Save the Children

POLICY BRIEFING

Achieving the Gender Parity Millennium Development Goal

What needs to be done?

2005
make it great for children

MAKE child POVERTY HISTORY

Save the Children fights for children in the UK and around the world who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence. We work with them to find lifelong answers to the problems they face.

Save the Children UK is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, the world's leading independent children's rights organisation, with members in 27 countries and operational programmes in more than 100.

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Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHIP	Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre
CRP	Child's Rights Programming
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FTI	Fast-Track Initiative
GATS	General Agreement on Trade and Services
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GMR	Global Monitoring Report on Education for All
GNP	Gross National Product
GRB	Gender Responsive Budget
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDA	International Development Assistance
IFF	International Finance Facility
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEE	Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MPH	Make Poverty History campaign
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Overall Development Assistance
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SC	Save the Children United Kingdom
SMC	School Management Committee
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPC	Universal Primary Completion
UPE	Universal Primary Education
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive summary

Education is a fundamental right. Yet more than 100 million children worldwide – 57 per cent of whom are girls – do not have access to education, suggesting that millions of children do not realise even the most basic rights to a happy, healthy and secure childhood.

However, getting children into school is just the starting point. Education is also an enabling right – a catalyst for human development in the fullest sense. Education should be a process that facilitates people – especially those denied their basic rights – to mobilise and become active agents in negotiating for other rights, such as a decent standard of living and healthcare.

Educating girls offers them a route out of poverty. Good quality education also empowers people to question the traditions, cultural norms and discriminatory practices that prevent girls going to school and ultimately perpetuate inequity. Educating girls, in particular, is therefore a key step towards social development and broader gender equality.

We can draw upon decades of experience to identify which strategies work particularly well for educating girls. The box below highlights just a few of these. The success of these strategies depends upon the mobilisation of families, communities, schools, governments and the international donor community.

What works for girls' education

- Communities are sensitised to the importance of girls' education and gender equality
- Children are protected from all forms of abuse through the creation of relevant and enforceable child protection policies
- All children have a chance to participate in school
- Female teachers are recruited and all teachers receive training on gender awareness
- Teaching is child centred, gender friendly and inclusive
- Teaching actively challenges gender bias
- Curriculum materials are free from gender bias
- HIV/AIDS awareness and opportunities for discussion about life skills are part of the curriculum
- Separate sanitation facilities are provided for girls

Source: Save the Children workshop on girls' education, East and Central Africa, August 2004

The Millennium Development Goals

Achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 is one of four targets under the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to promote gender

equality and empower women. Another MDG is achieving universal primary education by 2015. Meeting these targets would mean pulling 300 million children out of abject poverty.

However, more than 70 countries have failed to reach the gender parity target in 2005. If the current rate of progress continues, it is unlikely that this target and the corresponding universal primary education goal will be achieved by 2015.

The failure to achieve the gender parity target in education has grave consequences. If we had reached the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender parity in education by 2005, more than 1 million childhood deaths could have been averted.[1]

Urgent action is required. Achieving gender parity in education by 2005 is the first target of the MDGs. If the global community lets this target pass without a major new initiative in education, then all MDGs will not only be discredited, but they will most likely fail too. Yet, recent reports from the UN Millennium Project (created to track progress and propose strategies to meet the goals) fail to recognise the impact of the missed gender parity goal.[2] To ensure that this oversight does not signify a lack of importance attached to gender equality, immediate attention must be drawn to this missed target.

Meeting the target on gender parity in education

Limited finances and economic conditionalities attached to aid have contributed to slow progress towards the MDGs across most of the developing world. Aid must not only be increased, it must be predictable, reliable and sustained so that countries can undertake proper reform to ensure that all children attend school. With the money, political will, proper planning and programmes, problems related to access, quality and opportunity can be dealt with for the most part.

However, education reform on its own will not deliver gender parity in school enrolment and completion. The underlying reasons why girls are either not sent to school or drop out of school – poverty and inequality – must be addressed.

The year 2005, with its multiple international conferences, presents a golden opportunity to advocate for education, gender equality and eradication of poverty. Heads of state of nearly every country will be attending the UN Summit in September to review progress on the MDGs. Education needs to be at the top of the agenda for this meeting.

This year the UK hosts the G8 and holds the presidency of the EU. The UK is in a powerful position to influence world leaders to Make Child Poverty History. The Make Poverty History coalition brings together a wide cross-section of organisations, united in the belief that 2005 offers an unprecedened opportunity for global change. Save the Children's campaign to help girls get an education for girls is a key part of the broader Make Poverty History campaign.

To make education a domestic and international priority, children, families and communities need to mobilise to demand their right to free, quality education. Sharing information, supporting dialogue and sparking debate over what free and quality education means will motivate people to hold governments and donors accountable for the injustice and inequality which exists in education systems. Efforts to strengthen non-governmental organisations, alliances and networks need to be maintained so that civil society voices can influence national and international policy-making processes. Through targeted and co-ordinated efforts, a movement for change can be created that exerts pressure on governments and the international community to deliver on their promises.

Recommendations

The UK Government has a particularly important role to play in bringing about positive changes for girls' education. As chair of the G8, the European Union (EU) and the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI), it can ensure that new resources are channelled into girls' education.

In particular, we call on the UK Government to:

- meet its commitment to increase overseas aid to 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2010 and encourage other western governments to meet the 0.7 target
- use its influence within the international community to ensure that the money needed to meet the MDGs – $50 billion per year – is provided
- use its influence internationally to ensure more aid is spent on girls' education via mechanisms like the Fast Track Initiative, which would allow poor countries to scale up their education programmes quickly and easily
- persuade donors to coordinate aid and give governments in developing countries confidence to make long-term commitments to their education programmes
- ensure that gender parity is a key part of countries' education plans and budgets.

We also call on the UK Government to use its influence to ensure that countries have the right economic conditions to enable them to increase spending on education. In particular, we call on the UK Government to:

- persuade donors to cut some of the strings attached to aid – such as prioritising debt repayments, privatisation, deregulation and fiscal austerity – and allow governments to prioritise education spending
- ensure that the International Monetary Fund increases flexibility in the economic conditions it imposes on its loans to developing countries – these condition limit the amount of money governments can spend each year and can lead to education budget cuts
- works with the international community to cancel debts owed by developing countries, so that they can use these funds for education and other social spending.

1 Introduction

Education has long been recognised as a fundamental right for all children. Unfortunately, the fact that an estimated 600 million children grow up in poverty,[3] no doubt contributing to the 100 million children out of school (57 per cent of whom are girls),[4] suggests that far too many are denied their basic rights. Although the potential of both boys and girls to enjoy a happy, healthy and secure childhood is equally constrained by poverty and lack of education, the situation for girls is more severe, because over two-thirds of the poor are women. And girls' participation in schooling remains low, with only 76 per cent completing primary school (compared to 85 per cent of boys).[5] The consequences of this are even more alarming because we know that educated girls pave the inroads to achieving gender equality, reducing poverty and improving the overall well-being of children and families.

Recognising this cycle of disadvantage, heads of state agreed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit in 2000. They committed to meeting eight goals by 2015 to contribute to reducing global poverty. Although there is a specific goal for fighting extreme poverty (target 1 aims to halve the number of people living in poverty by 2015), to overcome this disadvantage, people also need opportunities to improve their educational and health status, nutrition, and other aspects of well-being. Gender parity in primary and secondary education was considered to be of such basic importance in meeting this overall goal that a target date of 2005 was set – 10 years earlier than the other targets for achievement (see Box 1).

Box 1. **The education and gender equality Millennium Development Goals**

The Millennium Development Goals are a set of eight goals, each linked to time-bound targets. The heads of state of 191 countries agreed to these targets and committed to meeting these goals at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. At current rates of progress, most of the goals, including universal primary education (UPE), will not be achieved. The first time-bound goal for 2005 - gender parity in primary education – has already been missed. If the current rate of progress continues, it is unlikely that this target and the corresponding universal primary education goal will be achieved by 2015.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education
Target: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
Target: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

The gender parity in education target is one of four indicators used to measure progress towards the gender equality MDG. The three additional indicators are: the ratio of literate females to males among 15-24 year olds; the share of women in waged employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. However, in order to truly attain equality, gender concerns need to be integrated within each of the eight goals.

Not enough progress has been made, and over 75 countries are at risk of failing to reach this first target in 2005. Fortunately, in 2005 governments and development organisations across the world are coming together on gender equality, education and poverty issues. In March 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) reviews progress since the women's conference in Beijing ten years ago. The education of girls has long been recognised as a means to empowerment among women's rights advocates. International Women's Day (8 March) Provides an opportunity to strengthen the links between education advocates and the broader gender equality lobby. By working together, momentum can be built towards the September UN Summit, when progress on MDGs will be reviewed, for increased efforts on girls' education. In the same way, the international community can also be reminded that unless gender concerns are integrated within each of the eight MDGs, and the gender parity goal is achieved, then equality will be out of reach. The first missed goal – that of gender parity in primary education – presents an unprecedented opportunity to focus on girls' education and the underlying causes of gender inequality and poverty that keep them out of school.

Also in 2005, the G7 Finance Ministers met in February. And the G8 Summit, when the world's most powerful leaders meet, takes place in July. There are also meetings of the International Finance Institutions (IFIs), the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), in the spring and autumn. Together, these meetings present an opportunity to deal with the wider barriers (primarily imposed by the G7 countries and the IFIs) – of debt, unfair trade, insufficient aid and harmful loan conditionality – that keep governments from being able to increase their public spending, and thus impede progress on education.

The Make Poverty History campaign has been building momentum to bring the issues of more and better aid, debt cancellation and trade justice to the forefront. Save the Children has been working to make child poverty history, as part of the overall Make Poverty History campaign, because the eradication of child poverty is both an end in its own right, and a major contributor to overall poverty reduction.

These conferences will build momentum towards September's 2005 UN heads of state Summit to review the MDGs. This presents an opportunity to re-energise efforts so that the second deadline for the target, 2015, is honoured. It also provides leaders with the chance to reaffirm the credibility of the overall MDG project, and their commitment to ensure that the basic human right to education and equality is realised, for both girls and women.

Lessons learned from decades of experience on education, equality and poverty, demonstrate that progress is possible and that the MDGs can be achieved. With a substantial increase in funding, schooling can be a transformative experience which enables both girls and boys to challenge the underlying gender bias and stereotypes that keep girls out of school, keep them in poverty and as a result vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and violence. Successful advocacy on improving quality of and access to education will help Save the Children realise its mission of creating "a world that respects and values each child; a world that listens to children and learns; and a world where all children have hope and opportunity".[6]

The aim of this paper is to establish the links between education, gender and poverty. It highlights the role of education for both girls and boys as a means to combat poverty and inequality. It also outlines strategies for communities, schools, governments and the international community to help achieve the MDGs. Particular attention is given to the current funding gap in education and constraints Southern countries face in increasing their spending. Evidence will be drawn from Save the Children's field, country and international experiences, among other sources. The paper is organised as follows:

- Section 2 looks at the underlying reasons why girls are not attending school – gender inequity and poverty. It identifies education as a key strategy for making progress on these two factors.
- Section 3 reviews progress on the 2005 gender parity in primary education target.
- Section 4 looks at why girls are kept out of school, focusing on three key issues – access, quality of education and opportunity.
- Section 5 considers what more must be done to get all girls into school. It identifies strategies for mainstreaming gender into national policies; ways to encourage families to send their daughters to school; and teaching and learning approaches to address the challenges faced by girls, particularly those from poor families.
- Section 6 identifies the funding gap in education and the main obstacles preventing governments from increasing public spending on education.
- Section 7 puts forward recommendations.
- Section 8 draws conclusions.

2 Gender equality and poverty

"It will be impossible to meet the MDGs without women's empowerment."
Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General and Director of the UN Millennium Project[7]

Gender discrimination and women's low status together prevent girls from fulfilling their basic rights to education and healthcare, and to securing a better life. Cultural norms and traditional beliefs and practices concerning gender roles continue to be a determining factor in sending girls to school. The different and unequal roles, rights and responsibilities that communities and societies consider appropriate for women and men have a strong influence on gender disparity in school enrolment and completion. For example, as long as a girl's most important role is believed to be that of carer, mother and wife, incentives to invest in her education will be low. In addition, in communities where girls generally move to their husband's house after marriage, parents are less inclined to educate them. Because these girls will eventually contribute to someone else's home and livelihood, they are less likely to be seen as a 'worthy' investment. Limited opportunities in the labour market for girls to earn a decent wage are also a factor.

These inequalities result in girls and women having limited decision-making power in the home, community, labour market and government. They also mean that girls and women have little chance of improving their overall situation, so the stage is set for disparities to continue from one generation to the next. In addition, social practices regarding the initiation of young people, which are strongly influenced by tradition (such as early marriage) often lead to girls' early withdrawal from school. The wider societal factors that perpetuate these situations include domestic violence, lack of sexual and reproductive rights and services, and economic insecurity. When poverty is factored into the equation, gender inequalities grow wider and vulnerability grows deeper.

Research shows that poverty takes a greater toll on girls. While gender inequalities exist among the rich and the poor, they tend to be greater among the poor. Poverty, however, is experienced differently by children and adults, men and women. Findings from Save the Children's Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre (CHIP) suggest that childhood poverty has lifelong consequences. When children start life at a disadvantage – in terms of poor health, malnutrition, or low education levels - there are fewer opportunities for them to move out of poverty (see Box 2).

Box 2. **Childhood poverty**

Save the Children's Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre has documented the impacts of poverty on children. Research shows how poverty experienced by children is different from poverty experienced by adults. These early 'threats' to the growth and development of children are partly irreversible, even with intensive interventions later in life. To fully understand poverty through

children's eyes, several Save the Children projects from around the world have consulted with children and young people on how poverty affects them. Consultations in Vietnam have clarified what poverty means for children's well-being and how their experience tends to differ from that of their parents and other adults. From 1999 to 2003, Save the Children facilitated three country-wide consultations that brought together 465 children between the ages of 6 and 18. They emphasised the importance of psychological well-being, as well as raising issues concerning cash income. For many, poverty raised feelings of insecurity (for the present and future), despair, injustice and fear. The most important means of overcoming these feelings were love and support from parents, good health and access to education and recreation. They were hit hard by the lack of education and the feeling of inadequacy they experienced by not being able to attend school and wear decent clothes. Those that could attend spoke of being concerned about the burden of the cost of education (uniforms, school maintenance) on their parents, and how this contributed to the families' overall indebtedness. In addition to expressing how poverty affected them, children spoke openly of how poverty impacted their parents. Many of the issues raised – such as indebtedness, divorce, alcoholism, drugs, and gambling - are not openly discussed among adults in Vietnamese society.

Sources: Background information from *CHIP Policy Briefing 8: Breaking Poverty Cycles – The Importance of Action in Childhood*; Example from Vietnam taken from Save the Children, 2004, *Children and Young People Participating in the PRSP Processes: Learning from Save the Children's experiences.*

Educating sons or daughters? The 'rate of return'

Where resources are limited, and parents are still expected to cover school fees and other costs, boys tend to receive preferential treatment for schooling. In some cases, both girls and boys may be enrolled in school, but their chances of continuing their education, especially if they come from a poor, large family, are dramatically different. There is a perceived notion that the 'rate of return' for a son's education is greater for parents, as sons have more opportunities to access better paying jobs and will therefore be better able to take care of their parents in later life. Because girls' most valued contribution is to the home, they are often withdrawn from school either to save money or so that they can take care of siblings or elderly relatives while their parents work outside the home to earn income.

Learning or earning? 'Opportunity costs'

In addition to not being able to pay for the education of all children, poor households often rely upon the additional earnings of children to survive. The growing number of children working either in our outside the home to supplement family earnings plays testimony to this (often referred to as the 'opportunity cost' to school attendance). Girls are usually hardest hit. In times of great economic need, girls, like their mothers, play the dual role of carer and wage earner, putting in long hours but earning little income.[8] In order to fulfil these dual roles, girls from poor households are the first to drop out of school and miss out on the education and training that could enable them to lead better lives.

Even when girls from poor families do go to school, they continue to be burdened with having to expend large amounts of time and energy on taking care of the home and siblings, collecting water and fuel. This leaves them little time to do school work, which leads to them achieving lower grades, and so the incentive to send girls to school plummets even further. Recognition of the reasons for this situation will only come about if the unfairness of gendered roles and responsibilities is questioned.

Changing attitudes across generations

Gender inequality and poverty are an inter-generational cycle. To break the cycle, both young people and adults – men and women - will need to be involved. This is because the identities and roles that keep girls out of school form part of the overall social relations in society that are defined mostly by men. They are not a 'natural' result of biological differences between women and men.[9] As such, the attitudes and behaviours that cause inequality and exacerbate poverty can only be changed with effective advocacy from both men and women.

Women have a particularly important role to play in helping girls overcome these inequalities, especially if they themselves have had access to better opportunities. There is evidence that greater opportunity for women and subsequently for their daughters has led to more participation in decision-making, both in and outside the home. There is also a strong correlation between mothers' literacy skills and higher levels of schooling, especially for girls. For example, in Niger the probability of children not attending school is 70 per cent where mothers are illiterate. This figure drops dramatically to 30 per cent when women are able to read easily.[10] Improving access to fair wages and better working conditions are also essential. With higher income, the opportunity costs decrease and ability to pay for schooling increases. With this also comes a greater appreciation of the value of education and the ability to help children learn.

How education combats inequality and poverty

Education can be the key to empowering women and men to break out of the vicious cycle of gender inequality and poverty. The benefits of educating girls, to their families and society at large, have long been documented. Educating girls helps to improve communities and societies and can also help to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS. Equally important is the intrinsic value of education and the opportunity it provides for girls to be empowered to overcome situations that cause inequalities. Education can strengthen girls' dignity and self-confidence so that they themselves can begin to challenge discriminatory and biased gender roles and relations. Schooling can be a transformative process, providing children with the awareness and tools to fight discrimination and gender bias. The following points detail how access to education helps girls (and boys) secure and exercise each of the rights and services that are essential for creating a gender equitable society.

- An educated mother is better informed and equipped to take care of her children. Babies of mothers with no formal education are at least twice as likely to die before the age of five as babies of mothers with post-primary education.[11] Each additional year of schooling cuts the expected infant mortality rate by 5-10 per cent.[12] Educated mothers are 50 per cent more likely to immunise their children than mothers who are not educated.[13]

- Education can play a critical role in reducing violence against girls and women and enhancing their control over their own bodies (although it does not eliminate violence). Research shows that higher levels of education among women are associated with a lower lifetime incidence of violence against women.[14]

- Education can help ensure the basic human right to universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. The consequences of lack of education in this respect are millions of women dying unnecessarily from childbirth, unsafe abortions and HIV/AIDS. For example, of the 10m young people living with HIV/AIDS, 6.1m are young women and 3.9m are young men.[15] A study in Zambia shows that AIDS spreads twice as quickly among uneducated girls than among girls with some schooling.[16]

- Education plays a critical role in increasing the age of marriage and decreasing rates of fertility. Girls with fewer than seven years of schooling are more likely to be married by the age of 18.[17] When women gain four years more education, fertility per woman drops by one birth.[18]

- Education promotes ownership and control over assets such as land and housing, providing economic security, incentives for taking economic risks, which lead to growth, and important economic returns, including income. Lack of control over these assets is increasingly linked to development-related problems, including poverty, HIV/AIDS and violence. In Kerala, India, 49 per cent of women with no property reported being subjected to physical violence, whereas only 7 per cent of women with property reported having experienced physical violence.[19]

- Education can provide the knowledge, skills and training required to access formal employment and fair wages. It is estimated that women perform two-thirds of the world's work and earn only one-tenth of the income, and own less than one per cent of the world's property. Women constitute up to 75 per cent of workers in the shadow economy known as the informal sector, with the vast majority still working in low paying, seasonal and insecure jobs. Higher levels of education increase the probability that women will engage in formal paid employment.[20] Providing girls with an extra year of education beyond the average boosts eventual wages by 10-20 per cent.[21]

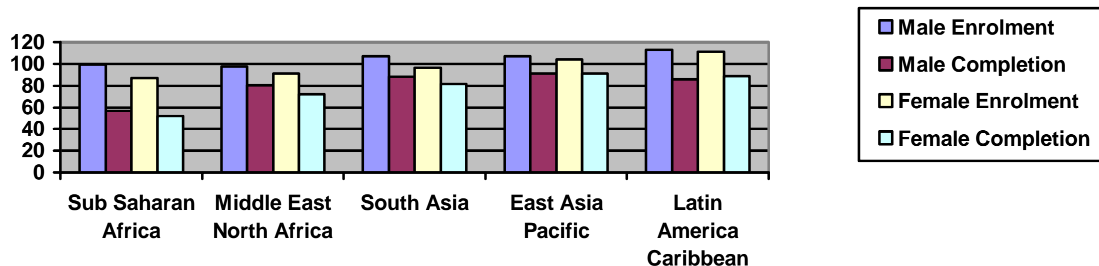
- Education can help women access formal decision-making channels and also empower them to fight discrimination and subjugation so that they have equal access to resources. Currently only 14 countries have achieved the MDG target of having 30 per cent of women in parliament; not one Southern country figures among these. Although there are examples of illiterate women representatives in local government committees (eg, India), for the most part, if women are educated they will have greater access to opportunities created by quotas aimed at increasing the percentage of women in parliament. Educated Bangladeshi women are three times more likely than illiterate women to participate in political meetings.[22]

If gender is mainstreamed into programmes and policies in a manner that ensures that girls and women benefit from projects that affect society at large (such as child-friendly schools aiming to ensure education for all children), and if the barriers girls face in pursuing their education are addressed, then lasting change can occur. Girls will then be able to use their education to improve their lives and their families' well-being. Poverty and discrimination keep women excluded from education and minimises their chances of being empowered.

3 Reviewing progress

Despite progress in enrolment rates for girls, gender parity in education – in terms of access, achievement and completion – remains elusive (see Chart 1). Although the gender parity target pertains to the same number of girls and boys ***enrolled*** in school, this does not mean that they will necessary ***complete*** a full cycle of primary schooling. The graph below shows the wide gap between enrolment and completion rates, especially for girls. Getting children into school is the first step, but as we have shown in the previous section, this alone is not sufficient to keep them in school. For all children to succeed in accessing schooling, the root causes that keep them out of school - poverty and gender inequality - must be addressed.

Chart 1: Primary School Enrolment & Completion Rates (2000)



Source: UNESCO 2004

The data presented above suggest that unless dramatic progress is made, it is unlikely that all countries will be able to meet the MDG 2015 target of gender parity in primary education.

Predictions indicate that:

- Only **46 out of 133 countries** with available data are expected to reach gender parity or a reverse gender gap in primary education by 2005.[23]
- If these trends continue, only **57 out of 133 countries** are expected to achieve the target by 2015. As the chart above shows, girls continue to systematically lose out on the benefits that an education affords.
- Overall, only **76 per cent of girls currently complete primary school**, compared to 85 per cent of boys. These rates are much lower than enrolment rates, indicating that many children drop out of school (most after grade 1).[24]
- An estimated **150m children** currently enrolled in school **will drop out** before completing primary school – at least **100m will be girls**.[25]

In order to meet the two education targets by 2015 (at the latest), special attention will need to be paid to regions, countries and disadvantaged groups currently out of (or not completing) school, notably:

- In **sub-Saharan Africa,** where 23m girls are out of school and gender disparities are considerable.[26]
- **Eleven countries in sub-Saharan Africa** are farthest from the target: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Niger.
- In **South Asia**, 22m girls are out of school in India and Pakistan.[27]

Children from poor and rural households are at a further disadvantage. In South Asia more than 40 per cent of girls aged 15-19 from poor households never completed first grade, and only one in four completed fifth grade.[28] In Pakistan, for example, the primary school completion rate for boys in rural areas is three times higher than for girls; in urban areas it is twice as high.[29] In Niger, 83 per cent of girls in the capital, Naimey, are enrolled in primary school, compared to 12 per cent in rural areas.[30] Certain categories of children tend to be excluded from the formal schooling system altogether – children from the poorest families, the landless, working children, children of minority and tribal groups, children of migrant or pastoralist families, orphans, children affected by HIV/AIDS, those with physical and mental disabilities and those living in conflict zones (either because schools are unsafe, no longer exist, or because they are recruited into battle).

4 Gender parity in education

As Part 2 showed, with the availability of data (although not always disaggregated by gender) we can identify where the most disadvantaged children, and those not attending school, live. So why is it so difficult to improve the situation? If we know that education is the key to overcoming poverty and fighting inequality, then why hasn't change taken place sooner? As this section illustrates, two key factors explain why girls are kept out of school: access and quality of education.

Access

While the number of schools constructed has steadily increased in most countries, there are still not enough schools and there is insufficient space within existing buildings to accommodate all school-age children. The quality of the infrastructure makes schools even less accessible. Distance to schools still remains a challenge and a key obstacle for educating girls in rural areas.

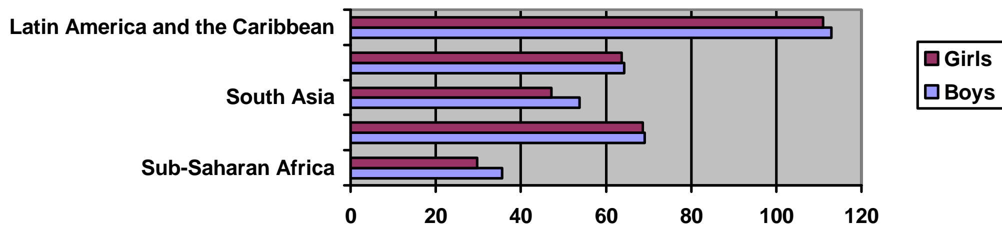
Cost is by far the most important deterrent to education, especially for girls. Although considerable efforts have been made to eliminate school fees in some countries, other costs continue to be asked of parents. These come in a variety of forms, including admission, registration and examination fees, contribution to Parent Teacher Assocations (PTAs), purchase of uniforms, textbooks and learning materials, the construction and maintenance of schools and mid-day meals and transportation. Sometimes parents are also expected to contribute towards teachers' salaries.

Some of the direct costs of schooling listed above have either been reduced or done away with. The elimination of school fees, in particular, led to an instant boom in enrolment rates (for both boys and girls) in many countries. However, once enrolled, many children dropped out of school because parents were still expected to cover many of the other costs listed above. For a family, particularly a poor household, with several children of school-going age, the direct cost of sending all of them to school can easily be unaffordable. For example, the share of private expenditure in primary and secondary education has been estimated at 42 per cent in Jamaica, 33 per cent in the Philippines, 30 per cent in Chile, 24 per cent in Indonesia and 21 per cent in Colombia. [31] Other 'opportunity costs' also remain, namely the loss of an additional wage earner or carer. Overall, however, if schools were more accessible (both in terms of distance and facilities, such as separate toilets for girls and boys) and the quality of education was high, parents would be more inclined to part with scarce resources to educate all children, particularly girls.

Finally, not having a chance for higher schooling is a major deterrent to sending girls to primary schools. As enrolment in primary schools increases and quality improves (albeit slowly), many more children will wish to go to secondary school. There are still not enough secondary schools and even fewer that are "girl friendly". Those that do exist continue to ask for fees and other indirect costs to be covered

by parents. This in turn has created a disincentive for parents to send their children, particularly girls, to school. Low enrolment rates are a testimony to this (see Chart 2). Below the chart, a case study based on Save the Children's work in Vietnam tells the story of Hien, a young Vietnamese girl who is not able to pursue her secondary education (see Box 3). The narrative explains how issues of access, cost, quality and opportunity combine to keep Hien from continuing her education. However, the underlying reason why she is not able to go to school is primarily due to poverty, and her parents' belief that education is of greater benefit for their son.

Chart 2: Secondary School Enrolment Rates (2000)



Source: World Bank 2004

Box 3. **Poverty and gender inequality keep girls out of school in Vietnam**

Hien lives in Dong Moc village in Dong Ngu commune, a remote area in the fertile highlands of Quang Ninh province in north-eastern Vietnam. She belongs to the Dao minority ethnic group. Hien has four older siblings and one younger sister. Her parents are poor rice farmers, who in the wake of recent agricultural reforms have also started to grow some new crops, such as cinnamon.

Hien graduated from the local primary school last summer. She wanted to go on to secondary school, but has to stay at home and work instead. *"I finished school last year, when I was 12. Now I have to work to help my parents. I wish that I could still go to school, but I can't - there's no secondary school here because there aren't enough teachers. The nearest school is in Tien Yen, far away from here, so I would have to live there. I asked my parents to let me go to secondary, but they said no because we have no money and they'd have to buy me text books and other things which are very expensive. I feel very sad about that."*

Hien's family can't afford to send all their children to secondary school, and have decided to prioritise her elder brother's education. In Dao tradition, girls become part of their husband's family when they marry and often move away. *"My parents only have enough money to pay for his (Hien's older brother) studies, and they chose him because he is a boy. I think that's unfair and I feel sad when boys can go to school and girls can't. My parents said that girls don't need to go to school because they'll get married and go to live with another family."*

Quality

Improving access alone will not guarantee that more girls will remain in school. If quality, relevant education is provided, parents are more likely to opt to send all their children to school. There have been many debates over what is meant by good quality education. Save the Children UK's approach to quality education is underpinned by our commitment to children's rights. Children must be central to decision-making processes that affect their education. Save the Children UK recognises that for quality education to be achieved, there needs to be a well-resourced, safe and healthy environment that respects the rights of all children and their teachers.

Quality education must be:

(1) Relevant – to both children's present and future needs
(2) Appropriate – developmentally, culturally and linguistically
(3) Participatory – children, families and wider communities play a full role in the process of learning and the organisation of the school
(4) Protective – from exploitation, abuse, violence and conflict
(5) Flexible and responsive – to the differences between children, and to social, economic and technological changes in the world
(6) Inclusive – see diversity as a resource to support learning and play
(7) Challenging – open up intellectual and cultural opportunities for children

Changes to curricula, teacher training and classroom practices
In order to achieve this high level of quality, several changes need to take place. Drastic changes in the curricula, and in teacher training and classroom practices must take place for children to acquire reading, writing and cognitive skills appropriate for each level of education; these learning materials and practices must also be free of all bias, including gender bias and discrimination. The school environment and experience itself needs to be transformed to combat discrimination and sexual violence against girls and to promote gender equality and inter-cultural relations. A focus on active learning and the greater participation of pupils will contribute to a quality, useful education for girls as well as boys. Finally, the scope for reforming schools will hinge upon the availability of more and better-trained teachers. These changes will require political will, national leadership and substantial increases in expenditure.

Investing in more teachers
In particular, education systems in Southern countries are plagued with inadequate numbers of teachers. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, the regional pupil/teacher ratio stands at 47:1 (climbing from 44:1 the year before) and in South-West Asia, it is 40:1[32] (compared to 17:1 in the UK). A high teacher/pupil ratio results in poor quality of education. Teachers do not have the time to use interactive, child-friendly and gender-sensitive practices in the classroom (considering that they were not trained in these approaches in the first place) with such large class sizes. In addition, many countries do not have enough female teachers – the prevalence of which has

been proven to boost girls' enrolment, particularly in rural areas. In many low-income countries, teachers do not meet the minimum standards for entry into teaching and many are not fully aware of the curriculum. Although a growing phenomenon, para teachers are not the answer as they are often community teachers and volunteers with little training, on fixed-term contracts (hence with little job security) and receiving lower wages than regular teachers. The result thus far has been a lower quality of education, thereby contributing to widening the gender gap in schooling.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic also severely undermines the provision of good education and contributes to teacher absenteeism. For example, it is estimated that 45 per cent (815 people) of the primary-school teachers trained in Zambia in 2000 died from AIDS that same year. With epidemics developing in many countries in South and West Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Central Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe, HIV/AIDS is a major global constraint on the provision of good quality education.

Learning and looking ahead

In the 1990s, the Education for All (EFA) movement called attention to the need to increase efforts and resources for primary education. The MDGs have followed suit by setting a time-bound target – the unfortunately missed 2005 date - when all gender parity in primary school should have been achieved. These campaigns have contributed to the worldwide progress on enrolment, and to some degree, completion rates for primary school in the past decade. However, due to a lack of planning and capacity, and a shortage of both financial and human resources, this spike in enrolment has also led to the over-flooding of primary schools (creating in some instances a disincentive for education). External aid has mostly been funnelled to primary education, leaving a gap in financing for other levels. To make up for this gap, costs have shifted to parents, who cannot afford early childhood or secondary schooling. Unless this situation changes, the complete gender parity MDG target, which applies to both primary **and secondary school**, will not be met by 2015.

Overall, attention needs to be brought back to the wider EFA agenda, which at the World Education Conference in Dakar in 2000 affirmed commitment towards ensuring access to high quality education from early childhood on to the university years and beyond, to adult literacy. Achieving these goals will contribute to decreasing poverty and gender inequities (see Box 4).

Box 4. **Education for All goals**

Two of the EFA goals – those relating to universal education and gender parity (goals 3 and 5) were picked up by the MDGs. However, the 'quality and equality' aspects of these goals were not included. While the MDGs continue mobilising efforts so that all children are in school, it is important to remember that all countries agreed to achieve this broader and comprehensive set of EFA goals at the World Education Conference in Dakar, in 2000.

Goal 1:	Expanding and improving early childhood care
Goal 2:	Ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete free, primary education of good quality
Goal 3:	Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
Goal 4:	Achieving a 50% improvement in adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all women
Goal 5:	Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education in 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement of basic education of good quality
Goal 6:	Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and life skills.

5 Strategies that work

Ensuring that girls and boys enrol and complete primary education of good quality is not an impossible task. There are several strategies that are proven to work for increasing girls' participation in school and, in particular, have had a certain impact on educating the poor. Boys feel the positive impact of these strategies as well. It should be noted that there is no 'magic bullet'. To be successful, strategies must be locally specific, culturally sensitive and multidimensional as there are multiple factors that cause low levels of educational achievement for girls. However, education has been proven to enhance the impact of other sectoral interventions, and, as such, is an essential building block to achieving equality and overcoming poverty. It is also clear that sequencing is important. If education comes first, any subsequent interventions will have a far greater impact. For example, in two Nigerian villages, the equivalent gain in life expectancy at birth was 20 per cent when the sole intervention was health facilities, 33 per cent when it was only education, and 87 per cent when it was both.[33]

The following strategies do not constitute an exhaustive list; rather they are examples. The aim is to highlight initiatives that have successfully improved girls' enrolment rates (particularly those from poor families) and mainstreamed gender into education policies. The examples are categorised according to the efforts of local communities; schools; governments and the international community. An illustrative case study drawn from Save the Children's work using the Child's Rights Programming Approach (see Box 5) around the globe follows each of these sections. These examples bring the voices of children, particularly girls, to the forefront. Their and their families' struggle to benefit from education should be the driving force for the international community, governments and schools to improve education. Accessible, free and good quality education will give parents the incentive to send all children, especially girls, to school.

Box 5. **Save the Children's rights-based programming approach**

Save the Children has many years of successful experience in promoting equal access and high quality education for all children. Save the Children's work is based on a Child's Rights Programming Approach to development. This is a way of programming (ie, of planning, designing, delivering and evaluating programmes) that is based around the achievement of the specific human rights of children as set out in international law. It is a comprehensive and inclusive approach, influencing all programme work.

Examples from Save the Children's programmes show how children are encouraged and empowered to claim their right to education. Programmes prioritise the active participation of children in the development, implementation, and monitoring of programme, policy and advocacy work directly relevant to their lives.[34] The examples that follow from South Sudan, India and Honduras show how children's participation has not only brought attention to their knowledge and contribution to society, but has also enhanced democracy. "It is

through learning to question, to express views and having their opinions taken seriously, that children will acquire the skills and competence to develop their thinking and to exercise judgement in the myriad of issues that will confront them as they approach adulthood," says Gerison Lansdown, former director of the UK's Children's Rights Office.[35]

Community efforts

Ultimately it is parents who make the decision on whether to send their children, especially girls, to school. Their involvement in their children's education – but particularly the mother's involvement - is perhaps the most critical factor in ensuring the success of children in schools. Many PTAs and School Management Committees (SMCs) (comprised of parents, teachers, school and education officials) have effectively advocated for increased girls' enrolment and retention, increased accountability of schools, and improved achievement levels. Schools are also places where communities come together, and thus provide a space to discuss these underlying gender relations in society. Progress in this respect can be seen using the example of religious leaders in Africa (usually seen to define and continue norms based on gender inequality), who have now joined others by encouraging parents to send both girls and boys to school.

Box 6. **Accelerated learning programme for girls in South Sudan**

Save the Children's Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in **South Sudan** has been successful in attracting girls to schools. An estimated 700,000 eligible children are out of school, of whom 470,000 are girls. For every 100 girls who enter primary school, only five complete their education. Save the Children UK works in 46 schools in two regions, Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile, aiming to build constituencies of support for girls' education among communities, community leaders and government. The ALP operates in 31 schools. Initially aimed at demobilised child soldiers, girls are attracted to the flexible nature of the classes and the fact that they learn with their peers, avoiding the embarrassment of learning with younger children. In 2002 only 49 girls were enrolled; by the end of 2003 this number had increased to 586 enrolled in Bahr el Ghazal alone. The Secretariat of Education is now planning to implement the programme nationally. Growing out of the ALP, Social Advocacy Teams comprising six boys and six girls raise awareness in the community of the value of education.[36]

Examples of community-level strategies for increasing school enrolment and educational performance of girls

Strategy: Communities	Lessons learned	Illustrative example
Increasing community involvement in schools	Campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of girls' education have long been undertaken. PTAs and SMCs have created the space for parents to have a greater say in matters related to the education of their children. For the most part, the groups have focused on improving accountability of schools and improving achievement. The next step is to engage parents in monitoring the quality of education and supporting them to lobby their governments for free, accessible and high quality education. [37]	Community empowerment project run in **Jordan** run by Unicef brought women of Al-Rashedieh village together to discuss absence of a secondary school. The women prepared a petition and presented it to the Ministry of Education (MoE). Six months later, three girls' secondary schools were built.[38]
Increasing children's involvement in sensitizing communities	Encouraging the activism of children and young people has led to a number of successes. Save the Children's support has enabled children's voices to be heard in many countries.	Social Advocacy Teams (SATs) in Save the Children's **South Sudan** programme promoted awareness in the community regarding the importance and value of educating all children. Each school has 12 members (six girls and six boys). Through community meetings, drama, cultural activities, etc, these students have seen a positive change in community attitudes towards girls' education and increased involvement of PTAs, teachers and local education authorities.[39]

Strategy: Communities	**Lessons learned**	**Illustrative example**
Involving communities in combating violence in schools	Violence in schools has been growing around the world. Many strategies have been formulated, from working with the government to enact laws against violence, to training teachers and identifying those that commit the crimes, and working with communities to address the underlying gendered causes.	In **Nepal**, many parents did not send daughters to school, fearing risk of 'inviting abuse'. Save the Children Nepal facilitated research by children to address violence in schools. Girls used participatory tools to explore, map, and analyse the situation. They determined the characteristics of a safe environment and developed an action plan. The girls' group has, since then, been consulted by the community on cases of mistreatment. A support group for abused girls now exists. Teachers and boys pay greater respect to girls in schools (incidences of teasing, intimidation and verbal abuse have declined). [40]
Supporting women's empowerment and initiatives for educating girls	Empowering women has proven to have a remarkable impact on increasing the participation of girls in school. In the same way, rallying women around girls' education is important but should not be an end in itself. Women should be given the opportunity to acquire literacy and other skills, especially since mothers that are educated are more likely to ensure their daughters receive schooling.	In **Burundi**, ActionAid's Reflect approach to adult education has brought a very positive trend in the community in terms of peace building, reconciliation and rehabilitation. This has led to an increase in girls' education. "…After we returned from exile in Tanzania, most of us feared to send our children back to school because earlier in the ethnic conflict children were massacred in schools. But to our surprise, after the Reflect circle started, the participants were the first to send children back to school because they had studied about the importance of education and also peace and reconciliation".

School-based strategies

The rapidly changing world, together with the increase in poverty and social problems such as HIV/AIDS, has challenged schools to change the way they operate. Multi-sector strategies, such as school feeding programmes, HIV/AIDS education and life skills training, have become commonplace. Many schools also operate on a multi-grade, flexible schedule to accommodate more children and those working (eg, in fields). Improvements in the quality and relevance of education, from eliminating gender concerns in curricula and teaching practices, to active learning techniques and abolishing corporal punishment, have dramatically increased the number of years girls stay in school.

Box 7- Tribal children monitor their hostel budgets, Rajasthan, India

In recent years, budget monitoring and analysis has become a popular tool for holding governments and donors accountable to their commitments, and for advocacy aiming to influence overall allocations of funding. In India, children and young people's involvement in budget monitoring has become an important element of active citizenship. It illustrates that government budgets and public policies are not only privy to the governments, ministries of finance and economists.

The Vagad Labourers and Farmers Association (VLFA), a district-wide people's organisation in Dungarpur District, invited the Budget Analysis Rajasthan Centre (BARC, which is supported by Save the Children) to conduct a workshop explaining the budget details of government school hostels for tribal children. Fifty young boys and girls, aged 12-18 from five hostels in the district, were brought together. The budget for tribal students' hostels was broken down so that the budget provisions for each child living in a hostel per day, per month and per year were explained. Children were told how much money the hostel was supposed to spend on each student (Rs6,225 or $138) for the purchase of toothpaste, toothbrushes and soap. There was money allocated for food – a balanced meal of dal, vegetables, rice, roti and sweets - per week. Children were also to benefit from two sets of school clothes per year.

The young people, however, were surprised to hear about these allocations. In reality, they had not received any of them. A district committee comprised of children living in the hostels and the VLFA was soon formed. They approached the tribal commissioner of the Government of Rajasthan about their rights to these items. Plans were also made to form student committees in each hostel to present the information they had learned to the hostel wardens. As a result of this new knowledge and continued advocacy, the corruption by hostel wardens has been stopped and children now get their monthly allocations.[41]

Examples of school-based strategies for increasing school enrolment and educational performance of girls

Strategy: Schools	**Lessons learned**	**Illustrative example**
Integrating gender concerns into curricula and teacher practices	Curricula are often gender biased, transmitting negative messages to girls and boys. Hidden messages in teaching materials and the attitudes of teachers convey that girls are inferior to boys and that they should have lower ambitions. In recent years governments have recognised the impact of discriminatory learning materials in perpetuating gender inequities. Several have evaluated and revised curricula.	The Government of **Mali**, with US Agency for International Development (USAID) support, undertook a year-long process to develop tools for integrating gender into the curriculum. Curriculum writers were trained in the use of these tools, which were adapted to the local context. They then used the tools when revising the primary school curricula.[42]
Active learning and participatory teaching techniques	Efforts need to be undertaken to sensitise teachers to treat girls and boys equally in classrooms, and give each a fair chance to learn and succeed. The existence of gender sensitive curricula does not guarantee that these concepts and values will be communicated to children. Teachers need to be trained in interactive, child-friendly approaches so they have a greater understanding of how to use gender sensitive techniques and teaching materials (where these exist).	The Save the Children UK education programme in Somali Regional State in the Federal Republic of **Ethiopia** started in 1995 and is implemented in collaboration with the Regional Education Bureau. Recognising that improving the quality of school requires efforts at different levels, the project has worked to upgrade the skills of primary school teachers. It has also developed a regional curriculum for primary schools. It has provided support to educational planners and supervisors and established and supported community management of education.[43]
School feeding programmes	Nutrition, or the lack of it, has been proven to not only keep children out of school, but also impact their alertness and capacity to learn. School feeding programmes, where food rations are given to households where girls attend school regularly, have	School feeding programmes, combined with take-home rations, have increased girls' enrolment by 50% in **Cameroon, Morocco, Niger and Pakistan**.[44] The World Food Programme (WFP), as primary administrator of the school feeding

Strategy: Schools	Lessons learned	Illustrative example
	increased girls' participation in school. Shortage in funding and dependence on food aid have sometimes plagued the sustainability of these programmes though.	programmes, has undertaken efforts to increase community involvement and promote equal involvement of men and women in managing the canteens.
Integrating HIV/AIDS into education	The primary school years provide a good opportunity for addressing HIV/AIDS because the ages between five and 15 are usually the time of lowest HIV prevalence, when most children are not yet sexually active. Good quality life skills education informs children about self-protection and adopting safe behaviours. HIV/AIDS education should also challenge ingrained gender relations by giving space to girls and boys to discuss gender issues and to examine the power dynamics involved in intimate relationships.[45]	**Uganda** cut HIV prevalence rates from 15% in 1990 to 5% in 2000. There was strong political leadership from President Museveni and engagement from the local level, with 700-plus government agencies and NGOs disseminating information to change behaviour and fight discrimination. Ten million young people now receive AIDS education in the classroom. Because of Universal Primary Education (UPE), more children are able to process and use the information they receive, whether it comes from radio and TV, billboards and posters, teachers and books, or visiting a testing and counselling centre. In one school district in 1994, more than 60% of students aged 13-16 reported that they were already sexually active. In 2001, the figure was less than 5%.[46]

Government efforts

The state is the primary provider of universal education. Its responsibility is to cover school fees (and other direct costs) and basic inputs, such as an adequate number of learning and teaching materials, to hire enough teachers so the teacher/pupil ratio is manageable, and to provide training for teachers so they use interactive, child-centred and gender-sensitive methodologies in the classroom. The examples below are just some strategies, based on a gender equality approach, that have worked to improve education and bring more girls, especially those from poor families, into schools.

Box 8. **Children and young people's participation in the PRSP in Honduras**

In Honduras, Save the Children, together with its partners, has been involved in five consultations with children and young people. These processes have shaped advocacy and influenced the country's PRSP and economic policy. While the space created for civil society involvement in the PRSP was disappointing, child labour, poverty and education nevertheless got some attention (and pledged funds!). The three-year consultation process described below has strengthened citizenship and flagged the importance of civil society participation, including that of children. Complex as the issue may be, creative and interactive methods using art, puppetry and theatre helped children discuss the issues of poverty, international finance institutions and the PRSP.

- Children explained the link between poverty and work and how the government could better the situation. The first thing was availability of flexible forms of education for working children. Because many would still need to work, they asked for better empowerment opportunities and fairer wages for their parents – so children could stop working and attend school.
- Links between child labour, poverty and education were strengthened in 2002. Fifty children were brought together to advise on the National Plan of Action of Children and Adolescents, 2003-2010.
- In 2003, Save the Children organised the participation of 30 children and young people during the official PRSP review. A child-friendly version of the PRSP was created. Children identified the failures within the education system. They were vocal about the lack of learning materials, from books to furniture, teacher absenteeism and poor teaching methods. Issues about fair wages, decent employment and flexible education were carried forward from previous consultations. New issues were raised, such as violence, lack of healthcare and migration of parents to the US.

In 2003, DFID funded Save the Children to undertake a pilot project to monitor civil society, and in particular children and young people's participation, in the implementation of the PRSP. The Honduran Government has since decided to allocate funds from debt relief for the National Plan of Action on the eradication of child labour. [47]

Examples of government strategies for increasing school enrolment and educational performance of girls

Strategy: Governments	Lessons learned	Illustrative example
Eliminating user fees and other indirect costs	Costs incurred by parents are the biggest obstacle for educating girls, especially those from poor families. However, without proper preparation, elimination of fees can lead to overcrowding of schools and low quality of education, resulting in high dropout rates. Therefore, before eliminating fees, governments need to prepare for increases in enrolment by securing resources to build enough schools, provide learning materials, hire and train additional teachers. Donor agencies need to support governments so they can plan for the elimination of school fees and provide the necessary inputs for it to be successful.	In 2003, the **Kenyan** Government introduced free universal and compulsory primary education. As a result, enrolment increased from 5.9m to more than 7m, and they are still rising. Poor parents now feel they are more able to feed and clothe their children since abolition of school fees. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) has committed £10.8m to the Government of Kenya's education plan, which aims to reduce the cost of primary education to parents.[48]
Creating ministries or divisions (Girls' Education Units) to mainstream gender concerns and to increase girls' participation in education	Translating gender sensitive policies into programmes remains difficult. Mainstreaming gender means considering both women's and men's needs and experiences into design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Ministries or special government units have been created to increase girls' enrolment, among other things. Some exist out of genuine interest for gender issues. Others came about because of donor agencies (or government's need to satisfy requirement for focus on the issue). Funding tends to be on a project basis, not enabling comprehensive, long-term initiatives. This has compromised attempts to mainstream gender into education.[49]	**Tanzania** has had a long-standing commitment to achieving gender equality. Its 1984 Bill of Rights led to legislative reforms to remove discrimination against women. Women in Development (WID) sectoral focal points were created to mainstream WID issues in all sectors. A Gender Co-ordinating Committee was established in 1995 to strengthen educational activities and has since successfully lobbied to keep girls in school.[50]

Strategy: Governments	**Lessons learned**	**Illustrative example**
Create a gender responsive and transparent budget	A gender responsive budget (GRB) means ensuring that gender issues and disparities are considered and addressed in all government policies and programmes.[51] It goes beyond accounting for special programmes focused on women. GRBs have proven to be a useful tool for tracking implementation and funding of government policies on gender. Training does need to be provided and adequate data, disaggregated by gender, must be available.	In 1997 the Forum for Women in Democracy, an NGO founded by women parliamentarians in **Uganda,** partnered with the MoE to analyse their budgets. Although UPE was mandated and fees eliminated, findings showed the gender gap was not eradicated. Specific projects (and costs) for girls and vulnerable children were identified and funded by donors.
Mainstreaming gender into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)	Although PRSPs are primarily World Bank/IMF-mandated national economic plans for reducing poverty, they should, nevertheless, provide a forum for countries to develop nationally-owned strategies, with the engagement of civil society. Programmes must consider that although women and men share the burden of poverty, they experience deprivation differently and devise different strategies to deal with it. [52] While PRSPs are mandated to include civil society, very few governments have done this well. Representation of the interests of women and children, and at times even social sectors, has not always been successful.	In 2002, **Rwanda's** PRSP was one of the best examples of how to mainstream gender. The Ministry of Gender and Promotion of Women created a participatory process for integrating gender issues across all sectors. Poverty, water, education and HIV/AIDS sectors now contain strong gender analysis.

Efforts by the international community

The UN agencies, donors and NGOs have played a key role in advocating for increased spending and better quality education in Southern countries. Several advocacy movements have been organised by UN agencies and global coalitions of NGOs. They have helped southern countries achieve progress in education by garnering increased funding and addressing gender disparities. In some cases, they have even provided non-formal centres for children out of school. New types of partnerships involving non-traditional actors (ie, the private sector) have also evolved, although the success of the latter in narrowing gender disparities has been mixed.

Case study – global minimum standards

In recent years, as Save the Children's education programming in conflict and disaster-affected contexts has increased, two issues have come to the fore: how to ensure a certain level of quality and accountability; and how to mainstream education as a humanitarian response. It was clear that other UN and NGO agencies were facing similar challenges.

In 2002, the Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) initiated a process to develop Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction. A working group, comprised of 13 UN and international NGO members, was established. Save the Children, as the only UK-based NGO, has been working with others such as UNICEF, UNHCR and UNESCO to bring together the best thinking and experience from the field.

Initially, INEE learned from the experience of the Sphere Project, which has developed standards in other humanitarian sectors such as shelter and health. Its core beliefs – ie, that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance - were adopted, as was the structure of the standards.

However, developing the minimum standards for education in emergencies required a highly participatory and unique process. In the end, over 2,250 individuals from more than 50 countries were involved.

- Over 110 local, national and sub-regional consultations were held in 47 countries to gather input and information from over 1,900 representatives. In addition to hosting a series of these local consultations, Save the Children partnered with the Institute of Education, University of London, to host a consultation in the UK.
- Four regional consultations were held between January and May 2004, covering Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East and Europe. The 137 delegates to these regional consultations included representatives from affected populations, international and local NGOs, governments and UN agencies in 51 countries. Save the Children hosted the Asia consultation.
- Finally, a peer review process involved over 40 experts in the fields of education, health, humanitarian and protection issues. This group analysed the four sets of regional standards and honed them into one. Save the Children encouraged the involvement of several UK-based donors and academics.

The minimum standards handbook provides guidelines that will help education providers improve teacher training as well as the design, implementation, development and administration of education programmes. Issues of gender equity and the rights of girls are integral to these programmes. The standards focus on building local capacity and more effective co-ordination with local and international partners, education authorities and host communities. The handbook is designed to give governments and humanitarian workers the tools they need to address the Education for All and UN Millennium Development Goals. It is the first step towards ensuring that education initiatives in emergency situations lay a solid and sound basis for post-conflict and disaster reconstruction.

Following the handbook's launch at the INEE's second Global Inter-Agency Consultation on Education in Emergencies and Early Recovery in Cape Town, South Africa, in December 2004, next steps include promotion, training, piloting and monitoring and evaluation. Save the Children is committed to realising these minimum standards, with the aim of ensuring a better education for children affected by emergencies.

Examples of international strategies for increasing school enrolment and educational performance of girls

Strategy: International	Lessons learned	Illustrative example
Advocacy on girls' education	Several international movements, involving UN agencies, governments and civil society organisations, have brought attention to the right to education, especially for girls. While the time-bound targets (EFA by 2000 or gender parity by 2005) have been missed, these movements have nevertheless mobilised much effort and many resources to the cause.	Several international campaigns and agreements promote the right to education. Some even propose strategies for achieving Education for All, with particular emphasis on girls. Examples include: United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Beijing women's conference EFA in 1990 Dakar in 2000 UNCRC MDGs in 2000 (with time-bound targets in 2005 and 2015)
Devising alternative, flexible approaches to schooling	The deteriorating quality of education and lack of schools for isolated populations led NGOs to set up 'community schools'. Successful examples of 'learning centres' show us that a flexible schedule and access to a school where there were none before; introduction of child-friendly curriculum and practices; and increased involvement of communities all contribute to enabling children to receive an education. There are also some major drawbacks.[53] When the project funding ended, communities could not always fund and manage	In **Punjab province**, children, many of them girls, have to work to support their families. Robeena, for example, who is 12 years old, spends up to 10 hours a day taking apart woollen clothes for recycling along with her mother and three sisters. A local education centre run by Save the Children enables girls to acquire basic reading, writing and maths skills. There are more than 250 education centres in two districts. Over 8,000 children, aged 5-12, catch up on education while continuing to support their families. Since

Strategy: International	Lessons learned	Illustrative example
	the school. Some NGO-run schools also created a parallel education system, which competed with state delivery systems. Where children gained a good education, many were not able to continue onto secondary school. Mostly (??) all schools built community 'ownership'. In some cases, this meant a greater burden on families to contribute scarce resources.	parents are unwilling to let girls travel far, Save the Children set up smaller centres. Staff met with parents and community leaders to discuss the importance of education and to persuade them to send girls to school. When children reach the required standard, the project aims to place them in state schools. Families that cannot afford further education can get a grant. The project has also worked in 100 state schools to train teachers in child-friendly and participatory methods.[54]
Mobilising civil society and building global alliances among NGOs to advocate for education	The capacity of NGOs globally to organise and unite has been astounding. The most successful example is the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). Founded in 1999, the GCE brings together NGOs and teachers' unions from over 150 countries. The GCE promotes education as a basic human right, and mobilises public pressure on governments and the international community to fulfil their promises to provide free, compulsory basic education for all people; in particular for children, women and all disadvantaged sections of society. In addition, the GCE conducts quality action-oriented research and is a clearing house for reports and resources on education.	The GCE organises a successful Global Action Week every year, bringing together civil society to pressure governments and the international community to renew their commitments to education. In 2005, the 'send my friend to school' campaign will focus on the missed gender parity goal. The campaign encourages people to make lifesize cut-out friends to symbolise the out of school children.[55] In 2004, it released a provocative report on how IMF loan conditionality effectively blocks countries from spending more on education.
Public-private partnerships	There has been growing recognition of the need to combine efforts of NGOs, donor agencies from the North and recently, businesses. In the same	The Commonwealth Education Fund is a partnership between the British Government, business and NGOs. In 2002, Gordon Brown,

Strategy: International	Lessons learned	Illustrative example
	respect, it is important to recognise that unless the goal is clear and appropriate, such as supporting national educational development and civil society participation in education, these 'partnerships' can further isolate vulnerable populations. However, it should be noted that not all private sector participation is beneficial. Private schools often charge very high fees, isolating children, especially girls from poor families, from school. The privatisation of public services is also often undertaken without adequate consideration of issues of equitable access, affordability, coverage, quality and effects on public service provision for the poor.[56]	Chancellor of the UK Government, committed £10m to the CEF and made a promise to match donations from businesses. The fund is managed by ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children. It supports advocacy for education reform in 17 of the poorest Commonwealth countries by strengthening civil society participation in the design and implementation of national and local education plans. It also supports local communities to monitor government spending on education and other innovative activities to ensure that girls and the most disadvantaged children are in school.

6 The finance issue

"At the turn of the millennium, the international community promised that by 2005, there would be as many girls as boys in school. Later this year, when leaders from around the world come together to take stock of the Millennium Development Goals, there will be no escaping the fact that we have collectively failed to keep this promise." Rt Hon Hillary Benn, MP.[57]

Conservative estimates suggest that achieving universal primary completion by 2015 will cost $5.6 billion in new aid each year – if governments are able to correspondingly increase their investments in education at the same time. The real costs may well be much higher. Improving the quality of education while expanding access, so that the entire eligible age group can participate in primary education, requires a level of sustained investment that would be beyond the reach of many poor countries even if national budgets for education were to rise. Governments will have to mobilise additional, external resources. External assistance will remain a key dimension of the international effort to achieve the education MDGs and broader EFA goals.

This section reviews levels of public expenditure and foreign aid for education. Both will need to increase substantially if the 2015 target is to be met. In addition, resources will need to be more predictable, reliable and sustained. They will need to be better channelled to the countries and out-of-school populations (ie, girls and the poor) within them, as well as on recurrent expenditures, such as teachers' salaries, which take up the bulk of the education budget. Finally, overall conditionalities linked to foreign aid must be reduced if governments are to retain authority over decision-making on education and increase their spending. Economic conditionalities that can be harmful, such as trade liberalisation, debt and fiscal austerity measures, are reviewed.

Box 9. **Fast Facts on Overall Funding for Education**

- Preliminary estimates show that the MDGs could be met if foreign aid were increased by $50 billion per year, well within the promise of 0.07% ($130 billion a year).
- The recently completed Millennium Project Report estimates that low-income countries alone will need a total of $94 billion in 2006, rising to $149 billion in 2015, in order to reach the MDGs.
- Only five of the 22 major donors - none from the seven most powerful nations (the G7) – have met the 0.7% target. On current spending trends, Canada will not reach the target until 2025, the USA will not reach it until 2040, and Germany will not get there before 2087. See DAC 2004 Development Cooperation Report for donor aid projections.* The UK and Spain have recently set timelines to meet this target.
- In 2002, Overall Development Assistance (ODA) commitments to education exceeded $4 billion for the first time since 1999 and represented about 9% of total commitments.
- The year 2002 registered a slight increase in ODA for education, equally $4billion.

* Available at:
http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,2340,en_2825_495602_1893129_1_1_1_1,00.html.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2004/5

Increase in government expenditure on education

The current level of spending on education is simply too low. These low levels of investment have resulted in unequal access, low quality and shifting costs onto parents. As explained in Part 4 of this paper, these shortcomings have had a detrimental impact on girls' education, and girls from poor families in particular. In 2001, public expenditure on education as a share of GNP averaged 3.4 in sub-Saharan Africa, 4.6 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 3.6 in East Asia and the Pacific, and 3.3 in South Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa expenditure actually decreased from 1998, when it was 3.8. For comparison, North America and Western Europe spend 5.6 per cent of GNP on education. This is higher than any of the developing country regions, whose problems are far worse.

In order for countries to meet the MDGs by 2015, spending levels will need to increase dramatically. It is unlikely that these countries will undergo enough economic growth to generate the required resources. In addition, conditionalities attached to external aid imposed by donors can constrain country capacity to increase domestic spending or can negatively affect poor people. These polices include trade liberalisation, prioritising debt repayment, and fiscal austerity measures imposed through loan conditions of bilateral donor agencies and the World Bank and the IMF. As poor countries are dependent on external financing, a number of issues relating to donor influence over policy-making will continue to deepen. These policies are reviewed below.

External aid for education needs to be increased and sustained

Trends in foreign aid for primary education reveal that external funding for education is inconsistent, insufficient and unequally allocated, rendering developing countries' promotion of sustainable education reform virtually impossible. Industrialised countries and international financial institutions have failed to make the investment in education that will enable girls to attend and complete school. Despite donor nations' promises for extra funding for education, total aid flows to developing countries actually declined during the 1990s. They have increased only slightly since 2001.

Average annual bilateral support to education and to basic education from 2001–02 was more than $900m per year. Support for education from multilateral agencies (excluding the World Bank) amounted to $660m per year for 2001 and 2002. The World Bank remains the single largest supporter of education, with $2.3 billion (37 per cent of total aid) in 2003. This enables the World Bank to exert tremendous leverage over education policies (ie, push for privatisation and decentralisation). These resources are still not sufficient to meet the MDGs. This might all be about to change with new financing proposals such as the International Finance Facility (IFF) frontloading aid for the EFA Fast-Track Initiative (FTI).

In addition to more funds, aid for education must be more predictable, reliable and sustained. This means aid must be pledged for longer timeframes, even beyond three to five years, and disbursed more predictably. This is an important factor in enabling Southern governments to plan and fund their national education policies. Many ministries of finance argue that aid provided for only one to three years makes it difficult to hire the number of teachers required. Where will they find the resources to continue paying teachers once the funding cycle has finished? With more and more governments becoming pessimistic over aid flows, and some even considering not accepting money that is not sustained, the likelihood of countries achieving the MDGs will be further reduced.

Prospects for new aid

In November 2004 at the High Level Group meeting in Brazil, G8 countries pledged to increase funding for girls' education in 2005. There are plans to link the UK Government's proposed International Finance Facility – which involves bringing forward of future aid spending and could generate $50 billion per year into existing aid to the Fast-Track Initiative. In addition, at the launch of the Girls' Education Strategy, DFID earmarked £1.4 billion specifically for girls' education. Even with the endorsement of only a few of the G8 countries, these initiatives could generate $4-5 billion a year for education. These resources must materialise. The first question is, are these promised resources new, additional aid or simply repackaged funds? Will these funds be sustained over time? Will aid be channelled towards the countries that need it most (as pointed out in Part 2, Reviewing progress)?

Box 10. **The IFF: pros and cons**

In January 2003, HM Treasury and the Department for International Development launched the proposal for an International Finance Facility. The IFF is a temporary financing mechanism that aims to increase aid funding over the next ten years by 'frontloading' aid through the sale of bonds between now and 2015 and then paying them back with interest over a longer period. To reach the $50 billion yearly target amount, the IFF would need the participation of every donor who pledged increases at Monterrey. So far, only four countries have shown an interest in committing: the UK, France, Italy and Spain.

Frontloading aid has the key advantage that it can benefit children now, before they grow up, thereby increasing a country's future productivity and breaking the cycle of poverty. Once established, the donor commitments would be legally binding, meaning that poor countries could predict increased funding levels. However, this only applies to overall funding levels – on an individual basis countries could still be exposed to aid unpredictability if poor countries fail to meet the conditions of their funding mechanisms.

The IFF does not aim to produce any overall increase in aid, but rather to bring expenditure forward in time. It is a model for better aid governance rather than channelling more money. It does not address any of the problematic issues raised by the current aid system. It is therefore vital that the IFF be complemented by trade and debt policy reform, an increase in global aid commitments and an end to damaging economic conditionality. Other concerns include:

- There is a danger that donors will be tempted to reduce their percentage of GNI given to aid outside of the IFF in light of the increased funding that it will raise over the next ten years. Later on, they may also be tempted to divert funding to repay the IFF's bonds.
- The focus of the IFF on achieving the MDGs may encourage support for short-term projects and global initiatives at the expense of building long-term, effective delivery systems.
- While the majority of the funds will be provided as grants, concessional loans will also be provided.
- Finally, the role for developing country governments in the IFF's governance structures is not clear. There is a strong emphasis on the predominance of donor views to encourage them to come on board.[58]

Box 11. **The Fast-Track Initiative**

The EFA FTI was created to ensure more efficient use of available resources, and accelerate mobilisation of external resources for countries most in danger of failing to meet the core EFA goal of Universal Primary Completion (UPC) by 2015. The criteria for participation are having a Poverty Reduction Strategy, being off track for meeting the MDG, and demonstrating an upward trend in performance in primary education and financing. As of January 2005, the UK has taken over co-chair of the FTI, from the US, alongside Sweden.

In the first year, 18 countries were invited to develop national proposals to access FTI funds. In January 2005, 12 of these countries have received endorsement through the FTI review process. Six additional countries were invited (but have not yet been endorsed) and five countries are benefiting from the analytical fund.

With the proposal to channel increased aid derived from the IFF into the FTI on the table, a number of concerns with the FTI framework and functioning need to be addressed in order for it to become an effective fund for education.

- The primary concern is that of uncertainty in funding. Donors have yet to agree on how to improve the targeting, co-ordination and predictability of aid. The role and responsibilities of the donor consortium, as well as individual donors, continue to be unclear.
- Genuine partnership between donors, governments and civil society is absent. Decision-making processes of the FTI have not been transparent. Some have even expressed concern that the FTI is turning into yet another mechanism for donors to impose conditions on resources.
- There has been some progress in making the guidelines for the assessment and endorsement of the primary education component of an education sector plan a more effective tool from which local donors can guide evaluation of that country's sector plan, and in ensuring that gender and HIV/AIDS are integrated.[59]

Where aid is most needed

Trends indicate that aid doesn't always go towards countries most in need. Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, and the Arab States account for three-quarters of the total bilateral aid committed to education, with 30 per cent, 27 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. However, considering that the World Bank is the

largest financer of education (in 2002 it provided 46 per cent of total multilateral aid to education) it is worrying that the amount of aid for sub-Saharan Africa - the region with the lowest rates of enrolment and achievement - was almost halved (primarily due to a decrease in long-term interest free lending through the International Development Association (IDA) arm of the World Bank). Other regions which face similar difficulties, such as Latin America and the Caribbean, which have less intense education problems, received more aid than South and West Asia, where one-third of the world's out-of-school children live.[60] Aid allocations are based on geopolitics and donors' preferences for 'good performers' rather than being based on the needs of the world's poor.

What aid should fund

How resources are used and whether they are effective in helping individual countries meet the EFA goals is a matter of considerable interest. While all bilateral and multilateral agencies have signed up to the MDG agenda, which prioritises basic education, total funding for primary education has actually declined. The bilateral donors that are giving relatively more to the education sector as a whole are giving relatively less to basic education. Conversely, the agencies that give relatively higher priority to basic education, on average, give a lower priority to overall support for education. The same is true for the World Bank. Although basic education remains the most important subsector, its share fell slightly over the decade. Cross-sector support increased.

Aid must also support governments in making essential services accessible to all, including enabling them to eliminate user fees and avoid shifting costs onto parents. Currently, only one third of aid goes to poverty reduction programmes. Of the remainder, one third is tied to suppliers in the donor countries and the other third goes to emergency needs, the funding of donor-country consultants, or administration of donor programmes. In-country, the bulk of funding provided by donors is used for infrastructure, learning materials and training, and not recurrent expenditures, schools, classrooms or children.

Recurrent expenditures, such as teachers' salaries, are an important component (sometimes 80 per cent of all expenditures) of the education budget. If development aid does not fund these expenditures, then how will governments be able to hire and train the additional teachers required to ensure that each and every child is schooled? Without teachers, schools cannot function. The already high teacher/pupil ratios speak volumes about the low quality of education. Low teachers' salaries (many times below a living wage) force many teachers out of the profession or to take up additional employment. Currently, governments are expected to cover teachers' salaries from national resources. This has never been totally possible and continues to be challenging, given the growing school population.

With countries becoming increasingly dependent on external financing of education, will donor agencies have more say over the education policies of

Southern countries? This is particularly relevant given current efforts to harmonise aid (which in itself is a positive step, moving towards supporting entire education systems rather than funding one-off projects). There is already evidence that donors dictate their own education policies, which are not necessarily in line with countries' own national development priorities. The World Bank, for example, pushes decentralisation, privatisation, public-private partnerships and the hiring of para teachers onto countries. Finally, it should be remembered that the ability of countries to define national education policies and to raise more domestic revenues to spend more on education – something that is important to retain national autonomy over policy-making - is limited by donor conditionality.

Conditional aid

Most recipient countries must adhere to policies and conditions of donor agencies prescribed through loan and grant agreements. Some conditions are necessary in order to ensure that the use of funds is transparent and accountable to both citizens and donor agencies. But in many cases conditionalities - in particular the economic and fiscal restrictions - have been damaging to national economies and have undermined progress in tackling childhood poverty and achieving gender parity in education. These include (but are not limited to) policies forcing governments to liberalise trade, prioritise debt repayments and impose fiscal austerity measures. These conditions have had, at best, a mixed impact on the lives of poor children and their communities. All too often they have a damaging impact. They have, for example, forced recipient governments to cut social spending and make poor families pay for services they can't afford.

Trade liberalisation

While there are some benefits to liberalising trade, current free (rather than fair) trade agreements can exacerbate childhood poverty and gender inequalities by increasing food prices, loss of employment and economic insecurity, particularly in the short term. Within the trade debate, there is an overwhelming argument, to the advantage of both developed and developing countries, to remove agricultural trade barriers in developed countries. These barriers create expensive trade diversion away from developing country suppliers. However, the impact of trade reforms on poor countries can be a loss of income, both for individuals (as jobs are lost) and for governments, whose ability to raise revenues through tariffs (prohibited under free trade agreements) is dramatically decreased. Africa, for example, has lost the equivalent of 50 per cent of every dollar received in aid because of the falling prices for its commodities, which is partly attributable to freer trade.[61]

The impact of this on education, inequality and poverty is clear. In Uganda, trade liberalisation has increased women's burden of work and poverty, leading to heightened food insecurity, with adverse effects on children's nutrition, health, learning outcomes and security.[62] Education systems will be further affected if social services are included in the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) (see Box 12). While it is clear that developed countries must make an effort to make

trade more fair by removing the subsidies that prop up their producers, it is also clear that any progress in trade reform must consider the potentially damaging impacts of freeing up trade in poorer countries.

Box 12. **GATS and education**

A recent and highly debated policy is the inclusion of social services in the General Agreement on Trade and Services. If countries like the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand succeed in characterising education as a "property right" rather than a public right, then education will have to be liberalised. Developing countries will not be able to impose any limits on the number of foreign education service providers (ie, private schools, NGOs) or the number of foreign services personnel that may be employed.[63] This will most likely lead to a surge in privatisation of education, and a widening rich-poor gap.[64] Governments will also have to treat domestic and foreign education service providers in the same manner, meaning that private providers can now also claim any assistance offered to public schools. Since performance criteria or regulations are also forbidden under the GATS, states will not be able to regulate private firms to comply with a basic quality of services, including curriculum, issues of language, and ethnic diversity, thereby creating further barriers for vulnerable children to access quality basic education. As the content cannot be regulated, foreign companies could have free rein over building national identity and teaching what they feel is important.

Debt

There is some concern that much of the extra funds raised through any one of the proposed financing schemes will not be directed to financing education because of the level of debt countries must repay. This sapping of resources leaves countries with much less to spend on education. The average debt service of 17 indebted countries stands at 23.6 per cent of GNP compared to an average of 12.3 per cent expenditure on social services.[65] In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, the amount of debt increases each year, with 85 per cent of new loans being made to cover old loans. In 2001, 22 of the countries receiving debt relief through the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative of the World Bank and IMF spent two-thirds more on servicing their debt than on education. Tanzania, which is struggling to implement a plan to provide universal free education, paid out $434 million (equalling the country's external financing gap for implementing its primary education plan).[66] Colombia spent 53 per cent of its national budget on debt, and less than 8 per cent was allocated to education and health.[67]

Honduras provides an example of how debt has blocked increased aid and public investment in education. Honduras was chosen as one of the first recipients of the Education for All Fast-Track initiative. At the same time, it increased teachers' wages. This measure increased the public sector wage bill over the 9.1 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ceiling imposed by the IMF as a condition for the country to benefit from the HIPC programme. The resulting suspension of HIPC

funds cost Honduras $194m in interim debt relief. This amount would fulfil the projected financing gap for EFA three times over.

Fiscal austerity

The IMF, which does not deal directly with education, nevertheless impedes progress on education by encouraging a country to ensure that it creates and maintains macroeconomic stability and sustainability. These conditionalities can create unnecessarily conservative fiscal constraints on national budget expenditure, often diverting resources from education to debt repayments, maintaining low budget deficit (or surpluses in some cases) and forcing countries to maintain low, single-digit rates of inflation. However, the IMF's targets are frequently criticised for being overly tight. There is evidence to suggest that higher fiscal deficits are compatible with promoting growth. There is also debate that inflation targets could be much higher.[68] Similarly, although there is little evidence to show that IMF policies slow down growth directly, there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that tight fiscal targets can limit a country's potential for growth, through limiting the amount of money that is spent on education and other productive sectors.

To meet these loan conditions, ministries of finance in borrowing countries limit public spending. Public sector wage bills, which occupy a large portion of the national budget, have taken the hardest hit. In Zambia, for example, in order to comply with the IMF's 8 per cent GDP wage ceiling (a mandatory IMF condition Zambia had to comply with before it could receive its full debt relief under the HIPC initiative), the government had to make a difficult choice. The Ministry of Finance forced the Ministry of Education to cancel its previous wage increases and ban the hiring of new teachers. In April 2004, 9,000 teachers remained unemployed, leaving hundreds of schools understaffed, and a teacher/pupil ratio of up to 1: 100 in some schools.

In some instances, the IMF has also been accused of being an indirect blockage to the amount of aid that a government can receive through its prescribed fiscal targets. Between 2002 and 2003, the Ugandan Finance Ministry attempted to reject a $52m grant awarded to Uganda by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) in order to abide by the IMF's strict loan conditions. They were partly concerned that accepting these new monies would increase levels of domestic spending and that, in turn, could spark a rise in inflation, therefore violating the inflation target agreed with the IMF. The Ugandan Government feared it could have faced a negative review by the IMF, thereby threatening its agreement with them and jeopardising all other incoming foreign aid, which relies on an IMF agreement as a signal of good behaviour. While the grant was eventually accepted, the delays undermined efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. Given the IMF's track record, it is quite possible that a similar situation could unfold if the newly pledged funds for education were made available. If funding is blocked, then girls' enrolment rates will suffer even more and the little progress that has been made on closing the gender gap will be stalled. Box 13 illustrates the impact of IMF policies in Ghana.

Box 13 - IMF policies in Ghana

In Ghana the trend has always been to set macroeconomic targets that are agreed with the IMF, such as single-digit inflation, low interest rates and a stable exchange rate. Once these targets have been set, the Government is compelled to put in place measures that will lead to an achievement of these targets, such as cutting down on expenditures to control inflation, etc. There is also an emphasis towards balancing the budget. While this is necessary, the emphasis is on indirect consumer-based taxes. These tend to impact the poor more adversely than the rich if they are not well designed. The national budget is a translation of what has been already agreed on between the Ghanaian Government, the IMF and the World Bank. The targets of GDP growth rate and the inflation rate, as well as keeping budget deficit within certain limits, are dictated by the IMF along with conditionalities of trade liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation.

Source: Save the Children, 2004, "Budget Activism in Ghana" by Nazeem, A. in *Where's the money going? Monitoring government and donor budgets.*

A way forward

In a recent policy brief, the UK Government indicated the need to reform IMF policies:

> *"Macroeconomic stability is extremely important if measures to tackle poverty are to be successful. Donors, including the UK, have traditionally relied on an IMF programme to indicate that a country's macroeconomic performance is satisfactory before granting aid. However, if donors suspend all programmatic aid in response to an IMF decision to do so, this leads to high volatility. The UK would like to move to a more graduated assessment of macroeconomic and social policy performance. Donors' decisions on providing aid to low income countries should be driven more by the countries' needs and circumstances – such as the capacity to implement reform and its importance to poverty reduction – rather than by a determination by the IMF of whether the country's economy is 'on-track'. We would welcome a discussion with partner governments and donor countries as to whether this is an approach that other donors might take."*[69]

The combined impact of the conditionalities described above has been damaging to the education sector. The abilities (and independence) of recipient countries to increase spending on education have effectively been blocked. Countries are unable to fund basic inputs, such as covering school fees and improving quality of education. Most are left with little choice but to reallocate funds from within their existing education budget, with, investment in primary education given precedence over other areas of the education budget. The overall effect is a decline in the quality of education and a loss of coherence in the education system. This makes system-wide reform impossible and threatens the achievement of gender parity in secondary education. Part 7 outlines recommendations for the donor community and IFIs. Putting these recommendations into action will put the world firmly on track to meeting the MDGs by 2015, if not sooner.

7 Taking action

Closing the gender gap in education will require efforts from the international community, governments, schools and communities. In Part 5, we suggested strategies for the latter three groups. This section focuses on recommendations for international donors. The UK Government has a particularly important role to play, because as chair of the G8, EU and FTI, it can ensure that new resources are channelled into girls' education. Several international conferences in 2005 present an opportunity to advocate on these issues.

In particular, we call on the UK Government to:

- meet its commitment to increase overseas aid to 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2010 and encourage other western governments to meet the 0.7 target
- use its influence within the international community to ensure that the money needed to meet the MDGs – $50 billion per year – is provided
- use its influence internationally to ensure more aid is spent on girls' education via mechanisms like the Fast Track Initiative, which would allow poor countries to scale up their education programmes quickly and easily
- persuade donors to coordinate aid and give governments in developing countries confidence to make long-term commitments to their education programmes
- ensure that gender parity is a key part of countries' education plans and budgets.

We also call on the UK Government to use its influence to ensure that countries have the right economic conditions to enable them to increase spending on education. In particular, we call on the UK Government to:

- persuade donors to cut some of the strings attached to aid – such as prioritising debt repayments, privatisation, deregulation and fiscal austerity – and allow governments to prioritise education spending
- ensure that the International Monetary Fund increases flexibility in the economic conditions it imposes on its loans to developing countries – these condition limit the amount of money governments can spend each year and can lead to education budget cuts
- works with the international community to cancel debts owed by developing countries, so that they can use these funds for education and other social spending.

8 Conclusion

This brief has focused on improving education because the gender parity target for MDG3, for 2005, has not been met. Several international meetings (from the G8, Beijing Plus 10 and MDG Summit) provide opportunities for governments to bring more and better aid to the table to re-energise efforts to meet this goal in 2015, if not before. As UNICEF has rightly stated: "Investing in girls' education today – not just with money, but also with energy and enthusiasm, commitment and concern, focus and intensity – is a strategy that will protect the rights of all children to a quality education and will jump-start all other development goals."[70]

Increased education is essential for the empowerment of women. The empowering effects of girls' and women's education are manifested in a variety of ways, including increased income-earning potential, ability to bargain for resources within the household, decision-making autonomy, control over their own fertility, and participation in public life.[71] In particular, education increases girls' self-confidence, social and negotiation skills and earning power, and makes them less vulnerable to violence and ill health – all factors that exacerbate gender inequality and poverty.

The factors that cause gender inequality and exacerbate poverty are well known. The "cure" could very well be education that is gender sensitive and accessible to all. If schools can teach equality and provide girls and boys with the tools to question the status quo, as well as devising strategies to overcome disparities, then transformation can take place. However, unless fees and other costs are eliminated, and schools change from being overcrowded classrooms with too few teachers, parents will have little incentive to send their children to school.

Closing the gender gap in education will require a multitude of actions on the part of families, communities, schools, governments and the international community. Fortunately, decades of experience have taught us what "works" for girls' education and what kind of schooling experience we should aspire to create. What is needed is a substantial increase in spending on education by governments, aided by a substantial increase in foreign aid. Pressure must be maintained on donor agencies and Northern governments to deliver on the promises they have made.

As chair of the G8 and FTI, the UK Government has an unprecedented opportunity to change the way the aid community does business. The UK Government must use the opportunity 2005 presents to show leadership internationally. By pledging £1.4 billion for girls' education and the proposed linking of the IFF and FTI, it sets an example for other donors to increase funding. The proposal by Gordon Brown, the UK Chancellor, for a debt alleviation plan is a first step, but what is really needed is complete debt cancellation. And Prime Minister Blair's focus on Africa continues to remind us that unless efforts are sustained, HIV/AIDS and lack of education will continue to threaten progress on poverty and equality.

The UK Government, whose briefing paper on aid conditionality agrees that UK development funding should not have conditionalities attached, must push the World Bank and IMF to reduce their conditionalities as well, so that governments

can have better control over their money and funnel funds towards comprehensive, nationally-owned strategies. This is particularly necessary with the World Bank, who push policies such as privatisation and trade liberalisation (to name but a few), all of which can isolate girls and children who come from poor households.

Most importantly, the IMF must become more flexible in its fiscal and monetary prescriptions, taking into account each country situation, and it needs to recognise that many areas of expansion (ie, spending more on education, gender and poverty reduction) will not jeopardise macroeconomic stability, but will actually contribute to growth in the long run. Current IMF policies are simply not enabling countries to achieve the MDGs. *The Bretton Woods institutions should do much more to help countries design and implement MDG-based poverty reduction strategies. International Monetary Fund programme design has paid almost no systematic attention to the goals when considering a country's budget or macroeconomic framework. In the vast number of country programmes supported by the IMF since the adoption of the goals, there has been almost no discussion about whether the plans are consistent with achieving them.*[72]

2005 presents a unique opportunity to Make Poverty History. Improving girls' education and addressing gender inequality are vital in the fight against poverty. In this key year, the UK Government must use its influence internationally to increase enrolment of girls in schools and improve girls' educational attainment, as part of a broad strategy to tackle global poverty.

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