary education to all children in the 6–14 age-group by 2010. The main features of the SSA programme are:

1. A focus on girls, especially belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and minority groups;

2. Back-to-school camps for out-of-school girls;
3. Free textbooks for girls and SC/ST students;
4. Special coaching/remedial classes for girls and a congenial learning environment;
5. Teacher sensitisation programmes to promote equitable learning opportunities;
6. A special focus for innovative projects related to girls' education; and
7. Recruitment of 50% female teachers.

- Interfacing and advocating at the state and district levels on the GCE (General Certificate of Education) and PRIs (Certificate in *Panchayati Raj* Institutions in India).

3. Model Building:

- Carrying out intensive model building interventions in educationally challenged schools and in villages where special programmes specifically for girls’ education have been implemented.

Vishakha, Group for Women’s Education and Research

Vishakha functions in nine districts of Rajasthan, namely Ajmer, Alwar, Bhilwara, Bikaner, Bharatpur, Chittorgarh, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Jaipur. It also operates in 60 villages of the Phagi block in Jaipur. The focal areas of education on which Vishakha works are: access to alternative education, and awareness generation through school and community libraries. To date, Vishakha has achieved the following with respect to promoting gender equality in education: published various materials relating to this issue; reviewed the curriculum with reference to gender; conducted a study on gender and caste in education; involved the community and community groups in education management in the villages; carried out a research project involving the observation of classroom interactions; conducted teacher training for alternative schools; created a primer and a workbook for cognitive and non-cognitive learning; and implemented an initiative teaching self defence techniques to schoolgirls. Ongoing activities in this area include running libraries cum information centres at schools and in communities at the village level. Vishakha is also planning to conduct research into gender-based discrimination in classrooms and in the curriculum.

On the issue of promoting gender equality in education, Vishakha as partnered with Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Sussex on a study regarding inclusion and exclusion, with Vishakha focusing on Rajasthan and IDS Sussex working in South Africa. It has also joined forces with IDS Rajasthan on an assessment of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) for Dholpur. At the national level, Vishakha has partnered with the Ministry of Human Resource Development on micro-level planning for education in the Phagi block of Jaipur, and it is also involved in the *Lok Jumbish*²⁹ and *Janashala*³⁰ programmes that have been initiated by

the state government. Additionally, Vishakha is working with AIDCELL, the technical group for DPEP at the national level, on a review of DPEP and different classroom interactions.

Bhagini Nivedita Pratishthan, Pune (BNP Pune)

This CSO operates solely in Pune. Its main objective is to empower women through education, economic independence and personality development. Though its primary focus is not gender equality, its activities are aimed at enhancing the education level of girls. It does this in two ways: by providing computer education for girls, and by running progress classes for girls in the 10th standard and coaching classes for girls who have failed this standard. Generally, a girl’s education is discontinued if she fails the 10th standard, as parents cannot afford coaching class (i.e. tuition) fees. BNP Pune, therefore, provides these classes – as well as textbooks and notebooks – completely free-of-charge.

In order to increase retention in school, BNP Pune runs self-study centres for girls at which activities are conducted to increase girls’ study skills and also their writing and reading skills, with the ultimate aim of improving their scholastic performance, which helps to retain girls in school. In partnership with Give India, BNP Pune supports the non-formal education of girls by providing self-study centres with necessary funds, computer education is made available through collaboration with KPIT Cummins Infosystems Limited,³¹ and BNP Pune works towards developing scientific attitudes in girls and women via other partnerships.

Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group (AWAG)

AWAG operates in Ahmedabad, in Gujarat, India, on issues ranging from health and sanitation to education, women’s welfare, rural development and public health. The areas of education on which its work focuses are: access to education, retention in schools and non-formal education. AWAG’s achievements to date on the issue of gender equality in education include:

1. From 1982 onwards campaigning to improve the themes and language used in textbooks published by the State. AWAG asked for textbooks that promote the equality of women amongst school children. After a sustained campaign, in 2005 the textbooks from Standard I to IV were purged of all references – pictorial, linguistic and thematic – to women as subordinate beings. The monitoring of textbooks intended for primary school children continues.

2. In 1987, after the communal riots of 1985–1986, AWAG studied the socio-economic profile of the Muslims living in the industrial area of Ahmedabad. It was found that mothers were better educated than daughters. AWAG offered non-formal teaching to groups of girls who were not allowed by their parents to join formal schools again.
3. AWAG started similar schools again in 2003–2004 for Muslim girls who were not allowed to go to school by their parents after further communal riots in the city. During and after communal disturbances, girls aged 10 years and over are withdrawn from schools – even non-formal schools, where they are not allowed by their parents to continue for more than a year or two.
4. In 2006, AWAG was invited under the SSA programme to sensitise groups of teachers from most of the districts of Gujarat to the needs of adolescent pupils, and to provide training in the counselling of disturbed students.
5. AWAG has held workshops on the issue of discrimination against girls and women for students in state-run secondary schools in the Rapar block of the Kuchh district of Gujarat.

AWAG is working with a large number of households in five major industrial areas of Ahmedabad at present. In June, which is the beginning of the academic year, AWAG exhorts families to allow their daughters to continue their studies and assists them in various ways in achieving this goal. AWAG has also launched a study into the school dropout of girls from the industrial, poor areas of Ahmedabad.

Although AWAG has not yet collaborated with the National Government of India on the issue of gender equality in education, it has in the past worked on projects with the State Government of Gujarat. AWAG has also lent its expertise to works carried out by the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, the Indira Gandhi National Open University, and the Centre for Social Studies in Surat, Gujarat, to name but a few.

Gender Equality in Education in India

As PRIA points out, the “*Indian educational system is one of the largest educational systems in the world*”, and when it comes to UPE, the national flagship programme is the SSA, which was “*launched in 2001–02 to reach every child in every hamlet in the country in a prescribed time frame*”.

According to PRIA, at present, the SSA covers the entire country, addressing the needs of 19.2 crore children in 11 lakh³² habitations. 8.5 lakh existing primary and upper primary schools, and 33 lakh existing teachers are also encompassed by this scheme.³³ PRIA further notes that “*gaps in primary schools have come down from 1.6 lakh at the beginning of the 10th Five Year Plan to only 20,957 and likewise, the gap of upper primary schools had reduced to 20,544 by March 2006*”.³⁴ However, despite all these achievements, PRIA thinks it will take at least another 12 years to attain gender equity at the primary level in terms of access, enrolment and especially retention. At the secondary level, PRIA feels that reaching gender equity will take even longer, possibly as much as another 25 years.

AWAG does not think it is possible to predict the time that could be taken to achieve gender equality in education in India as a whole, as the “*situation is very complex, the country is very wide and is thickly populated*”. But, as AWAG notes, the “*intention to achieve education for all and gender equality is evident from the approach paper for the XIth plan, and the XIth plan 2007 to 2012*”. Vishakha, too, believes that attaining gender equality in education “*with the existing situation...is a remote possibility*”.

According to PRIA, under the SSA, the targets that have been set by the government to promote gender equality at the primary level include: free textbooks for all girls up to Grade VIII; separate toilets for boys and girls; back-to-school camps for out-of-school girls; bridge courses for older girls; recruitment of 50% female teachers; Early Childhood Care/Education Centres (ECC/EC) in/near schools; teacher-sensitisation programmes for promoting equitable learning opportunities; gender-sensitive teacher training materials, including textbooks; intensive community mobilisation efforts; and funds per district for need based interventions to ensure girls’ attendance and retention in school. PRIA feels that the Indian Government is trying hard to achieve the targets set to reach MDG 3 by 2015, but it believes a lack of monitoring and management of the funds are the biggest weaknesses of the overall SSA programme, especially at the grassroots level.

Vishakha, too, notes that the government has set targets pertaining to increasing girls’ enrolment at the primary level. Still, it doubts India being able to reach MDG 3/ Target 4 by the 2015 deadline, given the current status of gender equality in education in the country.

29. *Lok Jumbish* is a project committed to bringing about UPE and improving the quality of education in existing schools.
30. *Janashala* is the first-ever collaborative initiative of different UN agencies in education. Launched in 1998, it involves UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO and ILO.

31. www.kpitcummins.com (Accessed 30th October 2007)

32. 1 lakh = 100,000 and 1 crore = 100 lakh = 10 million.
33. These figures have been extracted by PRIA from the 173rd report submitted on the 22nd of May 2006 to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, India.

34. This information has been extracted by PRIA from the Joint Review Report of SSA, 17th – 27th July 2006.

AWAG lists a number of targets that have been set at both the primary and secondary levels by the government in its quest to achieve gender equality in education in India. At the primary level these include: the XIth Plan’s vision to provide all children aged 6–14 with a useful elementary education by 2010;³⁵ the XIth Plan’s aim to bridge all social, gender and regional gaps with the active participation of the community in the management of schools; making schools more interesting, attractive and joyful places through improved physical infrastructures and higher quality teaching;³⁶ curbing the dropout rate;³⁷ addressing teacher absenteeism; and also introducing gender-sensitive curricula from primary school onwards, in order to develop children’s basic attitudes. At the secondary level, the targets set include: improving the quality of education up to Grade X; providing all children aged 6–16 with access to grades up to Standard X; building on SSA’s goal of universal and complete elementary education by expanding secondary education and implementing SSA-2 (as per the XIth Plan); making a special effort to cater to the educational needs of marginalized children; and providing girls with incentives to enrol in secondary school.³⁸ But despite all these aims, as AWAG points out, “*targets are targets, and as such may or may not be met*”. However, these particular aims do ask for acceleration in processes that lead to the accomplishment of targets, and as AWAG further notes, “*the SSA and Midday Meal Scheme are seen as two flagships by the Government of India that would enable the country to achieve the targets*”. In considering MDG 3/Target 4 and the 2015 deadline, AWAG makes the following observation: “*Statistics and targets use specific language. Hard realities of life in [a] vastly populated developing country could present difficulties. Reports in national newspapers have started sounding notes of alarm and caution, which could enable the government to press harder*”.

Key Issues and Main Impediments to Achieving Gender Equality in Education

In BNP Pune’s view, to achieve gender equality in education, the key issues that need to be addressed first are the numbers of school dropouts and unregistered children, as well as the creation of gender-sensitive syllabuses. It considers the main impediments to attaining this goal to include: economic problems, girls’ household

responsibilities, and the low status of women and girls in society. PRIA feels government programmes specially designed to promote girls’ education contribute to achieving gender equality in education. It thinks the key obstacles to reaching this goal at the primary level are: a lack of adequate policies that make primary education for girls mandatory; a lack of monitoring mechanisms, including community-level monitoring, that build the social pressure to educate girls; inadequate infrastructures; and the burden placed on girls to stay at home to care for their younger siblings. At the secondary level, PRIA believes the main impediments to achieving gender equality in education are: issues of security and mobility for female students; the lack of girls’ schools and colleges, which means that the distances girls have to travel to attend school are usually greater than their parents are comfortable with; other concerns relating to access to education; the availability of teachers; and issues of enrolment.

When considering the current status of gender equality in education, Vishakha notes that although enrolment amongst girls at the primary level has increased, the number of female teachers employed at this level is still insufficient, and even now, there are more teachers in roadside villages than there are in remote villages. At the secondary level, too, there are insufficient numbers of female teachers in employment, the ratio of boys to girls favours boys, there are inadequate facilities for girls (such as separate toilets), opportunities for resolving queries regarding reproductive health needs are lacking, there are no school-based mechanisms for dealing with issues like teasing, and there is still a gender-biased curriculum in use at this level. Vishakha believes the key issues to achieving gender equality in education at the primary level are: access to schools, quality of education, the curriculum, the number of female teachers, and the participation of women in the community in the school management system. The key issues at the secondary level are: transportation, equal opportunities, the curriculum, and the availability of computer knowledge and electricity. Vishakha feels that the main impediments to achieving gender equality at the primary level include: the lack of adequate teacher training, inadequate community participation in the school system and the community’s lack of ownership of the school system. At the secondary level, Vishakha considers the main obstacles to be: the

lack of good schools, the inadequate facilities for transportation, the lack of female teachers, the unequal opportunities for boys and girls, and the gender-biased curriculum. Although data published by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2007 shows the status of gender equality in primary education as improving year by year, with what appears to be a gigantic leap over the last 50 years, in AWAG’s opinion the “*fact remains that now enrolment of girls is increasing very slowly*”, with the Gender Parity Index (GPI) remaining almost static. AWAG believes the enrolment of girls is not likely to equal that of boys for two reasons: (1) because there are fewer girls in the 0–6 age range;³⁹ and (2) because “*Indian society...will not allow girls to study more than boys. Unless a very large number of boys are perceived to be studying, girls will never be allowed to study further*”. AWAG goes on to say that although the “*GER*”⁴⁰ *appears to be rising, the dropout rate remains quite high. 29% in primary education, in which boys number more than girls, and more than 50% in upper primary is indicative of the fact that many of the boys do not continue in education. Relatively, [the] dropout rate of girls appears to be lower in primary education but later it increases. In dropping out there are almost equal numbers of boys and girls, which is not the equality we look forward to*”. At the secondary level, as AWAG notes, there is little enrolment of both boys and girls (with girls being much less), although these rates have been improving over the years. Dropout rates at this level are also much higher, which AWAG thinks could be attributable to the higher cost of secondary education.

In AWAG’s opinion, the key issues that contribute to achieving gender equality in education at the primary level include: girls’ familial responsibilities; issues of safety for girls; socio-cultural norms;⁴¹ families’ economic status;⁴² school infrastructures; appropriate textbooks and curricula; and gender-sensitive teacher training. The issues are much the same at the secondary level: safety for girls, socio-cultural norms, girls’ familial responsibilities, and early marriage. AWAG considers the main impediments to achieving gender equality in primary education to be: poverty, issues of safety for girls, socio-cultural norms, girls’ familial responsibilities, the lack of supportive infrastructures for girls in schools, and the patriarchal attitudes of teachers in schools. At the secondary level, the main obstacles are the same as at the primary level, but also include the issue of early marriage. AWAG, PRIA, BNP Pune and Vishakha are all in

agreement that patriarchal attitudes and the current social/caste system in India, along with early marriage and the role of girls in the home, are issues that are unique and specific to India when taking gender equality in education into consideration. Other such country-specific issues include those of safety and mobility surrounding girls.

The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Gender Equality in Education

According to PRIA, civil society in India promotes gender equality in education at the primary level through its involvement in government committees, by using various methods to conduct research and advocacy in remote parts of the country, and also by opening up schools. At the secondary level, it promotes equality mainly by supporting the government through research and advocacy. CSOs in India also work together on this issue, collaborating on awareness campaigns, opening up non-formal education centres and conducting research and advocacy. Despite all this, PRIA feels that the government only recognises and accepts the work done by CSOs when it either funds the work, or the findings are released in time to coincide with government policies. In PRIA’s opinion, there is inadequate follow-up by the government on work done by civil society, and there are still too many regulations and red tape involved in joining government programmes. It also believes there is insufficient funding and inadequate mobilisation of resources when it comes to promoting gender equality in education in India.

Vishakha agrees that the funds and resources available for promoting gender equality in education are inadequate, but unlike PRIA, it feels the government does recognise and accept the work done by CSOs in this area. Whilst there are fewer CSOs working at the secondary level, Vishakha notes that at the primary level, many organisations have collaborated with the Ministry of Human Resource Development on this matter. Similarly, other CSOs are involved in projects like the *Lok Jumbish* programme, and yet more work together at the state level on initiatives such as those providing primary school children with proper nutrition. As Vishakha points out, “*civil society has taken part in providing funds as well as infrastructure for primary schools*”, and it has also been involved at the village- and community-levels in the management of schools and in the structuring of syllabuses

35. Nearly 100% enrolment is considered likely amongst 6- to 14-year-olds. The aim is to also provide these children with eight complete years of useful and relevant school education.
36. This is one of the tasks of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).
37. In 2003–2004, the dropout rate was around 31%. This has to be reduced sharply, if not eliminated altogether, for both genders and all social groups, if gender equality in primary education is to be achieved. An Employment Guarantee Scheme would add to family income, thereby reducing the pressure on children of poorer families to earn. Providing working mothers with a crèche facility would also lower the need for elder children to stay at

home to care for their younger siblings.
38. An example of one such proposed incentive is to deposit a sum of Rs. 3,000/- in every girl’s name, which she would be entitled to withdraw upon turning 18. Following this proposal by the Finance Minister, the Ministry of Finance has sent a Concept Paper to the Planning Commission for an ‘in principle’ approval, which would allow this incentive to be provided to all girls who pass the Grade VIII standard examination and then enrol in secondary school.

39. According to the Census Report of India, published in 2001, there are 927 girls to every 1,000 boys.
40. GER = Gross Enrolment Rate
41. A study conducted by Dr Ila Pathak of AWAG in 1993 showed that girls’ education within a certain group could only increase when boys’ education in that group increased beyond 70%, since a girl’s acceptance in marriage depended upon her being less educated than her spouse.

42. Parents were found to be more likely to send their daughters to school if their demand for food was satisfied through schooling. Therefore, according to AWAG, the Midday Meal Scheme has proved popular, and it has contributed to an increase in the enrolment of children in school.

for primary education. Additionally, certain CSOs run alternative education programmes, as well as hostel facilities for the less privileged. In conjunction with the government, many CSOs have been actively involved in teacher training, developing gender-focused curricula, and motivating communities to interact and interface with their school systems, such that they assume ownership of their local schools. Vishakha does concede, however, that whilst a number of CSOs work on education, with a focus on gender, “*the concept and notion of gender varies from one to another*”. As a result, Vishakha believes gender-focused work requires “*a lot more capacity building*”.

BNP Pune, too, states that the Indian Government has provided funds and undertaken various projects in collaboration with different CSOs in promoting gender equality in education. It also notes that some CSOs continue to work specifically on this issue on their own. Examples of successful ongoing projects led by CSOs focusing on this area of education include Doorstep Schools and Mobile Schools.

As AWAG points out, “*CSOs by definition are not a part of government. As such, there is inherent in them all some degree of opposition to government and its policy. However, since India is a democratic country there are political parties professing various political ideologies, which periodically come to power. CSOs which share the ideology expressed by the party in power do not find it difficult to cooperate with the government*”. AWAG goes on to say that CSOs that are ideologically neutral do not mind cooperating with any government. “*In fact, some of them get so involved with government-run projects that they almost get co-opted by the government.*” Political parties with narrow sectional interests (regional, linguistic and/or religious) have also been known to favour working with CSOs whose ideologies are congruent with theirs.

On the whole, though information is scarce, AWAG believes that CSOs in India fall into two distinct categories: those that are very small, with inadequate funds and staff that are not trained well enough to understand the complexities of the modern State and its bureaucratic structure, and those that are run by highly-skilled professionals, that receive large funds from foreign agencies and government departments alike. As AWAG notes, although the latter are not many in number, their

impact far outweighs their numerical strength. In the field of education, according to AWAG, there are not many CSOs in operation in India, and as such, collaborations that do occur at both the local and regional levels are “*largely piecemeal and short-lived*”, since these CSOs tend to work better alone. Funds earmarked by the government to address the issue of gender equality in education, in AWAG’s opinion, are inadequate, and it also thinks additional resources need to be mobilised if this issue is to be properly addressed and if this goal is to ultimately be realised in India in the near future.

Success Stories, Perceived Failures and the Way Forward

According to Vishakha, the following progress has been made to date on the issue of gender equality in education in India: access to school has increased, the numbers of schools have increased, the curriculum has become more gender-focused, and a few organisations have arranged literacy-cum-empowerment camps for children at the primary level. There are success stories, too. As Vishakha notes, the “*Lok Jumbish programme was a grand success*”, enrolment of girls has increased, and village-level committees have started managing schools and ensuring quality education through the Minimum Level Learning initiative. Unlike AWAG, however, Vishakha perceives the Midday Meal Scheme as being a failure, as “*the programme was thought to increase the enrolment of students...but it was found that children were not interested in the education but on the meal and thus would disappear from the schools eventually*”.

Vishakha believes that when it comes to the issue of gender equality in education, the way forward is to: introduce a functional education system, establish a gender-focused curriculum, provide for women and differently-able persons through the infrastructure of the education system, improve transport facilities, employ more female teachers, improve teacher training, involve the community in education management, establish a mechanism at the school-level to deal with problems related to harassment, and even introduce a grade-less education system.

PRIA, too, notes that progress has been made on this issue in India to date, including: a fall in the number of out-of-school children,⁴³ a decline in the gender and social gaps, ⁴⁴

and a reduction in the dropout rates.⁴⁵ Additionally, 67% of primary schools, 76% of upper primary schools and 88% of high schools with upper primary sections now have toilets, with 34% of primary schools, 46% of upper primary schools and 71% of high schools with upper primary sections now having separate toilets for girls. In terms of perceived failures, PRIA feels “*programmes like NPEGEL and KGBVS,⁴⁶ designed specially for girls, have not brought out sufficient results*”. Moreover, it does not think that incentives for girls are regular enough, and highlights the lack of female teachers in India, as well as the lack of both female and male teachers in the interior areas of the country. Other perceived failures include: inadequate teacher training; the lack of gender-sensitisation programmes and gender-sensitive learning materials; the irregularity with which funds are transferred to where they are needed; and also the inaccessibility of schools with safe and secure environments (which, as PRIA notes, is “*still not a luxury for most of the girls studying in government schools*”).

As for the way forward, PRIA believes the following need to be achieved if gender equality in education is to become a reality in India: regular flow of funds; stringent supervision and monitoring at the local level; mobilisation of teachers and parents on gender-sensitive matters; strict local-level planning; increased involvement of elected female representatives in school issues; authentication of data prior to the preparation of annual/perspective plans and reports; accurate assessment of the number and needs of targeted children prior to the preparation of plans/ reports; and vigorous community mobilisation campaigns that highlight the benefits of gender equality in education and urge poor households to send their children, especially daughters, to school.

In AWAG’s opinion, although enrolment of girls at the primary level is on the rise, the dropout rate “*is worrisome and the government is concerned about retention of students in schools*”. AWAG believes that the dropout rates in Grades I to VIII are large because “*schools for upper primary are spread out and are not available within a distance of 1 or 1½ kilometres*” of children’s homes, and where girls are concerned, “*going out of the village day after day is tabooed*”. However, as AWAG notes, some progress has been made on this issue, since figures released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2007 show less dropout and more retention at the primary level

in 2004–2005 than in the previous year. At the secondary level, girls’ enrolment appears to be gradually increasing, with the dropout rate falling slowly, although it still remains quite high. Low enrolment and high dropout, particularly amongst girls, is most likely attributable to the fact that “*secondary schools are situated in large block towns or in district towns. All schools do not have hostels attached to them for girls. Nor do parents send girls long distances to study. [Therefore] girls living in villages cannot access these schools*”.

When contemplating the success stories in this area, “*one good outcome that shines out and makes one notice the ability of girls to study is that girls score better than boys in school-leaving certificate examinations of the School Boards*”. These girls are largely urban and from the middle classes. Additionally, although 1997’s DPEP is now “*dovetailed in the SSA...by the Government of India*”, AWAG does not think there are any failures, as such, amongst the initiatives that have been launched to promote gender equality in education. As for the way forward, in AWAG’s words: “*The analysis done by the planning commission for the XIth Plan is comprehensive. Recommendations made are equally appropriate. Implementation poses difficulties, which at times appear to be insurmountable. This is so because the implementers are not yet gender sensitive, nor are the recipients*”.

43. According to PRIA, government reports show that the number of out-of-school children in India has reduced from about 320 lakh in 2002–2003 to 70.5 lakh in March 2006.

44. The gender gap at the primary stage has reduced from 5.5% in 2002–2003 to 4.2% in 2005–2006. At the upper primary level, this gap has reduced from 10.7% to 8.8% in the same years. The GPI at the primary stage in 2005 was 0.95, and at the upper primary level it was 0.88. Additionally, the share of SC students in enrolment at the primary level was 20.72%, and at the upper primary stage it was 19.42%. For ST students, their share in the total enrolment in 2005–2006 was 11.75% at the primary level and 9.28% at the upper primary level.

45. The gross dropout rate, as reflected in the Selected Education Statistics of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, declined from 39.03% in 2001–2002 to 28.49% in 2004–2005. For girls, the decline was significant: during the same period, their dropout rate fell from 39.88% to 24.82%, which is a decrease of more than 15%. For the entire elementary stage, however, the dropout rate is declining less rapidly.

46. NPEGEL is the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level; and KGBVS is the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme.

Pakistan

Education in Pakistan

There are six grades of primary school in Pakistan, beginning with *Katchi* (pre-Grade 1), which is followed by grades 1 to 5. Middle school encompasses grades 6 to 8. In totality, the grades from *Katchi* through to Grade 8 are also termed elementary school. Secondary school is technically grades 9 to 10. The Government of Pakistan is trying to move towards a four year 9 to 12 grade secondary programme, referred to as higher secondary school; however, the gap in provisions between secondary grades 9 and 10, and higher secondary grades 11 and 12, is vast.

The cost of free primary education in Pakistan is borne by the government at the provincial level.⁴⁷ At the federal level, the government also provides public sector schools with free secondary education. In 55 out of 110 districts, under the *Tawana* Project, a limited number of girls' and mixed schools (roughly in the region of 5,000 schools) receive free school meals that are co-funded by the Federal Government and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education. At the provincial level, the government also provides public sector and primary schools with free schoolbooks. In order to further encourage education, the Government of Pakistan hands out various bursaries at both the federal and provincial levels – an example of this being the 200 bursaries given out each month to girls in grades 6 to 8 whose attendance in school is at least 80%. Some NGOs bequeath bursaries to selected schools in certain provinces, too. In addition to all this, there are a number of social safety nets in place to facilitate children's education in Pakistan. These include: MORA – the Ministry of Religious Affairs – which hands out stipends at the district level; the Pakistan *Bait ul Maal* that provides both conditional and general cash transfers to children and households; and the Department of Education, which offers stipends to girls in middle and secondary school in the provinces of Sindh and Punjab. The government is also providing rural schools with facilities that they have so

far been lacking, such as school walls, water supplies and bathrooms. In Punjab, the Punjab Education Foundation sponsors certain low cost private schools that benefit students, for example, via the remission/abolition of school fees.

Overview of the CSOs Participating in this Work

South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK)

SAP-PK operates in Pakistan as part of the larger South Asia Partnership (SAP) that works towards empowering people, especially those from disadvantaged sections of society, in countries in the South Asian region. The key areas to do with education – and, in particular, gender equality in education – which SAP-PK focuses on are: girls' education; the support of non-formal education; advocacy in education, including the development of links into the community; and SAP-PK also works with emergency rooms in hospitals that have education departments.

To date, SAP-PK has achieved the following in its efforts to promote gender equality in education: it has completed the *Tawana* Girl Child Nutrition and Education Project in 1,454 government-run girls' primary schools, accounting for 132,559 girls,⁴⁸ and it has also provided financial aid to community-based education projects. On-going and future activities in this area include: advocacy work on education, liaison-building and networking between the community and the Education Department, and working on policy changes in education.

Other organisations that SAP-PK partners with in order to promote gender equality in education are: the Farmer Development Organisation in the district of Lodhran, the Pakistan Welfare Society in Layyah, the Rohi Development Organisation in Rajanpur, the Alnoor Foundation in

47. There are four provinces in Pakistan: Punjab, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Sindh and Balochistan.

48. The *Tawana* Pakistan Project (School Nutrition Package For Girls), under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education, was a large-scale social safety net intervention that sought to access the poorest of the poor to address malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies amongst girl children (5–12 years), improve school enrolment and retention, and promote women's empowerment through employment and participation in the implementation process. It also envisaged contributing to the reduction

of poverty by creating employment and promoting local economy. It was executed through the National Implementation Unit and core stakeholders, with the Aga Khan University and 11 NGO team partners providing technical assistance. The major services provided were daily freshly cooked meals, twice weekly multi micronutrients, and bi-annual de-worming medicines. The project completed 42 months on the 30th of June 2005, following its commencement in January 2002. During this period, the project covered 4,032 primary schools.

Arifwala, in the district of Pak Pattan, the Awam Dost Foundation in Bhakkar, and the Social Women Activist Group in Vehari.

On the issue of promoting gender equality in education, SAP-PK has worked with the Pakistani Government on the *Tawana* Project, and at present it also regularly arranges and facilitates dialogues and meetings between local communities and the Education Department.

Sudhaar

Sudhaar – a non-governmental organisation registered under the Societies Act – came into being in Lahore, Pakistan in 1994. Sudhaar's primary focus is phasing out child labour via the provision of non-formal education, promoting education by improving the quality of education in government schools, and developing linkages between the two systems. Sudhaar's vision is to make quality education available to all children and to bring the child labour growth rate down to zero in Pakistan.

Sudhaar began working towards the elimination of child labour in Kasur in 1995 by founding non-formal education centres. Then, in 1998, it started working with the government and municipal schools in Sialkot and Kasur. Later, links were established by mainstreaming children from non-formal education centres to the formal schools. It also identified linkages with technical training institutions to find opportunities for government-approved apprenticeship placements for children in the 15+ age group, who had at least eight years of schooling. Currently, Sudhaar programmes span 400 municipal and government schools, plus 160 non-formal education centres in three districts – namely Kasur, Gujranwala and Sialkot – 80% of which are in rural areas.

Sudhaar mobilises resources from national and international development partners and UN agencies. Some resources are also obtained from membership and private sector donations. Between 1995 and the year 2002, Sudhaar mobilised approximately 70 million Rupees.

Since 1995, Sudhaar's work has focused on child labour-education issues, covering areas such as educational planning, non-formal and formal education, literacy and vocational training, and to date, Sudhaar has collaborated with *Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi* (ITA) and Save the Children UK on projects concerned with promoting gender equality in education, such as addressing child labour issues through EFA.

Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)

Registered in June 2000 as a Trust, ITA's goal is to promote quality education for all – children, youth, women and adults – free from discrimination, with the ultimate aim of enabling all groups to reach their maximum potential through life-long learning. Though ITA primarily partners with public sector schools of all levels, which operate sub-optimally or are in a state of degeneration, it has also been contributing to the well being of other relevant educational spheres and empowering marginalized groups in society. ITA translates its vision into practice by devising workable and upgraded education models for designing social policy guidelines that are appropriate for urban and rural locations. And to successfully execute its vision, ITA has formed alliances with likeminded partners in Pakistan and abroad. By working with these partners, ITA has been able to spread its network across almost all of Pakistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK). In all of ITA's projects and programmes, gender issues and gender parity is a crosscutting strategy.

The key areas of education, and, in particular, gender equality in education, on which ITA focuses are: access to education for girls and disadvantaged groups (like children involved in child labour and siblings of school children who never enrolled in school); increasing retention in schools via quality and compensatory interventions; education in emergencies; the upgrading of schools; and improving the quality of education and education planning, thereby ensuring gender-focused planning and budgeting through district educational plans.

To date, ITA can list a number of achievements pertaining to the promotion of gender equality in education. For example, under its Whole School Improvement Programme (WSIP), ITA has adopted 45 schools all over Punjab with intensive inputs. Of these 33 are all-girls schools. ITA launched WSIP in 2000. Since then, enrolment in these schools in general, and in the girls' schools in particular, has risen by 60 to 100 percent. In a few cases, enrolment has actually increased by even more than 100%. Additionally, 22 girls from these schools have been awarded scholarships, through philanthropy, to complete their higher secondary education in 2006 and 2007. Thus far, over 300 other schools across Punjab and AJK have replicated elements of school improvement that have been taken from ITA's WSIP.

In school council formations, trainings and meetings, ITA ensures gender parity and also encourages women to voice their opinions in decision-making processes. In the communities that it operates, ITA mainly hires women, who can serve as substitute-teachers in schools, become cluster coordinators, and also manage programmes, thus creating employment opportunities for women across the spectrum. Within ITA itself, which is an equal opportunity employer, women are encouraged, where possible, to aspire to and work in management positions. Furthermore, ITA ensures mobility paths for its grassroots associates, the substitute-teachers, to move all the way up to the managerial levels through knowledge- and skills-based empowerment opportunities.

Other examples of ITA's achievements in promoting gender equality in education include: increasing the enrolment of girls to 76% in learning centres established under the Child Domestic Labour Project of 2005–2006, which was supported by the ILO (International Labour Organization) and implemented by ITA; having gender parity be the underlying focus of the Enabling Relief and Rehabilitation through Education programme, which saw middle schools for girls being upgraded to secondary level and permission being granted to use boys' schools as middle schools for girls in the afternoons; and ITA also influences policies and prepares briefs for advocacy that are often used by policymakers themselves. In fact, ITA serves on various policymaking and steering committees on education, social protection and child rights, and in every one, ITA ensures that gender is addressed in a focused manner.

ITA partners with a number of organisations to promote gender equality in education. The Sanjan Nagar Public Education Trust is a crucial link where enabling education for extremely disadvantaged girls is a major initiative. Other partners include Save the Children UK, Sudhaar and UNICEF. ITA is also engaged at all levels of government in policymaking, evidence-based policy influencing and reporting, where promoting gender equality is deeply embedded in planning, financing and implementation.

Gender Equality in Education in Pakistan

In terms of primary education, as ITA notes, the current National Plan of Action for EFA and the MDGs foresees Pakistan attaining gender equality by the 2015 deadline.

However, Sudhaar believes that in reality, this achievement is actually a minimum of ten years away. SAP-PK, meanwhile, is of the opinion that although gender equality in access to education already exists, the syllabus is in need of review – possibly even leading to a complete overhaul.

A number of targets have been set by the Pakistani Government in order to promote gender equality in education at the primary school level. The EFA 2015 Plan aims to reach gender equality at the primary level by 2010 and at the elementary level by 2015. It is thought that a parity ratio of 1.00 on the Gender Parity Index (GPI) may even be attained before the 2015 deadline in some provinces (such as Punjab). Other steps being taken by the government to promote gender equality in education at the primary level include: establishing additional single-sex schools for girls, opening more schools in rural areas, increasing the appointments of female teachers, as well as improving teacher training and promoting trained teachers in order to improve the quality of education. The government also plans to increase the numbers of English teachers in schools, with the ultimate aim of teaching English from Grade 1 onwards.

In terms of secondary education, ITA believes that gender equality will not be reached until at least 2020, as the percentage of the population attending secondary school is still very low and needs to be raised significantly. SAP-PK also thinks that attaining this goal is comparatively far off, since there are fewer secondary schools for girls in Pakistan, and as access to secondary education for girls is also low. Noting that “*even though in many places the difference between boys' and girls' elementary schools may not be all that great, and in some places girls' schools may exceed boys' schools, mobility is a big deterrence for girls*”, Sudhaar goes on to concede that even with a lot of hard effort, achieving gender equality in secondary education is still a minimum of 15 years away.

Whilst Sudhaar is not aware of any targets set by the Pakistani Government to further gender equality in education at the secondary school level, SAP-PK, too, admits that there are “*not so many targets, except teacher training*”. ITA, on the other hand, notes that one target that has been set is to attain a parity ratio of 0.94 at the secondary level on the GPI.

When considering the current status of gender equality in education in Pakistan as a whole, ITA points out that nationally, the overall Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at the primary level for the years 2004–2005 was 86%, the GER for females was 77% and the GPI was 0.85. At the secondary level, the GPI for the years 2004–2005 was 0.83. As SAP-PK notes, at the primary level, “*the number of schools are equal, free and girls also have access, but awareness is lacking regarding girls’ education and during the harvesting seasons, girl students of rural areas don’t attend schools, so the teaching hours should be flexible for them*”. SAP-PK goes on to say that there are not enough teachers in schools at the primary level, and that the syllabus needs to be gender sensitised. At the secondary level, the number of schools for girls is less, not free, and the distances to schools are so great that girls cannot attend due to a lack of transport and lack of mobility based on socio-cultural attitudes. Poverty also continues to be a big issue, as parents who cannot afford to educate all their children in general will choose to educate boys over girls. Sudhaar, too, notes that at the primary level, fewer girls are enrolled in school than boys, and that the dropout rate for girls is also higher, particularly from Grade 3 onwards, when girls are deemed old enough to finish school, or are required at home to help with household chores, or the journey to school is considered unsafe. At secondary level, girls’ enrolment and dropout rates are even worse, although on average, girls have been found to perform better academically than boys. Again, this can be attributed to mobility issues: since girls are more restricted, they can devote more time to their studies – even though, as Sudhaar concedes, “*they may be rote studies rather than any real learning*”.

When discussing MDG 3/Target 4, Sudhaar doubts that Pakistan is on track to meet this goal by the 2015 deadline. ITA, too, states that even though the GPI in primary enrolment at the national level shows a steady increase over the years, “*there are considerable variations in inter- and intra-provincial levels*”. And SAP-PK believes that while Pakistan is on track to reach MDG 3/Target 4 at the primary level by 2015, this is not the case at the higher levels of education. Additionally, SAP-PK feels that there is a lack of social mobilisation with regard to issues of gender and the promotion of education within communities.

Key Issues and Main Impediments to Achieving Gender Equality in Education

At primary level, Sudhaar considers the key issues and impediments to be late school admissions, early marriages, community groupings based on caste (meaning “*girls and even boys are not sent to schools if they are located in rival or lower/higher caste areas*”), security concerns about girls travelling to school, poverty, teacher shortages, and familial responsibilities that require girls to stay at home to help with household chores and to care for infant/younger siblings. As Sudhaar notes, ‘high’ education for girls is “*not considered desirable anyway, and their ability to manage household work is given a greater value*”. At secondary level, the main issues and impediments are the lack of schools for girls, mobility restrictions that prevent girls from accessing the schools that are available, teacher shortages, the relevance of the curricula, and the fact that there are fewer openings for girls post secondary education, which means that there is less incentive for girls to attend secondary school in the first place. Other issues at the secondary level include safety,⁴⁹ early marriage⁵⁰ and poverty.⁵¹

ITA considers the key barriers to gender equality at the primary level to be: low education provision up to secondary level, household socio-economic status, poor distribution of schools, perceptions of safety for girls, low quality education in public schools, and, in rare cases, the misinterpretation of religion by men/religious elders that inhibit girls’ education. The main impediments at secondary level are similar, and include: issues of access to schools, insufficient middle and secondary schools, poor quality education, lack of teachers (especially females, and particularly in the fields of science, maths and English), poverty, and social constraints on mobility due to issues of safety.

In SAP-PK’s view, the key issues that contribute to achieving gender equality at the primary level are: the presence of teachers in schools in rural areas, full attendance of children in schools, flexible attendance hours for poor children, effective monitoring systems and mobilisation activities. SAP-PK considers the main impediments to be: poverty and the lack/irregularity of teachers in schools, particularly in rural areas. At the secondary level, SAP-PK believes the key issues

and impediments are school fees, socio-cultural norms, transport issues and low mobility amongst women, the numbers of girls’ schools, the distances to girls’ schools, girls’ access to education, and gender-sensitive attitudes.

The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Gender Equality in Education

According to SAP-PK, civil society in Pakistan lobbies for the following in an effort to promote gender equality in primary education: formation of non-formal education projects, raising awareness and increasing community mobilisation activities, home schools, relaxation of timings and uniforms, establishment of regular teachers, and a good monitoring system. At the secondary level, the role of CSOs is very limited.

Sudhaar concurs that at the secondary level, civil society has limitations in capacity, which means that efforts are restricted to campaigning and lobbying. Certain strong organisations lobby for women’s rights and gender equity, including education at all levels. At the primary level, civil society also promotes gender equity. It campaigns and lobbies to ensure that this can be achieved through specific steps like special allocations. In direct interventions, many CSOs opt for education facilities for girls or give priority to enrolling girls.

According to ITA, civil society has been very active in promoting gender equality in education at the primary level by increasingly engaging with both the government and the public sector. Examples of some initiatives include: the wide engagement with child labour through gender-sensitive approaches, targeting girls where appropriate; pushing for increased strategic mainstreaming of children from non-formal to formal schools; providing support to improve the quality of formal education for sustained mainstreaming; scaling up initiatives for girls’ education; and researching trends to influence policy. NGOs have launched various programmes and advocacy campaigns to eliminate gender disparity improve public awareness about the importance of female education. At the secondary level, civil society is involved in: setting up and upgrading schools for promoting girls’ education; teacher training; providing girls with scholarships; and mobilising corporate philanthropy for girls and for secondary education.

Success Stories, Perceived Failures and the Way Forward

In SAP-PK’s opinion, the progress made to date on the issue of gender equality in education at the primary level can be measured in terms of the increase in the number of schools, the introduction of free education, the provision of free meals and books to children, increased teacher training, and the provision of missing facilities to schools. In terms of secondary education, a lot of progress still needs to be made.

At the national level, as ITA notes, GPI in primary enrolment has improved steadily from 0.73 in 1990, to 0.82 in 2001, to 0.85 in 2005. In the past seven years, nine out of 33 districts have attained the MDG parity ratio target of 1.0, and four other districts are closing in on this target now, too. At secondary level, the GPI ratio has improved from 0.75 in 2001–2002 to 0.83 in 2004–2005.

According to Sudhaar, in Punjab (which accounts for 60% of the national population), substantial success has been achieved in increasing access to primary education, but the dropout rate is still a major problem that is particularly acute in the case of girls. Primary enrolment has been increased through incentives like the provision of free textbooks, the abolition of school fees, and the hiring of contract teachers to overcome the teacher shortage problem. The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) is working along the same lines now. At the secondary level, cash incentives have been given to girls in grades 6 to 8 in selected districts in Punjab (those with the lowest literacy rates). This has increased enrolment in middle schools. Additionally, the Provincial Government of Punjab is planning to extend the coverage of free textbooks and the removal of school fees to the secondary level in the very near future.

In Pakistan, there are a number of success stories relating to the promotion of gender equality in education. As SAP-PK notes, the *Tawana* Project, which provided meals to 400,000 girls in more than 4,000 primary schools in 29 of the most impoverished districts in the country, has increased the enrolment of girls in these schools to more than 40% and created in excess of 4,000 women’s committees overall. SAP-PK itself worked in 1,454 girls’ schools in six districts, providing meals to 132,559 girls, and forming 1,454 committees with the participation of 19,568 women, 475 female health workers, 1,615

49. The concern relating to girls’ safety is evident from the fact that in many places, girls from the same locality walk to school in groups.
50. Early marriage, according to Sudhaar, is a big problem, as there is a clear concept of *izzat*, which is the honour associated with a girl’s virtue or virginity. Parents and family elders are meant to be the custodians of *izzat* and many believe that through early marriage they can pass on this responsibility to the husband.

51. Girls of the age to attend secondary school may be required to be earning members of the family – either by working at home or in the neighbourhood – which is not surprising in Pakistan, where nearly 24% of families live below the poverty line and a further 20% hover just above it. Moreover, secondary education does not offer any wage-earning skills, nor does it guarantee a job. In fact, some parents consider secondary education to be ‘high’ education, which is deemed too ‘modern’ for girls. The cost of secondary education is also an inhibitive factor.

councillors of both genders, and 60 CSOs – all of which led to an increased enrolment of 5,762 girls in the schools that SAP-PK worked with.

The success stories identified by ITA include: school stipend programmes, school nutrition programmes, the upgrading of schools from middle to secondary level, the recruitment of female teachers to non-formal schools, and the elevated status of literate females (as teachers) in illiterate communities. Sudhaar, too, notes that some success has been evident when gender equality has been attempted through incentives. However, this organisation feels that these successes have been achieved at a high cost, monetarily-speaking. Therefore, what it actually considers the greatest success story to be is the *“recognition of the fact at the government level that gender equality is important and has long-term benefits”*.

On the downside, SAP-PK concedes that, despite its success, the Tawana Programme ultimately *“lost its strength due to the involvement of bureaucracy, the lack of confidence of the government in NGOs, and the lack of transparency and clarity in the management of the project”*. According to ITA, *“non-formal and child labour programmes directed at girls have been weak, but there are no major failed initiatives”* in Pakistan. In Sudhaar’s opinion, however, the Nai Roshni programme⁵² launched by the government in the mid-eighties *“was a disaster”*, as there was *“no concept of involving communities or running a sustained campaign before and during the programme”*. Resources that were committed were not allocated in time, and service delivery was a problem, since the government refused to involve anyone else and tried to do everything through its own structures. A literacy and non-formal education programme being managed by the government is an equal failure, in Sudhaar’s view, despite CSOs being engaged as implementing partners, since *“the resources are so meagre that quality and monitoring are virtually impossible to maintain”*. Additionally, there are no established quality standards, and no real student assessment or feedback. Hence, *“serious-minded and skilled organisations avoided being a part of this programme”*.

When contemplating the way forward for achieving gender equality in education in Pakistan at both the primary and secondary levels, SAP-PK feels the following would

be needed: more facilities from government, universal free education, incentives for teachers, gender-sensitive syllabuses, gender-sensitive teacher training, collaborations between the government and NGOs in community awareness and mobilisation, non-formal education and suitable timings/schedules for children in rural areas, effective monitoring of schools, and also new teaching techniques. Moreover, SAP-PK strongly believes that the issue of poverty needs to be tackled, as this – together with a lack of awareness – has a powerful effect on education as a whole, and on working children’s education in particular.

In ITA’s opinion, *“gender equality is not the correct challenge; rather gender equity with ensured entitlements is”*, since ITA regards equality as a quantitative measure, whilst equity is also a qualitative one, *“with legal entitlements ensured and backed by capabilities”*. ITA provides the following example to illustrate its point: if there are 5,000 middle schools for boys with 100,000 students, and the same figure is reached for girls, this only addresses the issue of gender equality numerically, whereas the critical issue is that there are very few transition possibilities from primary to middle or secondary level,⁵³ which stops both boys and girls alike from reaching their full potential. ITA firmly believes that this is the ‘gender challenge’ in Pakistan – one in which girls are more excluded than boys.

Sudhaar concurs with ITA that there should be opportunities available to children after elementary and secondary education to get access to vocational training, *“which is a big attraction for parents. Such opportunities will make education worthwhile for parents”*. Additionally, Sudhaar is of the opinion that *“unless primary and secondary education are made compulsory, and access is granted to all in phases, there is no way progress can be made”*. Simultaneously, penalties will have to be imposed for keeping children away from school, and a prohibition on child labour will have to be introduced. *“Without these measures, there is little hope for achieving gender equity.”* More importantly, Sudhaar believes that quality should become the primary concern at all levels of education in Pakistan. *“We should go for quality first, so that credibility of the education system is established (and quality includes relevance for both boys and girls). Access should come in phases, as more resources are made available with every financial year. Pakistan needs to progressively*

increase resources for school education.” Sudhaar feels that education for the general public has largely lost its importance and relevance. If peoples’ confidence cannot be restored, and if parents cannot be shown that education is going to make a practical difference in their children’s lives, they are not going to be very interested in trying to educate their children or in joining in on the wider debate on the subject.

52. Launched in 1987, the Nai Roshni Schools Project aimed to provide Primary Education in a non-formal manner to 1.65 million dropouts and out-of-school children aged between 10 and 14 years over a period of four years (1986–1990). According to www.plc.sdnppk.org/pro_history.htm this *“innovative and successful scheme was disbanded abruptly due to [a] change of Govt. (sic.) without any academic rationale or evaluation”*. (Accessed 30th October 2007)

53. Although the ratio between primary and middle school provision for girls is 3:1, the ratio between primary and secondary provision is 20:3. Education provision needs to go beyond the primary level, up to the secondary level, if parents are to be enticed into sending their children – and in particular their daughters – to school. If there are insufficient numbers of middle schools, parents consider sending their children to primary school to be counter productive (to the family), as they are aware that after primary graduation, their children are only going to possess minimal skills, which means that they are likely to remain exploited.

Papua New Guinea

Education in Papua New Guinea

In PNG, primary schooling is divided into two levels: Elementary School, which is the Elementary Grade, followed by Grades 1 and 2; and Primary School, which is comprised of Grades 3 to 8. Thus, in total, there are nine years of primary education. Secondary education consists of four years of school, from Grades 9 to 12, with the first two years being considered High School, and the next two years being Secondary School.

For the vast majority of children in PNG, education is not free. Schools charge fees that are paid by parents/guardians. According to World Vision, the only exception at the moment is the Enga province, where the cost of primary and secondary education is borne by the Engan Provincial Council, thereby allowing pupils to access education free-of-charge, following a decision by the Governor of this province. Aside from school fees, parents in PNG with school-going children also have to pay for school uniforms (although not all schools have uniforms, for those that do, parents have to pay extra for these, on top of the tuition fees). The government provides pupils with some textbooks, but on the whole, it is the parents who have to purchase the majority of the schoolbooks required by their children. Parents generally also have to pay for school meals, although at the secondary level, some meals are being provided by the government.

One incentive offered by the government to encourage children to attend school is the provision of educational bursaries. In PNG, conditional scholarships are available up to university level through the national and provincial governments, and, according to World Vision, pupils from landowner groups of mining sites are eligible for bursaries, too. The government additionally pays teachers' salaries, and both the government and various donors help in terms of infrastructure (for example, through the upkeep of classrooms). On the whole, though, education in PNG for most people is a costly affair, since very little

is free-of-charge, and only a small minority of the population is fortunate enough to qualify for the limited opportunities available.

Overview of the CSOs/NGOs Participating in this Work

Papua New Guinea Education Advocacy Network (PEAN)

Based in Port Moresby, PEAN is a national coalition supported by ASPBAE – Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education. As ASPBAE covers the Asia Pacific, PEAN is part of this sub-regional network.

ASPBAE's core area of work has been adult education, and more recently the EFA goals and the MDGs. PEAN has been engaged in an Education Watch initiative, the major component of which has been an Education Experience Survey that has already been administered in two provinces in PNG. When complete, some aspects of this survey will be able to reveal, to a certain extent and in a general context, the educational experiences of girls in these two provinces. PEAN has also completed a paper on Gender Equality.

Aside from its alliance with ASPBAE, PEAN also has networking relationships with the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the University of Papua New Guinea and World Vision on the issue of promoting gender equality in education. These relations are being nurtured, and ASPBAE provides PEAN with opportunities for training and capacity building on gender equality and other project areas. It was involved in the Global Action Week campaign, which, amongst other things, also promoted the EFA goals. The theme for the year 2007 was 'Education as a Human Right'.

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is a UN agency serving in 156 countries of the world. Its Field Office in PNG, based in Port Moresby, conducts activities that focus on the following five areas: health and nutrition, including Early Childhood Development (ECD); HIV and AIDS prevention; child protection; promoting girls’ education; plus planning and communication.

In PNG, UNICEF runs a specific programme on Accelerating Girls’ Education. Its main aim is to increase enrolment, improve retention and provide quality education, especially in relation to girls at the primary level. In order to encourage more girls to attend school, UNICEF has introduced an initiative called Child Friendly Schools (CFS). In 2004, 33 schools were incorporated into this scheme; by 2006, this number had risen to 100. During the implementation of the CFS programme, UNICEF visited schools and conducted focus group discussions with teachers, parents, school board members and pupils, especially girls, who had dropped out of school in the preceding 18 months. When asked why they had dropped out, most girls said the main reason was school fees. As a part of the CFS initiative, UNICEF organised teacher training, provided school supplies, and also actively encouraged girls to return to school. By the end of 2005, UNICEF had been able to attract 1,200 girls from 33 primary schools in six provinces back to school, some of whom are doing well academically. Were it not for UNICEF’s CFS programme, all of these girls would still be at home, missing out on (formal) education for the rest of their lives.

Other activities introduced at the primary level by UNICEF include: the beautification of schools, providing girls with toiletries when needed, establishing school clubs, and creating awareness, through the mass media and advocacy with policymakers, on the importance of sending girls to school. Many of these activities are ongoing.

The UN is currently undergoing a reform, which will lead to all UN agencies being under one management system. In UNICEF PNG’s next Country Programme Cycle (for the years 2008 to 2012), ‘Gender’ will be one of the Programme Areas where much emphasis will be placed on supporting projects and activities to promote girls’ education at all levels of education in PNG – from elementary to tertiary institutions, including universities. The Government of Papua New Guinea will also be

provided with support, so that more women are promoted to management positions, such that equal participation is observed in nation building.

UNICEF’s major partner on the issue of promoting gender equality in education is the National Department of Education. Work done in this area is based on the National Education Plan 2005–2014 and the Gender Equity in Education Policy, which was launched to promote activities related to gender in the education system in PNG. The Catholic Church and the Anglican Church are two other significant partners; they conduct programmes on promoting gender equality through their pastoral work. Their activities include training youth on the issues affecting girls’ education. UNICEF also regularly partners with other NGOs and CSOs when implementing programmes related to gender equality in education.

Instances when UNICEF has collaborated with the government or ministries of PNG on the issue of gender equality in education include the: implementation of activities under the Gender Equity in Education Policy; contribution to the development of the National Education Plan 2005–2014; support provided in establishing the Universal Primary Education Taskforce; and the work done with provincial governments when implementing programmes, including training and capacity building. Additionally, the Chairperson of the National Girls’ Education Committee is the Deputy Secretary for Education at UNICEF.

World Vision – Pacific Development Group

The Pacific Development Group of World Vision has branches in PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. World Vision considers the well being of children to be a key indicator of sustainable community development. Its programmes relating to gender and family intentionally reveal the social situation and potential of women and girls, as well as men and boys, and strengthen families and communities to empower girls and women, plus men and boys, for participation, equal access and equal opportunity.

World Vision’s current projects in PNG do not specifically deal with gender equality in education; however, its Gender-Based Violence Project (*Meri Igat Namba*, which is the project’s name in the Tok Pisin language, meaning ‘Making Women a Priority’) is looking to empower women through educational workshops on human rights,

life skills, counselling skills, para-legal training, and gender issues, as well as the issue of HIV and AIDS. By empowering women through practical channels, such as getting them to start up their own businesses, the hope is that they will be able to provide for their family needs in this way, rather than turning to other avenues, such as sex work, which may lead to HIV and AIDS.

ADRA Central – Adult Education (ADRA)

ADRA operates in over 44 countries of the world. In PNG, it functions in Lae, Port Moresby, Goroka and Bougainville. ADRA’s work focuses mainly on adult education and literacy. Through its CSO Capacity Building Programmes and Teacher Training Programmes, ADRA mainstreams and addresses issues such as HIV and AIDS, abuse and violence, basic human rights, life skills, small enterprise development, and gender equity. ADRA also advocates human rights, gender equality in education and girls’ education, since it works with women and girls through its education programmes.

ADRA is an equal opportunities employer, with a staff made up of 50% men and 50% women. And although it currently employs more female teachers than male, it aims to encourage more men to be trained as adult education or literacy teachers in the future. At present, the number of female students benefiting from ADRA’s courses is greater than the number of males, but this is because, in the areas of PNG in which ADRA is conducting adult literacy initiatives, fewer females have been given the opportunity to pursue a basic formal education, and these are the people who are now interested in obtaining an education.

In order to better educate the people of PNG on the importance of education for all, ADRA’s future plans include further awareness campaigns, and continued advocacy and promotion of this issue. ADRA will appear on television programmes, to talk about the importance of educating men and women alike – as if everyone is to access information on the problems and issues being faced by society in PNG today, and if the public is to learn how to handle these critical issues effectively, both women and men have to access education and be able to read and write. In ADRA’s words: *“Education frees people, makes people know what is right from wrong, prospers nations, makes people know their rights as human beings and through education, people know how to manage their lives, their resources, their families and their country, and they can make informed choices and decisions to live healthy*

and better lives. The people need to move away from their cultural beliefs and see the good side of education and its benefits”.

To promote gender equality in education, ADRA has formed partnerships with the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Women’s Ministries Department, and ‘Anglicare’ of the Anglican Church. Together with these partners, ADRA works towards reducing illiteracy, gender inequality, HIV and AIDS, and abuse and violence. It also educates people on the Principles of Human Rights. Additionally, through these partnerships, ADRA assists people to get involved in Small Enterprise Development programmes, which help to alleviate poverty in communities. ADRA empowers women and trains them to take on leadership and management roles in their organisations by providing them with leadership skills in training, and it helps women to reduce their workloads and educates men to play an equal role in the home. ADRA also provides both sexes with health and nutrition education. Finally, ADRA partners with four other religious and community-based organisations to conduct education, advocacy, promotion and awareness campaigns on all of the above issues.

In terms of collaborations with the government, ADRA involves the Department of Community Development, the Community Life Learning Division, and the National Department of Education’s National Literacy Awareness Secretariat in discussions on how to promote its programmes and further help the CSOs that it partners with to sustain joint programmes in the long run. ADRA participates in these departments’ workshops and meetings, and in turn invites them to attend its own forums, trainings, workshops, graduations and celebrations. These departments are also invited to make speeches on the importance of the activities being carried out by ADRA, such as those related to the promotion of gender equality in education. Moreover, ADRA actively works towards linking other CSOs with the government and with donors, *“so that in future, the CSOs will work directly with the government departments and the donors”.*

Gender Equality in Education in Papua New Guinea

According to UNICEF, gender equality is an issue of great concern for PNG, both in the context of education and in society as a whole, as there are gender imbalances in primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutions, workplaces, and at the political level, with only one out of 109 parliamentarians in 2007 being female. UNICEF feels that attaining gender equality in primary and secondary education “is a long shot”, but at the secondary level at least, “we are progressing in this area”. The main target set by the government on this issue is in the National Education Plan, which states that the Education Department aims to achieve gender equality in education by 2015.

As PEAN notes, the National Education Plan provides for the equal participation of girls at all levels of education, “and although the gap is being bridged, it remains a challenge, because not enough resources are allocated for the implementation of this policy”. According to PEAN, since the National Research Institute and the Education Department have conducted some research in planning for Universal Basic Education, by the end of 2007 “there should be some clear direction on this, which would impact on gender equality”. Where primary education is concerned, PEAN feels that “unless Universal Basic Education is in place, we may not achieve gender equality by 2015, although it is the prime objective mentioned in the National Education Plan 2005–2014”. In terms of secondary education, PEAN is of the opinion that achieving gender equality by 2015 is unlikely.

World Vision, like UNICEF and PEAN, acknowledges that a lot still needs to be done to promote gender equality, both in education and in society as a whole in PNG. As it notes, “quite a few of the political parties in the recent national elections stated that their party policies were for Free Education”, though no mention was made of gender equality, when the issue really is free education for “all children”. In World Vision’s view, the government has not “taken seriously the fact that there are more boys in school than girls and they have the power to change it”. World Vision hopes that at least by 2010 the government will have done something concrete to address this issue.

ADRA, too, is of the opinion that it will take at least another 15 years at the primary level and another 20 years at the secondary level to attain gender equality in education in PNG. It goes on to state that “no targets have been set in the National Education Plan...and there is no target specified in the Gender Equity in Education Policy. The present enrolment data and the projected data are [also] not gender disaggregated, therefore, it is hard to speculate” about any governmental targets that may exist with respect to this issue.

At this juncture, neither World Vision nor UNICEF nor ADRA believe that PNG is on track to meet MDG 3/Target 4 by the 2015 deadline.

Key Issues and Main Impediments to Achieving Gender Equality in Education

PEAN feels the key issues that contribute to achieving gender equality in education in PNG are: educating parents to better understand the importance of girls receiving quality education, so that these parents can overcome cultural issues that in certain provinces are a major hindrance; eliminating school fees; increasing access; and also addressing issues such as the presence of qualified teachers. Nationally, PEAN notes that in some provinces, there are still more boys in primary school than girls, while at the secondary level, males tend to get preference over females due to school fees, as most parents with large families cannot afford to send all their children to school.

UNICEF considers the main issues to attaining gender equality in education in PNG to be those of: water and sanitation; harassment both in and out of school; security for girls in school; early pregnancy; bullying; distances to schools, as most children walk there and back; the lack of teaching materials; and teacher absenteeism. Following a short research project, however, UNICEF realised that the major concern in this area was the existence of school fees.

According to World Vision, the key issue that must be addressed if gender equality in education is to become a reality in PNG is the local culture, since “the cultures in our country shape the way people make decisions concerning their children”. Moreover, World Vision believes it is important to better educate all the people of PNG on issues of gender awareness and human rights, and teach men in particular to appreciate and value the role that women play in society.

In ADRA’s opinion, the main issues surrounding gender equality at the primary level are “poverty and the fact that many people cannot afford school fees and the fact that parents consider boys [above] girls”. As ADRA points out, the retention rate among girl students at school in PNG is low, since “girls’ physical changes happen faster than... their male counterparts, resulting in them getting married earlier and other cultural and social factors contribute to girls leaving school earlier than boys”. At the secondary level, in addition to the aforementioned problems, ADRA believes that “during the primary school stage, girls are more interested in the opposite sex and spend more time... thinking about boyfriends, marriage, etc. and [so] experience [a] drop in their performance academically and may not enter secondary school”. ADRA goes on to state that most secondary schools in PNG enrol more boys than girls, and cites a principal of a national high school, who reported that “75% of enrolments in secondary schools are boys”. Girls, therefore, would account for just 25% of the total enrolments. At the primary level, ADRA thinks boys would currently make up 70% of the student population, with girls accounting for the remaining 30%.

In PEAN’s view, the main impediments to achieving gender equality in education in PNG are: socio-cultural norms, school fees, facilities for girls (like toilets) and “also to some extent, probably the impact of colonisation”. In UNICEF’s opinion: “People at the community level as well as the national level don’t see the importance of girls’ education. There are no clear-cut policies to promote gender equality. If there are any, lack of implementation is an issue”. World Vision also singles out cultural values and customs as a main obstacle to attaining gender equality in education: “change parents’ thinking on the importance of giving equal opportunities to children of both genders and the situation will improve”. Furthermore, World Vision believes that government support in making this a priority for the nation is important, as “there is not much support of this issue, very little funding is allocated to address it”. ADRA agrees that school fees and cultural issues are among the key barriers to achieving gender equality at the primary level. It considers the other obstacles to be poverty, and a lack of awareness, promotion and education on issues of gender equity amongst the male and rural populations of the country. At the secondary level, whilst poverty and school fees continue to impede gender equality, as ADRA also notes, “attrition at the primary school level is high and so many do not make it to secondary school”.

PEAN, UNICEF, World Vision and ADRA are all in agreement that when it comes to gender equality in education, certain cultural issues come into play that are unique and specific to PNG. In ADRA’s words, “cultural practices...prevent a girl child from going to school because the little that the family has would be for the boy child. The girl gets the last priority, as the family still will benefit from the girl if she will marry an educated working class man and she [will] still bring some income to the family in terms of bride-price”. And as UNICEF points out, “most of the customs in Papua New Guinea are patrilineal, where people perceive that males are dominant in decision-making at home and in the workplace. Such mentality should be seen as a thing of the past and people have to understand that for a family, community, province and a country to progress, we need support from both the male and the female, to contribute in nation building”.

The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Gender Equality in Education

In PEAN’s opinion, civil society in PNG is not very active when it comes to the issue of gender equality in education, since “resources for CSOs can be limited, so we work according to what we have”. According to PEAN, there is “definitely not” enough funding or mobilisation of resources in PNG to adequately address the issue at hand. PEAN feels that most CSOs in PNG work in isolation, with hardly any collaboration on issues. Additionally, it does not think the government either recognises or accepts the work done by civil society in relation to this issue. Currently, PEAN’s source of funding is ASPBAE, through the Real World Strategies by the Dutch Government.

Even though there are a large number of CSOs joining in the fight to combat HIV and AIDS related issues in PNG at the moment, World Vision does not think “there are too many CSOs working to achieve gender equality in our country”. Of those that do, World Vision is of the opinion that not many address this issue very effectively. Funding allocation, according to World Vision, “is definitely a problem – if there was more money then there would be a means to address the issue more effectively”. At present, World Vision receives funding from both national and private donors.

Unlike PEAN, UNICEF believes that the “*National Government appreciates all the work done by the CSOs, NGOs and churches, because these groups of people can reach the rural and remote locations where government services cannot reach*”, and it goes on to say that CSOs base their activities on key government services like health and education. UNICEF does concede, however, that whilst a lot of work is done by civil society to promote gender equality in education, “*people at policy level don’t take it seriously in supporting or implementing the work*”. UNICEF acknowledges that most CSOs in PNG lack the capacity to implement programmes themselves, and it notes that the logistics to move around to implement and monitor programmes is also a concern. Funding and resource mobilisation, therefore, are pivotal issues, since they can be major obstacles to development. As UNICEF points out, “*even if funds are made available, how the funds are spent and accounted for is another issue in schools. Therefore, most of the funding is controlled at the national level and disbursed to schools directly in the form of subsidies and grants*”.⁵⁴ To overcome the issues of funding and resource mobilisation, at least to some extent, most of the CSOs in PNG create partnerships with appropriate government agencies to deliver services through networking, which also means that these services reach the remote parts of the country that government services are unable to reach alone. In addition to NGOs and CSOs that provide basic government services like education and health, UNICEF notes that in PNG, the Church provides 60% of the educational services, mostly at the primary and secondary levels.

According to ADRA, when it comes to the issue of gender equality in education, civil society in PNG is primarily involved in raising awareness, which is achieved through various initiatives and campaigns, and also via media advertising on television, on the radio and in the national newspapers⁵⁵ during celebrations and educational events. On the whole, ADRA believes that individual CSOs in PNG work alone on their various projects, without any coordination between one another or the government – although the scope for such collaborations does exist. As ADRA points out, CSOs “*should be working through their denominational institutions or schools, and [in] their Boards of Governors gender could be emphasised*”. ADRA goes on to say, “*every CSO is doing [its] own thing. Gender Equity comes in as a mainstreaming activity as part of Abuse and Violence or HIV [and] AIDS, or incorporated as*

gender sensitisation in school curriculum development and implementation”. ADRA does not feel there is adequate funding or mobilisation of resources in PNG to properly address the matter of gender equality in education, and although it thinks the government recognises and accepts the work done by CSOs on this issue, it questions its level of commitment, since there is no gender-aggregated data in the National Education Plan, despite the Department of Community Development having a gender desk and each of the provincial and district offices having gender officers. ADRA acknowledges that the government does support CSO activity regarding gender by attending workshops and forums, and by raising awareness and disseminating information amongst people living primarily in towns. However, it also makes the observation that “*not much seems to be happening in the village and local government level communities. This fact has been evident in the last National Elections where only one woman has been elected to parliament*”.

Success Stories, Perceived Failures and the Way Forward

In World Vision’s opinion, not a lot of progress has been made on the issue of gender equality in education in PNG. Though some private organisations are known to award scholarships, specifically to women, these are mostly at the tertiary level. If progress is to be made, World Vision feels that the government needs to be pressured into taking this matter on as a priority and doing “*something practical to deal with it*”.

Like World Vision, ADRA concedes that not a lot of progress has been made with respect to gender equality in education in PNG. Whilst gender parity has almost been achieved at the primary level, this is only in urban schools; there are still three times as many boys in rural schools as girls. At the secondary level the situation is much worse, with the ratio of boys to girls in urban areas being 3:1, and girls accounting for only 10% of the student population in rural areas. However, ADRA does believe that things are improving slowly, due to a gradual change in attitudes. For instance, urban parents are beginning to realise the importance of educating girls, and in rural areas, the benefits of educating girls are also becoming more apparent “*as girls get work and bring in [an] income and knowledge and prove to be useful to their communities*”. In ADRA’s experience, if a girl from a

rural community moves up to a higher level of education, or gets a well-paid or better job in an organisation, she inspires other girls in her community to follow in her footsteps, and makes parents from her community want the same opportunities for their daughters. As ADRA points out, “*interviews of successful women [show that] actual cases of women from their community playing equal roles with men have contributed in a small way*”. In terms of the way forward, ADRA thinks it would be beneficial for some CSOs to be funded to promote and educate government departments, NGOs, other community-based organisations and parents on the issue of gender equality separately, rather than mainstreaming it with other topics. For, as ADRA remarks, despite there being a gender desk and a policy in place at the Department of Education to address this issue, within this department itself, almost all of the higher and executive positions are held by men, and the policy on gender has yet to be implemented effectively, due to changes in personnel. And in the teaching service commission, it is very difficult for women to climb the job ladder “*as most of the decision-makers are men*”.

UNICEF, too, admits that it has “yet to see really good success stories” in PNG where gender equality in education is concerned, although it does acknowledge that progress has been made in this area recently, including the launch of the Gender Equity in Education Policy in 2003 and the increased attention that has been given to the issue of female teachers advancing to management positions. In terms of the ways forward, UNICEF believes the Gender Equity in Education Policy must be implemented and the results analysed, if progress is to be made. Policymakers must also formulate and implement policies on gender, with gender issues being discussed in workshops, at meetings, in speeches, and in Parliament. UNICEF suggests that perhaps a quota system based on gender needs to be introduced during school enrolment, to increase female participation. Achieving UPE would also help in addressing issues of gender equality. UNICEF is making progress in this area and hopes “*there will be some improvement in gender issues in Papua New Guinea in the struggling years ahead*”. For, as UNICEF points out, “*for gender to move on there must be some passion on the agenda*”.

54.

Schools in PNG receive funding from several sources. These include:

1. Government subsidies for schools;
2. Government grants for infrastructure development;
3. School fees that are paid by parents/guardians;
4. Contributions from donors;

5.

Contributions from churches;

6.

Contributions from NGOs and CSOs; and

7.

Contributions from Members of Parliament.

55.

There are four national broadsheets in Papua New Guinea: the Post Courier, the Sunday Chronicles, the National and the *Wantok* newspapers.

Conclusions

Millennium Development Goal 3:

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Target 4: Eliminate Gender Disparities in Primary and Secondary Education

Preferably by 2005, and at All Levels by 2015

Achieving gender equality in education requires equality of access and opportunity to education, as well as equality of treatment once in school for girls and boys alike. Gender parity in education refers to the equal enrolment of girls and boys in school. To sustain and build on the gains made in improving gender parity in education, the wider issues of equality of opportunity and equality of treatment have to be addressed. The aim of this report was to present a review of the main impediments faced by four Commonwealth countries, namely Cameroon, India, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, which currently appear to be unlikely to achieve MDG 3 by 2015.

Education is a fundamental human right, so all children, irrespective of gender, should be able to expect and receive an education of good quality. The right to education is very important because, without it, it would be very difficult for individuals to fully exercise their other human rights, including their social, political, economic and civil rights. Education has also been shown to provide socially marginalized persons with a means to lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully in their communities.

In many countries, attaining gender equality in education hinges on increasing female enrolment, promoting girls' education and, in a broader context, empowering women to play an equal role in society. If these aims are to be achieved, the key obstacles to attaining them need to be addressed first. Then, the work done to date to overcome these impediments needs to be considered, with a particular focus placed not only on the success stories of past initiatives, but also on the failures.

The thirteen consultations conducted for this work highlighted a number of factors that impede the attainment of gender equality in education in the nations under consideration. These issues can be broadly categorised into two groups as follows:

1. Systemic Issues:

- Access to education, encompassing the need for more schools, especially girls' schools, addressing the issue of distances to schools, as well as that of mobility/transport;

- Quality of education, including the need for gender-sensitive curricula and gender-sensitisation amongst pupils, parents and teachers;
- Cost of education, primarily focusing on the existence of school fees;
- Inadequate infrastructures, such as necessary toilet facilities;
- Lack of teachers in school, particularly female teachers; and
- The need for compulsory education.

2. Societal Issues:

- Parental perceptions, including parents' ignorance of the importance of gender equality in education;
- Security concerns, mainly for girls in school and for children travelling long distances to attend schools;
- Socio-cultural norms, such as girls' household responsibilities, issues of caste, early marriage for girls and the low status of women in society that ultimately lead to school dropouts, especially amongst girls;
- Poverty;
- Economic issues, particularly within individual families; and
- The misinterpretation of religion.

To achieve gender equality in education in Cameroon, ACESF-CA believes that both girls and boys need to be empowered first, while parents and governmental



decision-makers alike need to be convinced of the importance of this issue. Vishakha thinks the way forward for India includes improving transport facilities to and from schools, making school environments safer for all children, employing more female teachers, improving teacher training and establishing a gender-focused curriculum. AWAG and PRIA also feel that gender-sensitisation is an important issue that needs to be properly addressed by all members of Indian society, if gender equality in education is to be attained. Moreover, PRIA is of the opinion that the provision of funds for this issue needs to be more regular, with stringent supervision and monitoring at the local level.

In Pakistan, the greatest challenge to gender equality and gender equity in education, in ITA's view, is the lack of opportunity available for pupils to make the transition from primary to the middle and secondary levels of schooling. As ITA points out, this affects both boys and girls alike, but has a greater impact on girls. Sudhaar concurs with ITA that Pakistani children need access to higher levels of education – including vocational training – as they complete each stage of school. Sudhaar and SAP-PK are in agreement that education in Pakistan has to be free and compulsory, with Sudhaar suggesting the need for penalties to be imposed for not sending children to school. According to these CSOs, other steps that should be taken to achieve gender equality in education in Pakistan include improving the quality of education (through gender-sensitive syllabuses, gender-sensitive teacher training and the introduction of new teaching techniques), prohibiting child labour, and – most importantly – tackling the issue of poverty.

In Papua New Guinea, World Vision feels that the government needs to be pressured into taking this matter on as a priority and doing something practical to deal with it, whilst ADRA thinks it would be beneficial for government departments, civil society and parents to be educated on the subject of gender equality separately, rather than have it be mainstreamed with other topics, as it is now. UNICEF believes addressing the issue of gender equality would be easier if PNG were to attain Universal Primary Education, and it also strongly feels that the Gender Equity in Education Policy has to be implemented and the results analysed. Furthermore, UNICEF maintains the need for gender issues to be discussed in workshops, meetings, speeches and in Parliament.

As was apparent from the consultations carried out for this work, civil society in the four countries in question has been involved – both in conjunction with government and in partnership with other CSOs and NGOs – in the promotion of gender equality in education in their respective nations. Whilst some initiatives have been successful (such as the *Lok Jumbish* programme in India and the *Tawana* Project in Pakistan), others have been perceived as failures (like Pakistan's *Nai Roshni* initiative). And to this day, many impediments to achieving gender equality in education still exist, not least the issue of poverty and the continued influence exerted by socio-cultural norms. As a result, every single organisation involved in this research is in agreement that more work needs to be done in their respective countries if Millennium Development Goal 3/Target 4 is to be achieved by the 2015 deadline agreed upon by the members of the UN.

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