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Conflict Threatens Gender Equality

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Credit: Howard Davies/Oxfam

Girls at school in Cambodia. The effects of the war are still felt in Cambodia which is far from achieving gender equality in education.

The impact of conflict is highly gendered. Although men and women are both affected by the violence of conflict, the way in which they are affected, and their experiences during conflict will be very different. Aspects of conflict such as forced displacement, the collapse of health systems, and gender based violence - which is often used as a deliberate strategy of war - have particular implications for girls and women. While in some cases assuming new

roles that were previously unavailable to them may be empowering for women, often, armed conflict exacerbates and reinforces already existing gender inequalities.

Conflict has devastating effects on a country's education system. School infrastructure may be destroyed or damaged - according to the Human Development Report almost half Mozambique's schools

were closed or destroyed during the civil war (1976-92) - and girls' and boys' attendance and ability to learn is often severely disrupted. In many cases the way in which this occurs is highly gendered. While boys may be more likely to be recruited to fight in rebel forces, girls may need to miss school to carry out additional household responsibilities in the absence of their parents, or be withdrawn from school due to high levels of insecurity. Boy soldiers who try to reintegrate into their societies once a conflict is over have to deal with the traumas of their experiences. Girl soldiers often combine these same emotional disturbances with experiences of ostracism. There are reported cases of damaging exclusions from school and society when girl soldiers return pregnant or with young children.

Spiralling levels of gender violence, including sexual and domestic violence, trafficking of women and forced prostitution, are some of the gendered aspects of conflict which have clear implications for gender relations within the educational system. Girls are often the victims of such gender violence and exploitation, and the trauma and other health implications - including pregnancy - of being sexually abused, can have a direct impact on their ability to attend school and learn. In addition, educational institutions themselves may often become sites of gender violence against school girls during periods of conflict, militarization and repression. And the legacy of a climate in which violence against girls in school can flourish may continue long after the conflict is officially over. In post-apartheid South Africa, the continued high levels of gender violence in schools, with roots in the period of apartheid repression, is an issue of particular concern for gender activists.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1-3 Conflict Threatens Gender Equality
- 3 Letter from the Editors
- 4 Palestinian Teenagers Reflect on Their Rights
- 4 Introducing the KIC Project

- 5 The Conflict Effect: Challenges and Opportunities for Girls' Education
- 6-7 "For the good of the family" - Changing attitudes to girls' and women's education in wartime Chechnya
- 8 Recent Events
- 9 Book Review: "Poverty, Inequality and Corruption" - Stealing the Future - Corruption in the classroom
- 9 New Report on Gender and Education

- 10 Conference Comments
- 11 Weblinks and Letters
- 12 Beyond Access Project Update
- 12 Forthcoming Events

Liberia: Plummeting enrolments and escalating violence against girls

Bettina Yain, a grade eight student from, Liberia, hopes one day to become a nurse. She is studying at Gray D. Allison School Gray D. Allison School is in Barclay Training Center in Monrovia, where the marks of Liberia's fifteen year civil war are clearly visible. Ringed in barbed wire and housed in an old church, the school is in a dilapidated state from years of neglect compounded by the fires and lootings of the war. Bettina, who at 18 is too old to be in grade eight, has had to show huge determination to resume her education after the years of conflict. After attending school in the mornings she must work in the market with her sister selling rice and oil in order to be able to pay her school fees and the costs of textbooks and transportation.

Before the civil conflict started girls in Liberia already had fewer educational opportunities than boys, kept out of school by discrimination, poverty and household obligations. However gender inequality in education was exacerbated by the civil conflict and instability. According to the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, between 2000 and 2002, girls' gross enrolment ratio declined from 72.5% to 35.5%. During the conflict, which ended in 2003, thousands of girls were the targets of specific physical and emotional gender based violence and abuse and were subject to rape, forced prostitution, torture, forced termination of pregnancies and mutilation.

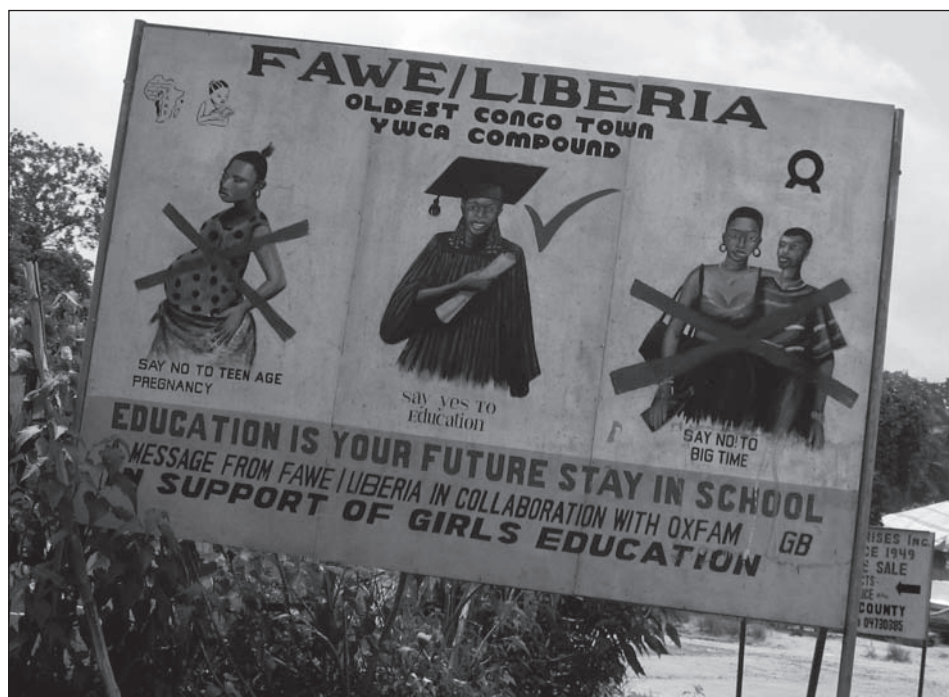
To try to address the continuing gender disparities and high levels of gender violence against girls, in 2005 the Liberian Ministry of Education worked with UNICEF to develop a national policy on girls' education.

Box compiled thanks to Abraham Conneh, Education Programme Officer, Oxfam GB Liberia and Heather Johnston, West Africa Regional Education Programme Manager, Oxfam GB

Measuring and monitoring gender equality in education during conflict

The Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI) demonstrates clearly the huge challenges that many countries in conflict or recovering from years of conflict

or military repression face in achieving gender equality in education. The GEEI was developed by the Beyond Access Project, with support from the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF ROSA. It measures girls' participation in and benefits from schooling using a weighted combination of indicators - girls' net attendance rate at primary school, girls'



A FAWE sign to encourage girls to get an education in post-conflict Liberia.

survival rate over five years in primary schooling, girls' secondary Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) and the country's Gender Development Index (GDI).

In Asia, Cambodia, where the war that ended in 1979 left virtually the whole infrastructure of the country destroyed, has a very low GEEI score. So too does Lao PDR, where a low intensity conflict, marked by sharp ethnic tensions continued for years after the official end of the war in the 1970s. Similarly, in Latin America, Guatemala, a country affected by decades of brutal military repression, stands out for having a much lower GEEI score than the relatively high scores of other countries in the Latin American region. In Commonwealth Africa, countries with long and devastating histories of war such as Mozambique score very poorly.

Examining changes in the GEEI scores of countries shows very clearly the way in which the conditions necessary to ensure that girls and boys are able to receive a

“Examining changes in the GEEI scores of countries shows very clearly the way in which the conditions necessary to ensure that girls and boys are able to receive a gender equitable education can be eroded during years of conflict or repression.”

gender equitable education can be eroded during years of conflict or repression. Nigeria, who started from a low base point in 1990, with a GEEI of only 26% saw its situation regarding gender equality in education deteriorate even further over the

next decade. By 2000 its GEEI score was 20 – the lowest in Commonwealth Africa together with Mozambique. In contrast, in 1990 Zimbabwe had a relatively high GEEI score of 73 – the second highest of all Commonwealth African countries. In the post-independence 1980s the introduction of a Free Primary Education policy in Zimbabwe had led to promising increases in enrolments of girls and boys in school. However by 2000 its GEEI score had dropped to 42, ranking it below previously lower scoring countries such as Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda.

During the 1990s the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes, and the reintroduction of fees and charges for education in Zimbabwe, meant that fewer households could afford to send their children to school, with girls being affected more than boys. At the same time, the high levels of political repression that characterized the decade did not provide a supportive environment for making progress on gender equality in society more broadly,

and ensuring that girls and women could thrive at and outside school. Despite Zimbabwe signing up to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1991, national law does not adequately promote gender equality

or protect women's rights, and discrimination against women continues to be permitted under customary law. Since 2000, an additional threat to the educational system has emerged as teachers have become a specific target of

political violence in the country. There have been reports of teachers being physically assaulted and of female teachers being raped.

The cases of both Zimbabwe and Nigeria clearly demonstrate the vital importance of close monitoring of the situation regarding gender equality in education in countries affected by conflict or political and military repression.

Reconstruction for gender equality

The GEEL also reveals the vital role that reconstruction can play in ensuring that gender inequalities exacerbated by conflict do not continue to affect girls' - and boys' - education once conflict is over. Namibia and South Africa, two countries that, despite histories of war and undemocratic government, have paid attention to reconstruction and governance, both have relatively high GEEL scores.

South Africa: Challenging gender-based violence in schools

In South Africa when the negotiations for peace and democratic government took place, the demand for addressing gender equity as a key part of building a new society was widely accepted. The constitution of 1996 provided a clear framework for gender equity, and a range of measures were introduced in order to give concern with gender a high profile.

In 1996 a Gender Equity Task Team was appointed to advise on how to address the continued high levels of gender violence and related issues affecting girls' experiences in school. Since then, there have been some positive initiatives – for example the inclusion of importance of gender in the revision of school curriculum, and the publication of a guide for teachers on issues of gender in school. However, according to trade union officials and women working in NGOs, the failure to mobilise sufficient resources and to link gender equity units in provincial and national education departments with women's movements and locally based gender activists have limited the extent to which action for gender equity could be sustained and scaled up. As a result, gender-based violence continues to be a fact of life for girls in many South African schools.

The case of South Africa illustrates clearly the important opportunities that the peace process

and climate of national reconstruction offer for establishing more gender sensitive political and legal structures and for making progress on gender equality in education. However it also demonstrates the difficulties of ensuring that gender equality initiatives developed during this reconstruction period have a sustained and widespread impact.

Education plays a critical role in rebuilding societies torn apart by conflict and, as many of the countries and regions currently suffering conflict take steps towards moving into the process of reconstruction, rebuilding education systems and ensuring that they are made to



The remains of a bombed school in Somalia. Because of the conflict, education was suspended for several years.

Credit: Janet Raynor

work effectively for girls as well as boys must be an urgent priority. For this to happen it is crucial that the reconstruction process more broadly has gender as a central concern, and that education interventions are linked to wider efforts to ensure that the process of renegotiation of social relations that follows the upheaval of conflict is used to promote the construction of more equitable gender relations in society as a whole. It is essential that strong links are developed with local gender activists and the many networks and initiatives that are sustained by women during conflict, and that sufficient resources are made available to ensure that gender equity initiatives are fully implemented in the short and the long term.

The peace and reconstruction process must be used to ensure that girls and women are safe in and out of school, and to secure the foundations of a climate in which girls and women can thrive during their education and once they have completed it.

For more information about the Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEL) go to www.ioe.ac.uk/efps/beyondaccess

Letter from the editors

Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sudan, Uganda, Chechnya and Colombia represent just a few of the places in which communities are currently being torn apart by violent conflict. In June, the UN Small Arms Review Conference met to try and agree a way forward to ensure tougher controls on the international trade in small arms and light weapons which fuels many of these conflicts. However, as it collapsed without agreement, conflict and instability continue to be a daily reality for millions of women, men, girls and boys.

Such conflict has huge implications for education systems and for gender equality and this issue of Equals focuses on the challenges - and opportunities- for making progress on gender equality in education in conflict and post-conflict situations. On pages 1-3 we use the Gender Equality in Education Index to review the situation regarding gender equality in education in countries with histories of conflict. On page 4 Nancy Mahmood and Toine van Teeffelen from the Teacher Creativity Center and the Arab Educational Institute explore some of the different ways in which teenage boys and girls in Palestine can be engaged in learning and reflection in a context of violent confrontation. On page 5 Megan McKenna and Jenny Perlman Robinson from the Women's Commission for Refugee Girls and Women look at some of the interventions that are being used to help women and girls obtain an education in post conflict Liberia and in camps for Internally Displaced Persons in Sudan. And on pages 6-7 Kirsty Stuart explores the way in which the conflict in Chechnya has affected attitudes towards education for girls and women.

This issue of Equals is the first of three issues that will be funded by Oxfam NOVIB, the result of an exciting new partnership between Beyond Access and the KIC (Knowledge Infrastructure with and between Counterparts) project. More information about the KIC project, which seeks to facilitate learning and information exchange between counterparts, is given on page 4. As a result of the partnership with KIC we will be increasing our distribution of Equals and are looking at ways to make Equals more interactive. Issues 18 and 19 will have a slightly different format as they will be co-edited with partners in the field.

As always we welcome your suggestions and your feedback on the articles in this issue. Do write to us at the address given on the back page.

Amy Sheila Elaine
Amy *Sheila* *Elaine*

Palestinian Teenagers Reflect on their Rights

Nancy Mahmood and Toine van Teeffelen

“You have to be a fighter to be able to get what you want or be who you want to be, especially women. This is one of the reasons why I instill courage and confidence in my teenage students to have a goal and go for it,” said a dedicated female Palestinian teacher in 2000.

The second uprising from 2000 on and Israel’s extremely violent suppression of it had a grave effect on the children of Palestine. A study by Defense of Children International (DCI) showed that almost 80% of the children in the West Bank and Gaza suffered from psychological, health and educational problems. What could educators do?

Engaging whole communities for action learning

Teenage boys and girls were differently affected. Many young males living in confrontation areas such as Jenin refugee camp in the north of the West Bank waited with home-made weapons in the streets for clashes with the army. How could their energy be channelled for a constructive purpose?

Teacher Creativity Center, together with UNICEF, took a

comprehensive approach. It was impossible just to go to and try to convince the 15-16 year-olds. The atmosphere

was simply too militant. The whole of the surrounding society had to be involved. The parents, and especially the mothers, were very open to the project. Eighty workshops were held for parents’ councils, mothers, youth centers, women’s groups,

students from universities and schools and local councils. Some sixty local teachers discussed risks of children’s participation in militant acts and its psychological and physical consequences. Crucially, dozens of organizations including all political parties issued a statement calling for the non-involvement of children in militant acts.

Then the way was open to engage the children in action learning. With the help of trained educators, and with the full support of the community, the young people discussed and tried to come up with solutions to local problems that affected children’s rights such as the lack of places to play or the lack of safety on the roads.

Finding ways of coping through personal writing

Unlike the boys, Palestinian girls and young women have usually not been involved in clashes with the Israeli army. They have often felt very powerless, witnessing events on the sideline and groping for a role. The Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem (AEI-Open Windows) encouraged personal writing by school students from across the Bethlehem and Hebron districts, such as in a diary, a life story, a dream, an interview

or an English-language letter to an American presidential candidate.

The participation of girls in these activities was

generally stronger. Why? A possible reason is that in daily life women and girls are better story-tellers and story-writers. It is easier to ask girls to keep a diary. When you live in a conflict situation such as experiencing prolonged 24-hour curfews,

as has regularly happened in the major Palestinian cities in the West Bank, writing your personal story is a way of coping, of finding orientation, rest and reflection in a bewildering and dangerous situation. In personal writing, you can express and differentiate emotions - bringing out tension through black humor for instance. By sharing and discussing your stories with other children, you

show compassion and concern. At a diary project at St Joseph School in Bethlehem, in which girls’ diaries like Anne Frank’s were used as source of inspiration, children of the 11th grade wrote in detail about their feelings after hearing that the younger sister of a classmate was shot dead.

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Introducing the KIC Project

These projects are among those which Teacher Creativity Center, AEI-Open Windows and another Palestinian Oxfam partner - Early Childhood Resource Center - will document in the exciting KIC (Knowledge Infrastructure with and between Counterparts) Project. KIC is an Oxfam International project which is based on the existing needs of counterparts to improve learning from one another. It seeks to promote the systematic exchange of knowledge and learning from relevant experiences and networking around 5 key themes, including education.

KIC offers the infrastructure to do this: a virtual KIC Portal, where counterparts and others can meet each other, locate other partners working in the same field, browse through thematic web sites, document their practices and research, find knowledge sources and participate in “virtual discussion rooms”, known as “Communities of Practice”.

The next 3 issues of Equals will be supported by the KIC project, which is collaborating with Beyond Access to reinforce learning on gender and education. It is hoped that this collaboration will encourage counterparts and Equals readers to use Equals to actively share their own knowledge around gender equality in education, by publishing practices, taking up guest editorship roles, reacting to Equals articles and participating in mediated on-line discussions in Communities of Practice or forums which will be hosted on the KIC website.

For more information on the KIC project go to www.oxfam.kic.org



Palestinian children engaging in action learning.

The Conflict Effect: Challenges and Opportunities for Girls' Education

Megan McKenna and Jenny Perlman Robinson

"I studied for one year in Sudan. I am taking literacy classes now. I feel very good when I study to read. Someone who has not studied is like darkness compared to light. I know how to write my name, how to hold a pen, and I am hopeful for the future. I want my daughter to finish her education. She is 10 years old." -- Aza, 35, Mille Refugee Camp, Chad

Equitable access to quality education for girls in conflict and situations of displacement remains a serious challenge. However, ironically, conflict can provide a "window of opportunity" to increase girls' attendance and retention in school. In situations of displacement, girls may have the chance to go to school for the first time, which they would not have been able to do if they were still in their home villages.

Liberia and Darfur, Sudan, highlight some of the challenges – and opportunities – girls face in accessing education in conflict and post-conflict situations. Both countries also provide examples of effective strategies to ensure that all children – girls and boys – are able to realize one of their most basic human rights: the right to education.

Liberia, December 2005

One way to encourage girls to continue their education is to have female teachers as role models. The presence of female teachers can significantly reduce sexual abuse and trading in sex for fees or higher grades. Post-conflict Liberia presents a major opportunity to bring more women into teaching, a profession traditionally dominated by men. However, with only 27 percent of girls who enrol in grade one completing grade 5, creating gender balance in Liberia's education system will be a daunting challenge. The establishment of codes of conduct for educators – strictly monitored and enforced – is also important to address the all-too-common exploitation of girls and young women students by male educators. Save the Children UK, in conjunction with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, has been working on developing a national code of conduct for education personnel.

In order to compensate for girls' time in school and allow them to contribute to the family, girls' clubs in Liberia have been formed during school hours to provide girls with a chance to earn some income while going to school. These activities have raised enrolment 20-30 percent and increased girls' self respect and independence. Membership is contingent on school enrolment and helps encourage girls to attend school. Seed money for clubs and enterprises may be provided by

the aid community and through local NGOs like the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE).

Darfur, June 2006

In Sudan, the number of girls in school is among the lowest in the world. In response to the gaps in girls' enrolment, the Sudanese Federal Ministry of Education established a Girls' Education Department in 2000, although officials admit that because of many challenges, the department has not yet reached its goal of gender equity. The Department stressed the problems of early marriage, parents' attitudes against education for girls, schools too far away for girls to travel safely and a huge lack of funding. In Darfur, girls' enrolment was among the lowest of the states of Sudan, but has risen somewhat because many of the girls have access to education for the first time in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

In IDP camps in Darfur, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) can serve as an important liaison between teachers and the community – supporting girls' education and providing a mechanism for reporting problems and abuses. PTA members have played a positive role in stressing the importance of girls' education with the community and encouraging more parents to enrol their girls. The PTAs, which comprise mostly men, would be even more effective, however, if more women were encouraged to be members.

Youth centres have also provided young women with opportunities to start or continue their education and learn income generating skills. A 17-year-old girl interviewed in Secali IDP camp in South Darfur had never been to school before because her village did not have one. In the camp she was attending a youth centre supported by the International Rescue

Committee and was learning Arabic, numeracy and basic English for the first time. She said "it makes me feel very good. I want to learn because it's important to my future to become a doctor or a teacher."

Raising awareness among mothers of the importance of education is another strategy that is yielding positive results. Adult literacy classes are very popular in the IDP camps in which they are offered, and often are the first chance many women have had to learn. Through numerous interviews, the Women's Commission learned that the classes not only helped the women learn to read and write, but also convinced them of the importance of education for their daughters.

Girls' education is the best investment a country can make to promote peace and reconciliation and improve the health and well-being of the community. Progress in girls' access to quality education in conflict-affected countries will require an ongoing assessment of the needs of vulnerable groups such as adolescent girls, teenage mothers, girls associated with combatants, and continued work with teachers, parents and the community. Education interventions should focus not only on providing consistent formal and non-formal educational services, but also on addressing obstacles, such as discrimination, school fees and language barriers. In countries such as Liberia and Sudan, interventions for girls' education must start at the outset of an emergency and continue through the transition to peace and rehabilitation.

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For more information about the Women's Commission, and to access their recent report on education in the conflict to post-conflict transition in Liberia go to www.womenscommission.org/



A women with her daughter in an IDP camp in Darfur.

“For the good of the family” – changing attitudes to girls’ and women’s education in wartime Chechnya

Kirsty Stuart

“Education is very important for women at this time because now, in wartime, the entire burden of worrying about the family rests on women’s shoulders.”

This statement by a Chechen woman sums up one of the main reasons for changing attitudes to girls’ education in Chechnya. There has been violent conflict in Chechnya, a part of the Russian Federation and former Soviet Republic, since 1994, although this has been less intense in recent years. As in many other countries, conflict in Chechnya has changed traditional gender roles.

Traditional roles and attitudes to education

Despite the Soviet influence, before the conflict most Chechen women did not go out to work – their role was in the home as wife and mother. Traditionally motherhood is extremely important for Chechen women and a mother is sacred in Chechen culture: even grown-up sons never have the right to disobey her.

Prior to the Soviet period, there were very few schools in Chechnya and in 1917 only 2.7% of Chechens were literate, as compared to around 40% of the overall population of the Russian Empire. Soviet education policy transformed this situation and by 1970 literacy levels in Chechnya had reached 99%. In the late 1980s female

Chechen university graduates far outnumbered their male counterparts, although overall numbers of degree holders were the lowest of all the Soviet peoples. A 1990 survey of attitudes to education found that 70% of young Chechen men and 65% of young Chechen women valued education. I asked two former colleagues, both educated Chechen women, about attitudes to education in Chechnya in the light of the conflict. In particular I asked about attitudes to girls’ education and women and girls’ motivations for gaining an education. Much of the information that follows is based on their responses.

Both women said that education was important for them personally to enable them to fully understand what is happening in the world and to have a well-paid job in order to provide for family members, including for the education of their children. They also considered education to be vital for Chechen society today, in order to end the conflict and rebuild the republic. Their views appear to be shared by many young people – one of the women said that on a recent visit to Grozny (the Chechen capital)

she had been “very surprised at just how strongly young people wanted to gain an education”.

Education as a means to well-paid employment

The conflict has meant that Chechen women now need to work outside the home and they see education as a way of improving their chances of finding a well-paid job. Whereas previously most Chechen women were not engaged in productive employment, today they are frequently the main or sole breadwinners in a family. The men may have died, have become unfit for work as a result of the conflict, or be unable to find work. In other cases it may not be safe for men to travel to work, as disappearances and arbitrary killings remain common, primarily affecting men. Sometimes the men sit at home, idle and disillusioned, while the women go out to work. Even in the most traditional mountainous areas society has become more tolerant of woman’s social participation in recognition of the fact that women literally kept villages alive by travelling to markets to trade during the most intense periods of fighting when it was too dangerous for men to travel.

Both women I interviewed said that the conflict had meant that women now had to take responsibility for their families, as men experience difficulty finding work or had been killed. One woman explained that thanks to her and her sister’s good level of education, they had been able to support their whole family while it was impossible for men to

“Even in the most traditional mountainous areas society has become more tolerant of woman’s social participation in recognition of the fact that women literally kept villages alive by travelling to markets to trade during the most intense periods of fighting when it was too dangerous for men to travel”

find work in Chechnya.

When asked whether girls’ education was valued by society, one woman thought that unfortunately it was not, but that Diaspora communities were “gradually coming to understand that girls’ education is essential”. In contrast, the second woman felt that only a few “backward” families still thought that



Chechen internally displaced children in Ali-Yurt, Ingushetia, hold up their school uniforms.



Chechen internally displaced girls and boys at school in Ingushetia.

basic education alone was sufficient for their daughters. These answers suggest that Chechen society is moving towards an acknowledgment of the importance of girls' education, whether this is a process that is just beginning, or one that is almost complete. The conflict has undoubtedly played a role in this change in attitudes.

Traditional values remain important

The desire for education, however, has not overshadowed more traditional values. This was made clear by one of the women:

“Education is very important for women, especially Chechen women. The current situation in Chechnya means that a woman must be independent and able to feed herself and her children. This does not mean that the institute of the family is becoming less important. Not by any means. Family (and not career) will always take priority for a Chechen woman.”

“One woman explained that unmarried men were generally uneducated and could not support a family therefore girls who were already earning a good wage were in greater demand. Thus, as education is linked to higher earning potential, it has become a way of girls increasing their marriage potential.”

way of girls increasing their marriage potential. While this contradicts the traditional scenario where men are generally unwilling to take wives who are more educated than them, the women's ultimate goal in seeking education appears to be family and not career related and therefore does not threaten underlying traditional gender roles.

“All our troubles stem from our ignorance”

Another reason for the recent valuation of education in Chechnya (which applies to young people of both sexes) is the belief that “all our troubles stem from our ignorance.”

Poorly educated young people are arguably easier to manipulate into taking up arms, they experience

greater difficulties in finding employment and therefore may join either side of the conflict for financial motivations or as a form of self-realisation.

Education for marriage

Motivations for gaining an education are not solely limited to getting a well-paid job in order to sustain one's family. Heavy male losses to the conflict have meant that there is a shortage of young men. Whereas previously a girl would perhaps be most concerned as to whether her husband would be honourable and a good match, today there is a realisation that there are just not enough men, resulting in apprehension about the possibility of ending up unmarried.

One woman explained that unmarried men were generally uneducated and could not support a family therefore girls who were already earning a good wage were in greater demand. Thus, as education is linked to higher earning potential, it has become a

Studying may also be a conscious or sub-conscious reaction to the popular Russian stereotype that Chechens are all savages and terrorists. It may also be a means of occupying time meaningfully where no work is available and for women it could be a means of giving themselves longer to find a suitable husband, or self-realisation for those who have been denied marriage and motherhood by the conflict.

What is striking about the main motivations for education (future employment and marriage) that the women interviewed mentioned is that education and a career are seen as being not for personal satisfaction or prestige; instead seeking education is primarily a response to the way in which the conflict has changed the circumstances

under which women fulfil their roles as wives and mothers - roles that the women seemed very keen to continue to fulfil.

Women's “wartime gains”?

The expression ‘women's wartime gains’ is sometimes used to refer to changes in gender roles during periods of violent conflict, including women's increased productive and decision-making roles. In relation to Chechen women, the question needs to be asked whether employment and further education are perceived to be straightforward gains by the women themselves, or whether they are merely ways of continuing to fulfil their traditional roles under circumstances that make marriage more competitive, place the burden of financial security on women and require a mentally and physically strong new generation to rebuild the nation in peace.

Undoubtedly, Chechen women's motivations for gaining an education and entering productive employment in this time of conflict are complex. It must be acknowledged that these motivations are not necessarily linked to challenges on traditionally male domains, but may in fact be a manifestation of the women's deep-rooted sense of responsibility and caring for their families and the wider nation-family. However, it is also equally possible that once peace and a return to a traditional lifestyle become reality, women may not wish to give up their ‘wartime gains’.

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A girl stands in the remains of Middle School No. 41, Grozny, Chechnya.

Recent Events

“Every Child Needs a Teacher” - Global Action Week 2006

This year's Global Action Week saw international attention turn towards the global education crisis and in particular the need to invest in teachers. New research from UNESCO, announced a much greater than previously anticipated teacher shortfall. 18 million more teachers are needed if every child is to receive a quality education.

From 24 – 30th April, civil society coalitions around the world, made up of child rights activists, teacher unions and NGOs showed they really care about ensuring every child gets a quality education, delivered by a quality teacher. Millions of children and campaigners held mock court hearings, taught lessons, marched streets, painted pictures, made posters, met officials, voted for teachers and added their voice to the campaign. 112 countries across the world took part

during the week. Many collected evidence about the need for more and better trained teachers and presented this evidence to officials who they invited back to school and at national “Big Hearings”. These big hearings were a chance for campaigners to put officials on trial for failed education promises and to ask for declarations that they must do better.

At one Big Hearing in Malawi a young girl called Lusubilo Nyondo, asked her Minister of Education:

“Minister – have you asked me what I need as a pupil? As you sit confidently in front of others do you think of what I need to also sit in that chair in future?”

In Tanzania, where most primary school teachers are female, campaigners gave voice to female teachers and highlighted

the links that exist between education and women’s empowerment and the need to support female teachers for their own empowerment. They enabled female teachers to speak on national radio and TV, in order to explain their work and the challenges they face, and make their own demands to the Minister of Education.

It is hoped that world leaders will respond to the millions of campaigners who joined to tell them that 'Every Child Needs A Teacher' and put teachers at the centre of national efforts to ensure that by 2015 all girls and boys can receive a good quality education.

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

“Young people: a resource for positive change” - The Quthing Road Show

Ntombizodwa Machinini, Lehlohonolo Mohola and Nthabeleng Thakalehana with Sharon Walker



Lehlohonolo, Nthabeleng and Ntomizodwa at the roadshow.

The Quthing Road Show is the second regional road show event to have taken place as part of a UNICEF initiative to address the high levels of HIV infection rates amongst young people in Lesotho. Below, Ntombizodwa Machinini, Lehlohonolo Mohola and Nthabeleng Thakalehana, three of the young people involved in the event report on the three days.

As an endeavour to reduce the relentless spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Quthing youth edutainment road show commenced with a fun-walk from an outskirt of Mount Moorosi called Tamblok to Maseribane High School in the heart of Mount Moorosi town. Various messages connected with HIV/AIDS were displayed on charts by young people. One such example “Young people: a resource for positive change” was adopted as the theme of the road show in order to make people conscious of the existing tragedy. All participating people were also given t-shirts with the slogan printed on.

A variety of entertaining and teaching activities took place. These included: peer educators; drama workshops; writing workshops; peer counselling; string game; motivational speaking; snakes and ladders AIDS game; sports and cultural activities. All these aimed at educating youth about the hazards of HIV/AIDS whilst allowing young people to enjoy themselves to their hearts’ content.

Quthing education officer, Mr. Joseph Marole, took advantage of the event to remind participants of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are hoped to be reached by the year 2015: “Providing quality education” and “Fighting HIV/AIDS”. Mr. Marole expressed his fears: “Unless youth are given the opportunity to participate in the fight against this pandemic, I fear that by 2015, both of the MDG goals will not have been achieved.”

Co-ordinators of the road shows, ‘M’e Kekeletso Morolong and ‘M’e Selloane

Mokuku, shared the same views and observations. They said: “This road show has been a great success because of young people’s desire and determination to succeed. Youth should therefore realise their capacity. They must not totally rely on guidance from adults...for the future of this country lies in the hands of young people.”

This observation echoed the theme of the 2000 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS). It reinforced how precious it is to include young people in the matters which concern them. To put it in other words, one could use the expression: “Change the world with children and not for them”.

For more information about the Lesotho road show initiative see: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/lesotho_30733.html

Book Review

“Poverty, Inequalities and Corruption”

Stealing the Future: Corruption in the Classroom. Ten Real World Experiences

Bettina Meier and Michael Griffin (eds)

Berlin, Transparency International, 2005, No ISBN, 84p.

Review by Sheila Aikman

Stealing the Future is a short and accessible book which provides concrete examples of different kinds of corruption and of situations which can lead to corrupt practices. It does through short case studies highlighting key aspects of projects which have been carried out by Transparency International chapters in ten different countries over the last two years: Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Georgia, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

The many guises of corruption are presented through these practical examples and understood as everyone's concern. Most common forms of corruption include paying for private tuition with the school teacher after school hours, parents being 'recommended' to buy books written by their children's teachers and children's exam results or progress being contingent upon parents making 'voluntary' contributions for school maintenance. The country case studies also provide examples of practical projects carried out to eliminate different forms of corruption.

This book and this practical focus come at a very opportune time. With increased aid to the education sector and governments developing Education For All Action Plans, eradicating corruption in all its forms is extremely important. Right now the Global Campaign for Education is working with national education coalitions around the

globe calling for national governments and the international community to enable the recruitment and retention of a professional well-motivated teacher workforce. In Niger, participants in the study there felt that it would be difficult to fight corruption so long as the salaries of public employees remained so low.

The case study chapters provide illuminating insights into the relationships between poverty, inequalities and corruption. Interestingly, the Brazil project found that leakages of funds in the decentralised system was due in large part to a lack of basic skills and capacity at the local administrative level. On the other hand, the study in Zambia found that where well-run parent-teachers associations were responsible for managing school budgets and members had a strong interest in the education of their children, there were only minor irregularities in district education expenditures. Community participation in school management is, therefore, valuable in that it increases ownership but needs to be complemented by capacity building to ensure that control is effective.

The book has important things to say about NGOs and their role in anti-corruption measures and approaches. Transparent monitoring by independent civil society organisations increases trust in school administration and good financial

management. However there is also a need for a closer think about NGO working practices and outcomes of NGO work which can be detrimental to intended beneficiaries. The case studies illustrate very positive directions for NGO work. Through constructive engagement with universities and governments at national as well as local level Transparency International projects have motivated public officials to become more service-oriented and responsive. In Argentina an 'Integrity Pact' was signed with publishing companies and the Ministry of Education which lent credibility to the process of selecting school textbooks, a process that was fraught with problems.

Transparency International is to be congratulated on this small book. The empirical research provides snap shots of local realities and offers encouragement and stimulation for others wanting to tackle corrupt practices in education. It is accompanied by web references so that the issues and the methodologies in each chapter can be followed up in more detail. I recommend this book to NGOs, development practitioners, policy makers and activists.

Sheila Aikman is the Global Education Advisor for Oxfam GB

Stealing the future is available at <http://www.transparency.org/publications>

New Report on Gender and Education

From The Global Campaign for Education

Teachers For All: what governments and donors should do

This report highlights that between 14 and 22.5 million teachers need to be recruited, trained and provided with the right incentives in the next ten years in order to enable all girls and boys to receive a quality public education by 2015. It also emphasizes that even in countries where there is no shortage of teachers, many teachers are untrained and/or demotivated, which seriously hinders their ability to deliver quality education.

The report looks in detail at the situation of teachers in poor countries today, the problems they face and the detrimental

effect these problems are having on girls' and boys' ability to complete a good quality education. It gives a range of recommendations in order to solve the problems highlighted and shows that massive investment is needed to ensure there are enough trained and motivated teachers for all primary school aged children.

Throughout the report the way in which gender, as well as other areas of exclusion such as disability and ethnicity, relate to the general issues affecting teachers are explored. The shortage of female teachers,

and the detrimental effect that this has for girls' education in many countries is addressed. So too is the need to ensure that women teachers do not suffer discrimination and are given the support they need in order to work effectively and safely, and the need to incorporate gender and diversity issues into teacher training programmes in order to enable all teachers (male and female) to teach in an inclusive and gender-equitable way.

The report is available at www.campaignforeducation.org

Conference Comments

Women in Development in Europe (WIDE) Conference

Report by Kate Greany

This year's Women in Development in Europe (WIDE) Conference was in Warsaw, highlighting a strategic move for the organisation to see Europe as not only in terms of its western member states, but to embrace Eastern European countries, such as Poland. The conference explored the themes of women in states and markets, asking the question 'What 'State' are we in?' – 'we' being women, and particularly feminists from Europe and beyond.

The Conference aim was to come up with concrete strategies for women and feminist alternatives to respond to what some participants referred to as the 'nightmare of the onslaught of neo-liberalism, globalisation and the free market economy.' There was a lot of discussion on the gendered implications of growing markets and shrinking states, such as precarious employment markets (in which the majority of employees are women and where workers' rights are neglected) and the

withdrawal of basic services (such as health and education), which affects women especially severely.

Some of the responses to these difficulties discussed at the conference were gender sensitive budgeting in South Africa, women's cooperatives in Eastern Europe and campaigns for improved women workers' rights. The idea of if or how feminists can work both inside and outside 'the system', using both 'the master's tools/language' as well as innovative alternative models/tools to challenge the status quo was a constant subject of debate. The conference highlighted the importance of women, and feminists, having the capacity to work on both the inside and outside, and choosing appropriate strategies, entry points and moments. In addition, the conference pointed to the importance of strong links between women's networks and their allies, especially between the South and Eastern

Europe, as participants from these regions clearly felt commonalities and could benefit considerably from more dialogue, and indeed a triologue with women from Western Europe too.

Although education was not mentioned explicitly, the themes of this conference are the very issues that those concerned with gender equitable education must engage with. The shrinking state considerably influences the delivery of basic services, including education; and emerging markets and globalisation are directly linked to the potential outcomes for girls' education in terms of employment opportunities, for example. Seeing education as a means of creating equal outcomes for girls and women means paying attention to these wider issues, and making links with those working on them, such as WIDE.

Further information about WIDE is available at www.wide.global.net

International Seminar: Gender Equity in Education Reforms in Latin America

Report by Fanni Muñoz

The International Seminar "Gender Equity in Education Reforms in Latin America" took place on the 17 and 18 May 2006 in Santiago, Chile. A diverse range of participants – the academic community, international organisations, and education policy makers – came together to debate the incorporation of gender in education reforms. The discussions were based on the results of studies on education reform and gender that were carried out in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Peru, with the support of the Ford Foundation.

The main conclusions of these studies included the following:

1. During the education reforms of the 1990s, although universal education and gender parity, particularly at primary level, were achieved, the integration of gender was weak;

2. Gender equity has not been a priority for the education sector;

3. Although in some countries there are mechanisms for addressing gender in the curriculum, the treatment of gender through the curriculum has not been institutionalised and mainstreamed;

4. Hierarchical power relations, exclusion and differential learning opportunities continue to be reproduced through the formal and hidden curriculum and through learning materials.

Among the key challenges for the promotion of gender focused education policies, the following were highlighted:

1. The need for the inclusion of a gender perspective in education policy to go beyond a focus on achieving equity and equality and to also imply the questioning of the education system as a whole;

2. The need for policies for gender equity in education to consider not only

affirmative action but also transformatory action that takes cultural inequalities into account;

3. The need to develop indicators for gender equality in education;

4. The need to broaden our understanding of equality and abandon the assumption that the school is a neutral space;

5. The need to articulate the gender agenda with other agendas and build alliances, as the gender agenda has lost power;

6. The need to work on pre and in service teacher training;

7. The need to build a general understanding of gender in schools.

Further information about the seminar is available at www.hexagrama.cl/seminario

Weblinks

Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan

Human Rights Watch

This report looks at the situation of education in Afghanistan as brutal attacks by armed opposition groups on Afghan teachers, students, and their schools have occurred throughout much of Afghanistan in recent months, particularly in the south.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/afghanistan0706/index.htm>

Gender perspectives in peace initiatives: opportunities and challenges

Chhabra, S.

This paper looks at the different ways in which women are involved in and affected by conflicts and highlights the challenges and opportunities for incorporating a gender perspective in peace operations.

http://www.eldis.org/fulltext/womenslinkjournal_gender_peaceinitiatives.pdf

Girls and Science: a training module on motivating girls to embark on science and technology careers

UNESCO

This manual looks at ways to reduce gender disparities in the fields of science and technology in Africa and to provide girls and women with the possibility of embarking upon science careers.

<http://portal.unesco.org/education/en>

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Girls' right to education

Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Mr. V. Muñoz Villalobos

This report emphasises the need to see girls' education as a human right rather than a service, and looks at the importance of ensuring not only girls' access to but also completion of school.

www.ungei.org/resources

The Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education

UNESCO Bangkok

This advocacy brief looks at the recruitment of women teachers. It highlights the important role of women teachers and stresses the need for a broad gender equality perspective when developing policy and programmes for women teachers.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001459/145990e.pdf>

The KIC Portal

The KIC Portal, enables Oxfam International counterparts and others to meet each other, locate other partners working in the same field, browse through thematic web sites, document their practices and research, find knowledge sources and participate in "virtual discussion rooms." This issue of Equals is being produced in collaboration with KIC.

www.oxfam.kic.org

Letters

I want to congratulate and thank the Beyond Access team for a very successful work. The BA project has been extremely inspiring for me as for others. I would also like to share some news related to my own "spin-off" work in Peru on the issues brought by the Beyond Access project. In March, a book in Spanish on gender, education and equity was published (Las Brechas Invisibles, IEP-UNFPA-UPCH 2006), collecting the papers presented in the international seminar held in Lima in June last year. The book has had a very good reception in Peru, and it is in the list of the ten most sold books of the publisher in the last two months. Following the seminar, we also created a virtual network in Peru, which is still active, to share information, works and events, and to promote discussion on these issues.

Peru had just elected a new government, and it has promised to follow the exemplary action of Michele Bachelet, the first elected woman president in South America, and have an equal number of men and women for Ministerial positions. These last elections also created a new congress with around 30% of women as elected congresspersons, a proportion achieved for the first time in our history. So, many things are going on in this side of the world that I hope will contribute in some way to promote progress on the desired goals of equality and equity. There is still a lot of work to do, since the parity figures in primary education are interpreted as if gender is not a problem anymore, and other dimensions such as ethnicity, poverty and place of residence are getting more attention. However I hope the link between gender and all of these dimensions will become clearer with continuous work and more progress can be made.

Patricia Ames, Peru

I would like to share with you a poem that I wrote during a regional education workshop on the Reflect Approach in Niamey, Niger, West Africa:

Gender Agenda

What is gender agenda?
It's equal rights and roles
For every man and woman
And every boy and girl

Why must people think
Male must be the subject
Female must be an object
To please the male's egos?

Stop and think a minute!
If we were all males
The world would be aggressive
If we were all females
The world would be assertive

We need a balanced culture
In a world of gender parity
That makes the world partial
By social norms and practices

Empower male and female
And watch the world change
From aggressive to affirmative
From assertive to attractive
To fight societal poverty

Abraham P. Conneh, Education
Officer
Oxfam GB Liberia

WRITE NOW!

Do you have a particular view that you want to raise in Equals or a comment to make about the newsletter in general?

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Beyond Access Project Update

The last few months have been busy ones for Beyond Access as the first phase of the project, which was supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), has been formally brought to a close. Two Gender, Education and the Media workshops have been held, organised in coordination with ANCEFA in Nairobi, and with CAMPE and Steps Towards Development in Dhaka. The enthusiasm from the participants and others has contributed to the development of Gender, Education and Media Guide which will be available shortly. We have also produced 20 smaller versions of Snakes and Ladders: the game of girls' education – which will be disseminated to interested education NGO coalitions for their use.

Many other Beyond Access activities will be continuing over the next months. OxfamGB has agreed to publish a second Beyond Access book, on gender, education and HIV, which will be a

companion volume to our current successful book. This new book draws on papers commissioned for the Beyond Access seminars, on new writing and a new link with ActionAid. Tania Boler will co-edit the book alongside Elaine and Sheila. We hope it will be ready in the second half of 2007.

Through the Actionaid, Save the Children-UK and OxfamGB partnership in the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), OxfamGB has secured funding for a Gender Strengthening project for 2 years to work with education coalitions in 16 low-income Commonwealth countries. This will be an important means of taking forward the work of the Beyond Access project in a very practical and applied way by using learning from the project to help education coalitions carry out effective interventions and advocacy for gender equality in education.

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

Forthcoming events

9 August	International Day of World's Indigenous People	
12 August	International Youth Day	
13-18 August	XVI International AIDS Conference Toronto, Canada	
6 September	Launch of State of World Population 2006 Report	For details see www.unfpa.org/
6 September	Bridging the North-South Divide in Scholarly Communication on Africa Leiden, The Netherlands	For details see www.codesria.org/news.htm
8 September	International Literacy Day	
8-10 September	British Association for International and Comparative Education Conference "Diversity and Inclusion" Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom	For details see www.qub.ac.uk/edu/baice/
12 September	The International Save the Children Alliance launches 5 year campaign on quality education for children affected by conflict	For details see www.savethechildren.net
19-20 September	IMF & WB Group Boards of Governors Annual Meeting Singapore	
September	18th Annual Meeting of Senior Officials of the G 77 New York, USA	
September	30th Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the G 77 New York, USA	
5 October	World Teachers' Day	
17 October	International Day for Eradication of Poverty	
24 October	World Development Information Day	
25-28 October	Global Economic and Social Forum; "People-oriented economic development... for a fairer globalisation" Lyon, France	For details see www.global-economic-and-social-forum.com
26 October	Launch of EFA Monitoring Report "Early Childhood Care and Education"	For details see http://portal.unesco.org/education/en
20 November	Universal Children's Day	
November	6 th Meeting of High Level Group on EFA, UNESCO, Cairo, Egypt	For details see http://portal.unesco.org/education/e

Contact Details

Beyond Access was set up in January 2003. Its main aims are:

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

Please contact us with any comments or enquiries:

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