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ABSTRACT

In 1995, the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (EFA) commissioned case studies in developing countries as part of a mid-decade review of progress in expanding access to basic education. This paper examines provision of basic education (grades 1-9) in Yemen, focusing on obstacles to girls' education in rural areas. The report provides an overview of enrollments, 1970s-90s, and presents case studies in two rural governorates: Shabwah in northern, former Yemen Arab Republic and Dhamar in southern, former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Enrollment data indicate that urban and rural boys and urban girls reached or are nearing EFA's target of 85 percent enrollment in basic education. However, less than a quarter of rural girls are enrolled, and these are concentrated in grades 1-4. The case studies show that although traditional social and cultural attitudes about segregation of the sexes can limit access to education for rural girls, education policy can worsen or ameliorate the effects of such attitudes. In Shabwah, decisions to provide busing arrangements and dormitories at district schools rather than build new village schools automatically excluded girls from attending. In addition, the crowded and dirty conditions in existing village schools affected parents' attitudes about enrolling girls. Other factors affecting girls' enrollment were father's educational attitudes (related to his own education), presence of female teachers or other female role models, size and cultural diversity of the town, distance to school, economic circumstances of individual families, and disruptions caused by civil war and the Gulf War. (Contains 17 references and 11 data tables.) (SV)

MID-DECADE REVIEW OF PROGRESS TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR ALL

CASE STUDY

YEMEN

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATIVE FORUM
ON EDUCATION FOR ALL

FOREWORD

Five years after the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand 1990, **the International Consultative Forum on Education for All** (the EFA Forum) undertook a review of how far countries have come in their efforts to reach Education for All.

This stocktaking of progress was done by various means. It drew on statistics and reports done by ministries of education all over the world. To complement these governmental reports, the EFA Forum asked a number of independent researchers in developing countries to provide a more in-depth view of Education for All in their countries.

From among these case studies on interesting experiences in providing basic education, we have selected a few for publication. For example, these studies look at the challenges of getting girls to stay in school and complete their primary education even though they are needed in the household economy or the school environment is geared to boys; efforts to provide education in emergency situations due to war and conflict; and the provision of education in the mother tongue of the pupils to promote learning. In short, these case studies deal with some of the current issues in basic education worldwide, and they shed light on the varying conditions in which basic education takes place. The approach and perspective vary between the studies, reflecting the diversity of the actors involved in EFA. We hope you will find these studies interesting reading.

The authors of the case studies have been selected and contracted by field offices of UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO. These offices also proposed the themes of the studies. The EFA Forum Secretariat wishes to extend its thanks to the authors and the field offices that have provided efficient assistance in carrying out these case studies.

These case studies are written by independent researchers and consultants. The views expressed on policies, programmes and projects are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the EFA Forum.

Final editing was done by the Secretariat of the EFA Forum.

BASIC EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN YEMEN

COUNTRY CASE STUDY AND ANALYSIS

Mid-Decade Review of Education for All

submitted to UNDP
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INTRODUCTION

In its National Population Strategy for 1990-2000, Yemen set forth two educational goals. These were:

- to expand access to basic education to reach a gross enrollment ratio of 85% or more for the relevant school age population

- to reduce the illiteracy rate to less than 30% among men, and 50% among women (Central Statistical Organization-CSO, 1991)

The present study will concentrate on the first of these two goals.

In order to reach its EFA targets, the government in Yemen must undertake a serious examination of the issue of girls' education, which has traditionally lagged far behind that of boys and poses the greatest challenge to any attempt to expand access. Until present, there have been no concerted efforts or effective attempts at the government level to target rural girls. The main focus of this study, therefore, will be the possibilities for, and barriers to, basic education for girls. In Chapter One, a brief overview of basic education nationwide is given, whilst chapters Two and Three offer two contrasting case studies of basic education in a northern (former Yemen Arab Republic - YAR) and southern (former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen -PDRY) governorate. A summary and conclusions are given in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER ONE - BASIC EDUCATION IN YEMEN

Basic Education in Yemen is defined as grades one to nine, i.e. primary school (grades 1-6) and preparatory school (grades 7-9). These references will be used throughout the study. The official basic education age-group is 6-15 years old (CSO, July 1995).

1.1 Enrollment

Yemen faces an enormous task in expanding the gross enrollment ratio in basic education to reach the target of 85% by the year 2000. One of the reasons for this is the rapid rate of population growth, estimated by the Population Census in 1994 at 3.7% per year. In the same year, the total population was estimated at 14,561,330, a figure which has already exceeded the projection for 1998 (CSO, April 1995). Approximately 29.5% of this number fall in the 6-15 age-group. The following estimates of basic school age population and enrollment ratios are based on 1990/91 official statistics, taking into account that there has been no significant change in the population age structure during the past decade.

Table 1. Primary education enrollment per sex 1990/91 and 1994/95 (in numbers)

	1990/91	**1994/95**	**Net Change**
Total Population 6-15	3,330,260	4,295,592	965,332
Male	1,737,430	2,147,796	410,366
Female	1,593,830	2,147,796	553,966
Total Students in Basic Education	1,885,215	2,500,471	615,256
Male	1,409,431	1,789,067	3,796,636
Female	475,784	711,404	235,620
Gross Enrollment Ratio	0.567	0.595	2.8%
Male	0.811	0.833	2.2%
Female	0.299	0.331	3.2%

(data derived from MoE 1995; CSO 1992; CSO 1995)

The table shows that there have been slight improvements in male and female enrollment ratios for primary grades 1-6 since 1990/91, with enrollments keeping just ahead of population growth. Nonetheless, the rate at which gains are being made is slowing down if one compares these figures to those up to 1990. If this trend continues, population growth will continue to out pace the rate at which gains are made for the foreseeable future.

Table 2. Increase in primary school enrollments from 1970/71 to 1994/95 (percentage)

Year	Former YAR		Former PDRY	
	total no students	% increase	total no students	% increase
1970/71	88,217	---	129,346	---
1975/76	252,075	186%	203,618	57%
1980/81	414,273	64%	185,191	-9%
1985/86	907,470	119%	238,394	29%
1990/91	1,286,154	42%	306,044	28%

(data derived from: MoE 1995;WB 1992)

From Table 3., one can see that the proportion of female students has climbed more or less steadily. In the governorates of the former PDRY, the greatest gains were made in the 1970s and in the governorates of the YAR, these were made in the 1980s. In the 1990s, however, gains in primary school enrollment have slowed to 2.1%. Progress at preparatory school level (grades 7-9) has been more impressive, with a healthy 9.2%.

Table 3. Enrollment of girls as a proportion of total enrollments between 1970/71 and 1994/95

	Former YAR		Former PDRY	
Year	Proportion (Primary)	% Increase	Proportion (Primary)	% Increase
1970/71	0.09	---	0.2	---
1975/76	0.11	2%	0.33	13%
1980/81	0.13	2%	0.3	-3%
1985/86	0.2	7%	0.31	1%
1990/91	0.25	5%	0.34	3%
	ROY combined statistics			
1990/91	0.266	Primary		
1990/95	0.287	2.1%		
1990/91	0.182	Preparatory		
1994/95	0.272	9.2%		

(data derived from: WB 1992; MoE 1995)

The 1990/91 Yemen Demographic Survey found the following differences in enrollment ratios between rural and urban areas.

Table 4. Urban/rural male/female differences in enrollments in basic education (grades 1-9)

	Urban	**Rural**	**Urban/rural difference**
Both Sexes	82.3%	52.0%	30.3%
Males	86.6%	77.9%	8.7%
Females	77.7%	24.2%	53.5%
Male/Female Differences	8.1%	55.7%	---

Three quarters of girls attend school in urban areas, meaning that there is less than a 10% difference between male and female enrollment ratios. In rural areas, only one fourth of girls attend school, raising the difference to 55.7%. Expanding access to basic education for girls in rural areas, therefore, should be made the priority objective, since this group represents 39% of the school age population.

Differences between governorates in female enrollment ratios are caused by social, cultural and geographic factors. Governorates, where the population is widely dispersed and the communities maintain traditional or conservative lifestyles, tend to have low female enrollment ratios. This is illustrated in the governorate of Saada (14%). In governorates such as Aden, on the other hand, which have larger urban or semi-urban populations, the female enrollment ratio rises to 46%. Governorates of the former PDRY also tend to have higher female enrollment ratios since education policies before reunification placed a higher emphasis on the education of girls.

1.2 Dropout Rates

Yemen holds the second lowest female enrollment ratio in the entire Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In addition, it has the lowest basic education completion rate, the highest primary education dropout rates by grade 4 and the largest dropout differential between girls and boys (Mehrah, 1995). For the 1981/82 cohort, which graduated from preparatory school in 1992/1993, statistics released by the Ministry of Education reveal a steady increase in dropouts from the first grade onwards. By the end of primary school, over half of the number of both boys and girls had dropped out of school. By the end of preparatory school, three quarters of children were no longer attending. Only one in five students who began first grade completed their schooling (Girls' Education in Shabwah, Ashuraey, 1995).

Although still significant, the problem of educational wastage has nevertheless improved over the last decade. Female primary school dropout rates fell from 27% and 28% during the 1981/82 school year to 11% and 13% for the 1989/90 school year for second and third grades respectively. For grades five and six, these figures were 44% and 48% in

1981/82 and 28% and 28% in 1989/90. For boys the improvement has been even more dramatic, with recent dropout rates only thirty to forty per cent of their previous rate. This has obviously led to a widening of the gap in school retention. Boys are still more likely than girls to complete primary school.

1.3 Student/Teacher Ratio

Another measure of progress is the number of teachers employed. The statistics in the table below demonstrate that the student/teacher ratio has improved significantly, with a 74% increase in 1994/95 over 1990/91. The rate of increase is higher for females, although there are still two thirds more male than female teachers. Unfortunately, the gains in female teachers are concentrated in urban areas to the detriment of rural areas where their presence is needed most.

Table 5. Trends in numbers of teachers in the basic education system since 1990/91

	1990/91	**1994/95**	**Net Change**
Total no of teachers	51,776	90,099	74%
Male	42,740	71,584	67.5%
Female	9,036	18,515	105%
Student/teacher ratio	30.8	22.0	7.2

(data derived from: MoE 1995)

1.4 Obstacles to the Schooling of Girls

To understand the state of the educational system in Yemen and consider why parents choose to enroll or withdraw their daughters from school, a number of factors need to be considered.

Social/cultural factors

- Mixed schools are seen as a threat to a girls reputation and chastity.
- Schools are often located in isolated or unsuitable locations and are too far away for girls to walk unaccompanied.
- The conditions of the schools are seen as unsuitable for girls because they are overcrowded and poorly equipped, with few amenities.
- Schooling interferes with early marriage.
- Lack of female teachers who can act as role models. Parents are often more at ease having both boys and girls taught by a female teacher.
- Lack of employment opportunities for girls after nine years of basic education, which

particularly affects girls in rural areas and therefore discourages them from continuing.

- Lack of awareness of the importance of education and its benefits. The government is undertaking information campaigns to counter this.

- Lack of desire on the part of parents to invest in the education of their female offspring. Where families are large, boys are almost certain to get priority. The expense of schooling for boys is often perceived to be more "justified" in terms of material investment since they are to be the breadwinners.

A review done by Ashuraey (1995) revealed that the main obstacles to the education of girls have been due to infrastructure and the educational system (the first five of the above). Social and cultural factors, while needing to be taken seriously, were not the principal reasons preventing girls from attending school. In fact, the influence of societal and cultural restraints has been receding over time. Given this, why have gains in female enrollment not been greater than those achieved? The general factors outlined below shed some light on this situation.

General factors

The economy: As shown in Dall (A Strategy for Improving the Quality and Delivery of Basic Education Services in the Middle East and North Africa Region, 1995), Yemen has the lowest per capita GNP in the Middle East and North Africa region. This obviously restricts the percentage of the budget which can be reserved for educational provision.

The political situation: In 1990, the former PDRY and YAR were unified into one country. Although this was desirable, the transformation diverted much needed time and resources from regular concerns such as education. Further hardship was caused by the Gulf War in 1991, which resulted in the loss of remittances of 750,000 Yemeni immigrants returning from Saudi Arabia, and which placed an additional burden on the already bursting education system. These events were followed by the costly Civil War of 1994.

The Gulf and Civil Wars have contributed to a serious decline in the economy, which is characterized by accelerating rates of inflation and large fiscal deficits. Major economic reforms are now seen as necessary and their implementation, although beneficial in the long term, will certainly cause economic hardship over the next few years for a wide cross-section of the population. A limited 'social safety net' has already been proposed for the poor, however if the proposal to remove the wheat subsidy is approved, the entire population will be affected. Families who can at present barely afford to send one child to school will have their means reduced even further. Other proposals - such as the freezing of employment in the public sector - could have a devastating impact in rural areas where the recruitment of female teachers is essential for increasing the enrollment ratio of girls. Evidently, the current economic climate will continue to have an adverse effect on the ability, or desire, of families to send their children to school unless effective and swift counter measures are taken.

The collapse of Local Cooperatives in the 1990s, after their centralization into a central government ministry, also had an impact on educational provision. In the 1970s and

80s, these were responsible for approximately two thirds of the education sector's annual capital investment and they helped to build numerous schools and public works in the northern (former YAR) governorates (Ashuraey, September 1995).

Education policy: The recent decision to dismantle or upgrade the Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) will have a negative impact in two inter-related respects. In rural areas, where most girls do not have access to secondary school, the TTIs played a critical role in enabling girls to be trained as teachers, since trainees were accepted with only nine years of basic education. Their closure means that fewer girls will now be able to pursue this career path. In the classroom, the decrease in the number of female teachers will also hinder efforts to improve the enrollment of girls since their presence, as we have already seen, is often a decisive factor in whether parents allow their daughters to go to school or not.

At the same time, a number of donor supported programmes to improve the status of girls have been significantly delayed. The largest of these, the US $37.7 million World Bank Basic Education Project, to which the Dutch government contributed US $10 million, aimed to construct 600 rural classrooms and hostels for female teachers. The construction of new classrooms is now expected to start by the end of 1995, and a project to increase the enrollment of girls in preparatory and secondary school is scheduled to begin soon after that. When implemented, the participation rate of girls in primary school and their continuation to preparatory and secondary school should greatly improve.

In April 1996, a School Survey is foreseen to establish an accurate database for the education system. This will be useful in guiding the Ministry of Education on exact enrollment figures and conditions of schools. It will also help in long term strategic planning, especially with regard to girls' education. Other initiatives under discussion or already approved include using husband and wife teams to teach in rural areas, accepting girls and boys into first grade in alternative years in selected rural schools, and the expanded use of the shift system (Jindari, 1995).

CHAPTER TWO - SHABWAH GOVERNORATE CASE STUDY

Shabwah is located in the southern coastal area of Yemen. Characterized by deserts and arid mountain terrain, it is a large governorate with an estimated population of 377,080 people (Yemen Population Census - 1994). This represents 2.06% of the total population of the Republic.

2.1 Enrollment Ratios

Under the former PDRY, 50-65% of girls were enrolled in primary school in many southern governorates. Since 1975, the enrollment ratio of girls as a percentage of the gross enrollment ratio has stabilized to approximately 30-35%. In Shabwah, this is has not been the case. During the 1990/91 school year, Ministry of Education statistics showed that only 14.9% of students enrolled in basic education in the governorate were girls, placing it fourth from last in a league table of the eighteen governorates. For secondary school enrollment ratios, the governorate came last, with only 13% being girls (Ashuraey, 1992).

Table 6. Female enrollment in basic education in Shabwah as a percentage of total enrollments

	1990/91		1994/95			
Grade	no of female students	prop female	no of female students	prop female	change in no of females	change in % females
1	1,782	0.255	2,722	0.318	63%	6.3%
2	1,285	0.224	2,420	0.292	88%	6.8%
3	1,001	0.184	1,634	0.226	63%	4.2%
4	568	0.138	1,066	0.183	88%	4.5%
5	286	0.077	604	0.123	111%	4.6%
6	138	0.045	233	0.064	69%	1.9%
7	25	0.011	99	0.032	296%	2.1%
8	13	0.01	12	0.006	-8%	0%
9	4	0.004	8	0.004	100%	0%
Total	5101	0.149	8,798	0.193	71%	4.4%

The above table shows that there has been an average 71% increase in girls' school attendance since the 1990/91 school year, although it still lags far behind that of boys.During the 1994/95 school year, 12% of all students in fifth grade were girls but by the end of the basic education cycle, i.e. ninth grade, girls accounted for only 0.5% of students. This is still an improvement over 1990/91 when only four girls were enrolled in ninth grade. As illustrated, improvements have been in the lower grades, yet the fact that so few girls remain

after fourth grade is very worrying since these dropouts are the most likely slip back into illiteracy and most of the gains of their education will be lost. Efforts must therefore now be directed at retaining more girls after fourth grade.

2.2 Obstacles to the Schooling of Girls

Why has the enrollment of girls in Shabwah been so low? Three studies, undertaken in the 1990s, have attempted to answer this question and suggest solutions to remedy the situation. (Beatty, 1993; Ashuraey, 1995; Kassem, 1995). The following factors draw on all three studies and highlight how the design of educational policy in the governorate, coupled with social and cultural attitudes towards education, have led to a situation where education seems to favour, and has become accessible primarily to, boys.

Education Policy: A decision was taken to build relatively few new schools. In order to compensate, it was decided that access to existing schools would be increased by 'bussing' children or by building dormitories. In 1993/94, there were an estimated 151 primary schools, i.e. grades 1-9, and 13 secondary schools, serving 1966 villages dispersed over a land mass of 236,930 square kilometres. Forty-two primary schools had all nine grades, while some offered only two or three. Consequently, many children had to move to another school to complete their basic education. During the 1992/93 school year, 130 buses, (actually open trucks), were made available to transport both girls and boys to school.

In practice, this strategy never worked because such a method of transport is not considered appropriate for girls, especially the older ones. Ninety-eight buses were used exclusively by boys, whilst only 31 were ever used jointly by boys and girls. One was used exclusively by girls. By 1994, after the reunification policies took effect, no girls at all were using these bus lines. Thus, only the communities where the girls had direct access to a school in the vicinity, or where their parents allowed them to take the bus with boys, showed any improvements in female enrollment ratios during this period. The second strategy of building boarding schools automatically excluded girls. Nine schools had such dormitories and served a total of 2,050 pupils. However, no girls could be sent to these schools since it is culturally unacceptable anywhere in Yemen to send a girl to live away from home without a chaperon.

Schooling conditions: In Shabwah, many schools are small, mud brick structures built by communities below the educational standards required. Some have no roof or leaky roofs and require major repair. As many as 90% of students may not have desks, a problem particularly prevalent in small villages where chairs may not even be available.

On average, classes in Shabwah have 42 students crammed into a 16.2 metre square space, three times more than that allowed by official standards. Because of limits imposed by a lack of space, many schools have had to turn pupils away or limit enrollments. As late as 1995, girls were still being turned away from first grade in some conservative communities as a result of selection practices which either intentionally, or unintentionally, favoured boys.

Although the standard minimum requirement is one toilet per classroom, in Shabwah the average is only one toilet per three schools, many of which are out-of-order. The remarks

of one father are typical of many parents' conviction that "...it is not logical to have more than 46 girls and boys in a very dirty, poorly lit unfurnished classroom, especially for girls in the upper grades. This is why the fifth and sixth grade girls drop out".

Social/cultural attitudes towards education: The segregation of men and women is more extreme in Shabwah than in most other areas of Yemen. Women are rarely seen outside unless engaged in agricultural tasks. In the study by Ashuraey (1995), all members of the family were interviewed to try and gain a deeper understanding of the motives behind the parents' reluctance to enrol their daughters in school.

The attitude of the father toward education was revealed to be important. Nearly half of the girls in the sample interviewed were not encouraged to attend school by anyone in their family. If anyone, this was most likely to be the father. Even so, fathers were less concerned by the length of the education than the girls themselves. 71% of girls believed that they should continue their schooling beyond twelfth grade, while only 25% of their family members believed that they should continue that long. Approximately 50% of family members believed that a girl should marry before the age of 19, whereas 84% of school girls expressed a desire to marry later.

The study by Ashuraey revealed that the decision to withdraw a girl from school was made against the child's will in 45% of cases, and those girls expressed a desire to return to school if their family permitted them. In 28% of cases, it was the father who had made the decision. The girls cited the need for an early marriage as the reason, while their parents claimed that it had more to do with mixed schools and the lack of female teachers. Thus it was more the families, rather than the girls themselves, who objected to co-education.

The low status given by many families to the education of girls is the result of a common belief that education compromises the girls' and families' honour and her adherence to traditional values and customs. One of the significant factors revealed by the studies was that a large proportion of family members did not even form any opinion on how long a girl should be educated. This suggests that, in many homes, education is simply not considered to be an important issue.

The lack of female role models for girls to emulate: Of the 130 female teachers working in schools in Shabwah and the handful of midwives and health workers currently in practice, the majority originate from other governorates. The near absence of role models may be the reason why families are not responsive to the idea that there is a different role for women beyond the one they normally fill.

2.3 Assessment of Basic Education in Shabwah

Shabwah would be expected to fall behind to some extent because of its geographic makeup and the remoteness of some of its villages. The dismal statistics in this governorate, however, are the result of a multitude of factors that have accumulated against the education of girls. According to Ashuraey "...Culture, geography, underdevelopment and poverty seem to have burdened women in Shabwah more than elsewhere, and have created additional obstacles preventing them from satisfying their basic human needs, including the need for decent education". Added to neglectful educational policies, such as the above, and a low

commitment to the education of girls at the official level, the situation has been compounded even further. Culture alone cannot be used to explain the low female enrollment ratios since as we have seen, families are not entirely closed to the idea of girls' education.

At present, the estimated gross enrollment ratio of boys in Shabwah is 65%, while that of girls is only 16%. If present trends continue, boys will have reached the target ratio of 85% by the year 2000, while girls will not have attained even a fourth of that goal. Unless a special effort is made to design policies that target girls, the male/female enrollment gap will only get wider and Education for All will be very far away.

Given current attitudes, it is clear that mixed education in Shabwah is not always a feasible option, especially in rural or traditionally conservative areas where it is often an obstacle to girls enrollment. Some separation of girls and boys, particularly after the fourth grade, is therefore necessary. Other solutions to the problem of girls' education could include restricting the morning or afternoon shift to girls, hiring more female teachers and introducing separate girls' schools. The solutions offered by the girls themselves were more realistic and thought out than those of their parents. They included raising awareness in families, mobilizing communities to take a more active role in the maintenance and building of schools and lobbying education officials to pay more attention to cultural traditions and norms.

The most important goal remains to retain girls between sixth and ninth grades. Policies such as the setting up of rural Teacher Training Institutes for girls would allow some of them to go on and become teachers without secondary education. They would then act as role models, and their presence in school would make it more acceptable for girls to enroll and stay in school. Once a cycle of female achievement is created, it will provide its own impetus.

CHAPTER THREE - DHAMAR GOVERNORATE CASE STUDY

Dhamar is a predominantly rural governorate. At the national level, it ties with Shabwah in the league of girls' enrollments as a percentage of total enrollments for primary school, coming fourteenth out of eighteen governorates. For preparatory school, Dhamar ranks number eleven and for secondary school, it ranks number twelve. Its attainment for girls' participation in primary school is only slightly more than one third that of the highest ranking governorate. For preparatory school, Dhamar has attained only one sixth the level attained in the highest ranking governorate, and for secondary school, one fifteenth the level.

3.1 Enrollment Ratios

Enrollment of girls in basic education is higher in and around the governorate capital with a rate of 47.1%, while in the rural areas, it is less than half of this, at 21.5%. Jahran, a rural town, shows the least encouraging educational statistics for girls of all the districts for primary and preparatory school; only 11% of girls enroll in primary school and 3% in preparatory school. While the statistics for Jahran are consistent with the fact that it is one of the most culturally conservative districts, it is interesting to note that its district centre, Maabar, shows some of the best statistics for girls education in the entire governorate. It is a good example of how societal attitudes can change if given the correct circumstances. As a general rule, however, the larger the town, the higher the enrollment rates for girls.

In order to understand why female enrollment ratios are such in Dhamar, interviews were first carried out with a group of rural female preparatory school graduates being trained as midwives and nurses, officials of the Higher Institute for Teacher Training, the Dhamar branch of Sana'a University and the Dhamar Office of Education. Secondly, pairs of villages with different customs were chosen in contrasting districts in order to capture important differences in the circumstances of rural areas. In one district, large villages close to Dhamar town were selected and in the second, smaller villages further from the centre were chosen.

3.2 Interviews with preparatory school graduates being trained as midwives and nurses

Thirteen rural midwife and nursing students were interviewed. In 1995, there were only 167 students, still an increase in comparison with previous years. Considering that very few girls in rural Dhamar have even achieved preparatory school education, these students are exceptional in that they are allowed to live away from home for three years to obtain their training, albeit in a protected environment - the midwifery training house - under the careful supervision of their instructors. The object of the interviews was to discover how and why they were allowed to become "exceptions" and to see if their experience could be repeated in the teacher training field.

The group discussion revealed that the girls' fathers, all of whom had some education themselves, had been the most important influence in encouraging them to study beyond ninth grade. These men had withstood community pressure to withdraw their daughters from school. Most of these girls had attended schools where sometimes only two girls completed ninth grade. The girls contrasted the attitudes of their fathers with those of other girls in their communities, the majority of whom believed that education was wasted on girls, since the

benefit of their education goes to their future husbands.

Several of the girls acknowledged that factors, other than the attitudes of their fathers were important, such as the distance to the nearest school, the cost of education, i.e. books, notepads etc., and the cost of teachers. Sometimes, students took turns in providing teachers with meals or their families would pay them an extra amount each month to supplement their income.

One student commented that people sometimes had to make a choice between eating and educating their children. Given the expenses, and the consequent inability to enroll all their children, families invariably placed higher priority on their boys. For this reason, the WFP project is important for the education of girls. Free foodstuffs, in effect, pay the families back for their investment in the education of their daughters.

All the students interviewed felt that they were good role models for their communities. As a result of the example they had given, many parents had enquired about teacher training since they felt confident that their daughters would be well nourished and looked after during the training period. Increasingly, however, parents had become motivated to send their daughters away for training by the prospect of a government salary.

When asked about the possibility for urban girls to live and teach in rural areas (an idea being investigated by donors as a solution to the shortage of rural female teachers, and the excess of urban female teachers), the students felt that it was impractical for Dhamar. They stated that urban girls would not be able to become accustomed to village life since they would not have the necessary day-to-day support network. For example, in order to purchase food, girls would have to enter markets that are usually frequented only by men. It was also felt that it might be damaging to a girl's reputation to live without her family, even if the teachers lived in pairs.

These midwifery students were carefully selected by the primary health care programme in Dhamar Governorate as girls who were accepted by their communities and would no doubt return to serve the communities from whence they came. They were the first to be trained in Dhamar town, although others have been trained in Taiz and Sana'a. Previously, not enough girls could be found in rural Dhamar with ninth grade education to open a training course and families would not allow their daughters to leave home for such a long period of time. The opening of the training course consequently offers great potential for other areas of professional training.

The same primary health care programme also trains *mershidat* (primary health care workers) for one year, either in Dhamar town or in one of the district centres. This training dates from the 1980s and follows the same method of selection and support as the midwifery training. It takes place in districts where societal norms do not allow the girls to travel outside their district. The girls are closely supervised by their trainers and have all returned to their villages to work as primary health care workers.

The experience in the health field could serve as a valuable lesson for the teacher training field. Both have the same length of training and accept girls at the same level of education. Given that teaching is as acceptable as midwifery, it is likely that under a similar

programme, girls from a number of villages could be trained as teachers.

3.3 Interviews with officials of the Higher Institute for Teacher Training and the Dhamar branch of Sana'a University

These interviews revealed that the majority of teachers in Dhamar are male. Outside of Dhamar town, only two districts, Jahran and Wasab al Ali, where Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) were located, contained significant numbers of female teachers. The girls who completed their schooling in these institutes were primarily from the towns in which the schools were located, and not from other villages in the district. There were dormitories for boys who come from other districts to study, but not for girls. These TTIs have now been closed.

Only 30-40% of the qualified female teachers actually practice their profession in the governorate. The remainder usually take up administrative roles such as directors of schools or continue their education at university. At present there are only 15 female students enrolled at the Higher Institute for Teacher Training, none of them from rural Dhamar. The Faculty of Education does have a number of rural girls studying, mostly from the neighbouring governorate of Ibb.

3.4 Interviews with officials of the Office of Education

Officials stated that the same factors affecting girls in the rest of the country were important in Dhamar as well. They felt that most families desired to educate their daughters, but only up to a certain level. Other factors included geography, the condition of schools, expense, the role of girls in agriculture, animal husbandry and the need for girls to work in the home. Regarding this last factor, while it was felt that it is certainly an influence, it was never seen as the principal reason for keeping girls out of school.

When asked to list the largest problems faced by the Office of Education in carrying out the provision of educational services, officials stated that girls' education posed one of the greatest challenges. Other challenges were also viewed as important, including the lack of schools, teaching aids and the inability to carry out ongoing supervision of teaching practices. As such, the issue of girls' enrollment in basic education was not singled out as a special issue in the governorate.

The only programme within the governorate which gives special encouragement to female students is the World Food Programme (WFP). Statistics released by the Office of Education on the effect of the programme on womens participation in literacy classes reveal that in 1993, before the programme was initiated, 489 female students were enrolled in literacy classes. This rose to 1,424 in 1995, an almost tripling of enrollments attributed to the use of food as an incentive. Although no statistics were available during the field visit on the effect of the programme on girls' participation in basic education, it was considered to be an important source of encouragement for the thirty or so participating schools.

Girls received these foods only once per year rather than quarterly, as initially planned. In talks with the responsible WF project officer, the reason for the once yearly supplies is the disruption caused by the war, when food was prioritized for school

dormitories. The programme for girls' education only received food when there were foodstuffs left over. The programme will be resumed this year.

The Dhamar Governorate Office of Education chooses the schools which will receive food aid. Selection criteria advanced by the WFP project prioritizes schools in remote or isolated areas. In reality, however, the largest rural towns, including district centres, have been the main beneficiaries. However, since the enrollment ratios are already higher here, the food aid programme is not working the way it was initially intended. Thus selection needs to be improved to target areas with low female enrollment and the programme needs to be expanded beyond the 30 or so towns that it is currently serving.

3.5 Village Pair Case Studies

Taking the question "Why do some communities educate a large proportion of their girls, while other communities with the same general culture do not?", communities in close proximity, with similar sizes and tribal structures were selected for investigation. As such, societal/cultural differences, as well as issues of access and geographic advantage were controlled. The only difference between the two villages in each case was the enrollment ratio of girls.

The overall methodology used was that of rapid rural appraisal. Schools were visited in each village and educational authorities, female school teachers and families interviewed. For each village, societal, educational, geographic, structural and economic factors were investigated and used in the analysis, as well as the following variables:

- distance from the capital of Dhamar
- distance from the other village in the pair
- population
- tribe
- size and condition of school
- size and number of classrooms in school
- number and sex of pupils per grade
- percentage of pupils of both sexes attending school
- other educational facilities in the area
- closest preparatory school
- closest secondary school
- number, nationality and qualifications of teachers
- economic base and relative wealth of village
- economic dependence on farming and the role of girls and boys therein
- educational level of men in the community
- attitudes of community and educators towards the education of boys/girls
- reasons for non-attendance or dropout of girls from basic education
- factors which would influence families to enroll and keep girls in school

The two pairs of villages chosen have the following enrollment and geographic characteristics. Each village will be described individually.

Table 7. Characteristics of case study village pairs

District	High enrollment ratio school	Low enrollment ratio school	Characteristics
Al Hadda	Ziraga (42%)	Yekar (5.9%)	School serving one large village
Utma	7th of July (27%)	Beit AlMuqadim (5%)	Small school serving several communities

The choice of villages was based on enrollment figures provided by the Office of Education. These vary somewhat from those encountered in the field.

Case Study Number 1: Ziraga

Ziraga, with a population of 4,000, is the administrative centre. Located in the northern part of the district of Al Hadda, it is one of the most conservative and tribal of Dhamars' nine districts. Al Hadda ranks eighth out of nine districts in terms of girls' enrollments in primary school and seventh for preparatory school. Approximately 25% of men and 2% of women have achieved some level of education. The economic base is farming and the town is considered wealthier than the surrounding villages. The District Office of Education is located here.

The government school, which was built by the community, incorporates primary, preparatory and secondary school grades. There is also a Scientific Institute, which contains a Teacher Training Institute for girls. In the former, there is insufficient space and desks to accommodate all the pupils being taught there. There are eight uncompleted classrooms of small to medium size. In addition, the school has small rooms with zinc walls in the school yard and three rooms made from cement blocks which lack roofs and doors. There are 22 teachers, four female, only two of whom teach regularly. The Scientific Institute is located in a larger and newer building but the same shortage of teaching equipment prevails.

Construction of another school was begun by Kuwait 8 or 9 years ago, but was halted due to the political tensions resulting from the Gulf War. According to local authorities, construction will recommence soon with completion expected within two years. In theory, it is planned that the new building becomes a preparatory and secondary school, while the current structure becomes the primary school. Suggestions that one of the schools becomes a girls' school, and the other a boys' school, or that a shift system be created were met with an unenthusiastic response by the Director of Schools. He insisted that an additional separate girls' school needed to be built, an unlikely prospect given the present scarcity of resources.

The majority of students are enrolled in primary grades in the government school. Boys and girls attend together in the same shift and classroom. Primary school convenes in the afternoon and the preparatory and secondary school in the morning. From the 1993/94 school year onwards, the Scientific Institute accepted girls in a separate afternoon shift, while boys attended in the morning. Because such institutes have a political agenda however, the separate shifts were not enough to encourage families to enrol their daughters there.

Table 8. Girls' enrollment in basic education in the government school and in the Scientific Institute

	Government School			Scientific Institute
Grade	**No Girls**	**No Boys**	**% Girls**	**No Girls**
1	41	51	46%	25
2	34	38	47%	35
3	37	39	49%	21
4	24	42	36%	25
5	18	31	37%	8
6	18	41	31%	7
7	3	62	4.6%	13
8	6	60	9.1%	9
9	0	34	0.9%	4
Total Primary	172	242	41.5%	121
Total Preparatory	9	156	6%	26

Teachers in the area estimate that most boys in the village attend school, while only about one third of girls do so. Most of the students, including all of the girls attending primary school, come from Ziraga itself. About half of the secondary school students, come from outside the town. Such high attendance can be explained by the realization of many families that they can no longer rely solely on income from the land. Through their sons, who may eventually earn a government salary, they are therefore attempting to widen their economic base.

An interview with the two female teachers revealed a great deal of enthusiasm for teaching. In their opinion, more girls would continue their studies if the classrooms were less crowded, if there were proper sanitary facilities and if food aid were given. These girls saw themselves as role models and both expressed an interest in teaching a literacy class in the afternoon to the women of Ziraga. Although they had asked for assistance in doing so, they had no idea about what steps should be taken to start a class and had evidently not asked their own District Director to facilitate this.

The District Director of Education listed the same factors constraining families from sending their daughters to school as the teachers had. The Director was an older man with several years of experience who had received his higher education in Saudi Arabia. Originally posted in Ziraga 13 years ago, he had not educated his own elder daughters.

However, he now planned to educate his four year old daughter to ninth grade. This education official not so much represented a role model or leader in terms of the education of girls, but rather a contemporary in his society representing the general changes in thinking over time regarding the education of girls.

Various officials rejected the idea of having a well supervised boarding facility at the Teacher Training Institute to attract girls from remote rural areas. The District Director of Education also rejected the idea of having a boarding and training centre for female primary health care workers, although he appealed to the researcher to bring trainers to Ziraga to train girls from the town of Ziraga itself. Such boarding and training centres for female primary health care workers have been established in other districts, as noted in an earlier section, but not in Al Hadda, because of the lack of social acceptance of the idea. This means that in the near future, girls who wish to be trained as teachers will come from the district centre itself. At the community level, attitudes toward such a move were not solicited and they may be different from those of the education officials, whose attitudes only seem to change only.

Case Study Number 2: Yekar

Yekar is a town of approximately 3000 people located in the northwest corner of Al Hadda district, bordering Jehran district. The area is considered fairly poor with men either leaving for Saudi Arabia and sending their income home to their families or working in the agricultural sector. The enrollment ratio of girls in basic education is one of the lowest in the whole district.

The school was small, overcrowded (some classes had as many as 70 or 80 students) and lacked desks and didactic materials. There were six classrooms, two of which were converted from storage rooms. Three classes study outside in half finished structures, while one is held in the open air. Seven Yemeni teachers were employed in the primary school and three foreign teachers, one Egyptian and two Sudanese, were teaching in the preparatory school. Only two teachers actually came from the local area, one of whom was the Director. Three local boys were expected to finish their secondary schooling in 1995, with at least one returning to teach.

While 22 girls were registered in primary school, only one was in attendance on the day of the field visit. It was estimated that about 50% of the boys in the village do not attend school. Of those who do, the average starting age was eight.

Table 9. Enrollment of girls in basic education in Yekar

Grade	No of Girls	No of Boys	% Girls
1	2	40	5%
2	7	38	15.6%
3	4	39	9.3%
4	5	32	13.5%
5	1	37	2.6%
6	3	36	7.8%
7	0	28	0%
8	0	30	0%
9	0	18	0%
Total Primary	22	222	9%
Total Preparatory	---	76	0%

Interviews were held with teachers and parents to determine the reasons for the poor female enrollment ratio. Again, teachers cited the condition of the school and the behaviour of the boys as mitigating factors. Interestingly, one teacher also argued that there are no local factors which encourage girls' education, and that television could play a vital role in increasing awareness of its importance. He felt that the community needed the influence of an external stimulus to bring new ideas into the households. Few families in the village could afford to watch television however. Electricity is obtained through a local generator, which costs each family YR 500 per month. Even though many families own television sets, the cost deters some of them from subscribing and for the others, the short electricity time does not allow very lengthy viewing.

Two of the teachers interviewed did not work in the village, and neither had applied for employment at the school. Both expressed a desire to move to a new location. The third male teacher whose wife was a physician, lived in Sana'a and commuted to the village every day. All three said that the basic problem was that, even though there were two teachers' residences attached to the school, both were very basic with only rudimentary facilities and there was little suitable housing in the village for rent.

The distance to the nearest preparatory and secondary school was a factor deterring parents from encouraging their daughters to continue school. Since Yekar does not have a secondary school, children have to travel to other towns. This requires a long journey back and forth every day. Consequently, families are discouraged from sending their children, firstly because they cannot afford to and secondly because there is no guarantee that they will find employment afterwards.

In the village, parents with some education themselves were usually the ones to

encourage their children to study. Only four or five fathers and none of the mothers were educated however. The Director of the school said one exceptional father had educated his children, including daughters, even if only to fourth grade. Another man had gone to Egypt for medical treatment and was so impressed with the role that professional women held there that, upon his return, he saw to it that his daughters were educated, if only to third grade. However, he allegedly removed them from school because the sanitary facilities were so bad.

In none of the conversations was there a sense that education is essential, or even a realistic possibility for most families, since they do not earn enough money from selling their produce to pay for the notebooks and fees. In one family, one or two out of eight sons went to school. In such a climate of economic hardship, sending girls to school was not high on the list of priorities.

Despite this, there is still a will to educate girls. Recently, the parents sought to use one of the Sudanese teachers' wives to give literacy classes for which they would pay YR10 per student per day. Thirty girls and women signed up. This price, however, was still considered too high and it is uncertain how long the initiative will last.

A short visit was made to Maabar because of its proximity to Yekar. This is a large town located in a very conservative district where surprisingly many girls enjoy a high level of education. The enrollment rate for primary school is 50% and in eighth grade 26%. The overall enrolment ratio for girls up to sixth grade is 42% and to eighth grade 40%. Girls attend during the afternoon shift, while the boys attend in the morning. The secondary school has a relatively high number of female students studying through twelfth grade. In the secondary school, classes are mixed because of the low numbers of girls.

Case Study Number 3: Seventh of July School

This very small school is located in the village of Rasab and serves eight villages in the surrounding area. The combined population of these villages is estimated to be 2000. Economically, the area depends on agriculture and government salaries. Farming is not very productive, however, because there is no irrigation. Rasab has a long tradition of education and is located only one and a half hours from Dhamar.

The school itself moved one month ago from a neighbouring village which was less easily accessible to the majority of students throughout the catchment area. There were sixty students attending that school, whereas there are now 108 in Rasab. Altogether, the new school has eight rooms, the average size being two square metres. It is far from ideal since the rooms are dark and windowless, but the Director felt that it was an improvement over the last school since it is accessible to more students. The closest secondary school is half an hour away by foot. Boys attend, but it is considered too far away for girls.

There were five local male teachers and one local female teacher in addition to two foreign teachers. The female teacher was the niece of the Director of the Statistics Department of the Office of Education and the only girl in the area to have obtained a secondary school education, having studied in Dhamar for three years.

Most of the fathers in Rasab have some education. Some have graduated from the military college as well as the university. Approximately 10% of the women are educated. In the other villages of the schools catchment area, about 30-40% of the fathers are educated.

Table 10. Enrollments of girls in basic education in the Seventh of July School

Grade	No Girls	No Boys	% Girls
1	7	10	41%
2	5	11	31%
3	6	9	40%
4	7	11	39%
5	0	10	0%
6	1	6	14%
7	3	10	23%
8	0	4	0%
9	0	7	0%
Total Primary	26	57	30%
Total Preparatory	3	21	12.5%

In an interview with the female teacher, again, the poor condition of the school and the distance required to travel were cited as problems. She also mentioned that she had no chalk or blackboard for her class and that she was limited in the quality of education she could give. Finally, the teacher noted that when she was young, many people felt that it was not appropriate for her to study. She felt that her own commitment was important to the fact that she continued.

Families often pulled their daughters out of school by fourth grade because they felt that by then the girls had obtained a sufficient education. The women in the village did not give as much weight to the issue of the students' own commitment to education. All girls, they stated, wanted to learn to read and write, but the circumstances of most did not permit it. One young woman in the room had completed sixth grade but her family did not allow her to continue. Forty women had been waiting for the teacher to finish her schooling so that they could be enrolled in the literacy class she would then teach. Most women reported that through attending this class, their confidence had increased and they were now able to communicate with doctors and officials more effectively. Furthermore, their ability to understand the nutritional needs of their children had also improved. The presence of just one female teacher, therefore, had an impact on the entire village. The women said that they would now put their daughters in school or re-enroll some of the elder ones.

Overall, the village residents demonstrated a strong commitment to education, allowing girls to continue much longer than in several other villages of the catchment area. Despite this commitment, however, the absence of a secondary school and the lack of female teachers still curtailed girls' chances for higher education. Many also seemed to be ignorant of the fact that even if a girl can read or write after four years of schooling, she is not likely to retain this knowledge if removed from school.

Case Study Number 4: Beit AlMuqadim

This school is located two and a half hours from Dhamar town and 45 minutes from Rasab. Like the Seventh of July school, it also serves eight villages with an estimated population of 1,500. The community is considered poor with people engaged in various economic activities.

Beit AlMuqadim is a small primary school with three classrooms and seven teachers, all from the surrounding area. All classes are held outside, which of course prevents studying during the rainy season. The permanence of this outdoor classroom solution is evidenced by the fact that there are two blackboards built into the outside wall of the school. The school was built by the community with no help from the government. The closest preparatory and secondary schools are one hour away by foot at the district centre. Only boys are allowed to attend because of the distance. Enrollments are as follows:

Table 11. Enrollments of girls in primary education in Beit AlMuqadim

Grade	No of Girls	No of Boys	% Girls
1	2	20	9.1%
2	0	12	0%
3	1	18	5.3%
4	1	11	8.3%
5	2	10	16.7%
6	0	10	0%
Total Primary	6	81	6.9%

Teachers at this school stated that the common attitude of families seemed to be that if a girl learns to pray and write her name, she has reached a sufficient level of education. Generally, girls are not even encouraged to go to school.

In many families, only two out of six children, mostly boys, attended school. More specifically, they tended to be the children of educated fathers. Only 20% of men, however, are educated and most women are illiterate. In Beit AlMuqadim, the absence of a preparatory school in close proximity to the village meant that many girls could not realize their potential and were forced to discontinue their studies. There were plans to build a preparatory school in the village itself and both mothers and fathers displayed anger that this had not yet

happened. Some of them did not even let their sons travel to the district centre and one father stated that he had educated his daughters to the sixth grade but could not educate them further.

Families also saw the cost of education as a constraining factor, especially if the child has to repeat a grade. They blamed the teachers for the poor quality of education claiming that, instead of guiding their students, the teachers permitted themselves to hit them. This, they complained, was often gratuitous and made the children frightened of school. The Director of Statistics confirmed that this happens and said that the teachers only have secondary schooling and have not been properly trained in teaching methods or disciplinary practices.

In Utma District there are now nine female teachers teaching in seven different villages. Despite the low enrollment ratio of girls in this area, the men and women interviewed were surprisingly committed to the education of their children.

3.6 Summary of Village Pair Case Studies

The purpose of the case studies was to identify the negative factors which kept some villages from realizing educational gains for girls, as well as the positive factors which created the conditions in other villages for the relatively high enrollment of girls. A number of lessons can be drawn from all four case studies, including the following.

The need for female teachers: They were seen as important because they act as role models, demonstrating the acceptability and benefit of girls having an education and they contribute to a more acceptable schooling environment for girls. Another added benefit is that they are local resources for women to act as literacy trainers. In all three areas where a female teacher was located, the women or teachers themselves initiated or sought to initiate literacy classes. In Ziraga, the two female teachers desired to start up literacy classes for women, but didn't know the procedure. In Yekar, the women had shown their enthusiasm for literacy classes, starting a system which they could not, in the end, afford. In Rasab, the women had been waiting three years for the female teacher to return so that a literacy class could be created.

The need for more communication between the Office of Education (and its local offices) and community leaders: Communities initiate, or do not initiate as the case may be, their own solutions and the Office of Education tries to respond to their demands as best it can. Given the number of schools and the scarcity of available resources, this may be the wisest overall strategy. In the case of rural girls, however, enrollment rates are so low that obviously demand and awareness must be stimulated.

The need for an active and enthusiastic leadership within the Office of Education: At present,there are a number of possibilities at village level which are not being explored. This was seen in almost every village visited. Initiatives to start literacy classes were not being followed at the official level. Consequently, there was an overall impression that if the teachers did not make an effort to take the initiative, who would? It is important that the education system itself identifies the means to create the impetus for change. Solutions range from awareness raising to finding additional female teachers for a separate shift for girls. The

active intervention of the Office of Education would be instrumental in helping communities identify practical solutions and the villages in greatest need of assistance.

3.7 Assessment of Basic Education in Dhamar

From the interviews with the midwives, teacher training and education officials, along with the subsequent village case studies, it can be seen that basic education in Dhamar is influenced by a number of factors, the most important of which include:

Size of the town and the coming together of people from different tribes or cultural backgrounds: The general rule in Dhamar was that, in larger towns, social pressure to conform was reduced as a result of the confluence of different cultural attitudes and customs. In towns such as Ziraga, therefore, beliefs and behaviours towards girls' schooling tended to be more progressive.

The educational level of the men: This proved to be one of the most important factors in influencing whether girls are sent to school or not. Education appears to create its own motivation, so that a father who is himself at least partly educated is more likely to want the same for his children. These men act as trend setters and are the first to allow their daughters to go to school. Others then follow.

The size and condition of the school: This was a constraining factor, although it did not appear to be the central problem. In Ziraga, the school was used effectively during both mornings and afternoons but no attempt was made to use the school in Yekar in a similar way. Contrasting this school to the Seventh of July school in Utma, which enjoyed a higher enrollment ratio for girls, the school in Yekar was far better. Thus, in the absence of a high commitment to the education of girls, the uses and condition of the school does not become a mitigating factor.

The distance to the school: Parents were often unwilling to allow their daughters to continue beyond 6th grade because the nearest preparatory school was not in the immediate vicinity of the community and some travel was required to reach it. They feared for their daughters safety. The education of *mershidat* and midwives showed that parents could accept their daughters leaving home to train for a profession if convinced of the provision of appropriate and acceptable accommodation, and guardianship for the duration of the training. The example of the *mershidat*, therefore, could be applicable to the training of women in other fields of public service, such as the teaching profession.

The economic circumstances of individual families: The village case studies showed that economics was more of a constraint in some villages than in others. In Yekar, for example, families struggled to send just one child, usually the son, to school despite wanting to send more. This demonstrates a commitment to education, at least for boys. Sometimes lack of means prevented that commitment being translated into enrolling children. In these situations, girls were always given second priority since cultural norms provide that education would benefit the male the most.

In Dhamar, the will to educate girls was far higher than current enrollment statistics indicate. Constraining factors such as the economic situation of the family or the distance

required to travel to school are absolute and will effectively prevent a girl from continuing her education unless a solution can be found within the education system itself, such as the introduction of the WFP project in poor villages.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Progress in the field of basic education has moved ahead slowly since 1990. This can be characterized by the following:

- Slight gains in gross enrollment ratios, with enrollments keeping just ahead of population growth;

- The enrollment ratio for girls as a proportion of total enrollments in primary schools has been increasing since 1990 although there has been no significant closing in the gap between enrollment ratios for girls and boys, with boys' enrollment maintaining its lead;

- Slowing in the rate of primary school enrollment since 1990;

- Improvement in the teacher/student ratio since 1991. The rate of increase of female teachers has been higher than that of males although the vast majority of female teachers remain in the urban areas and are not accessible to rural girls;

- While urban girls and both urban and rural boys have already reached, or are close to reaching 85% enrollment ratios, rural girls are trailing far behind, with enrollments reaching only 24.2%;

- There are large differences between governorates, with some remote or isolated governorates exhibiting only one third the enrollment ratios of others;

- High drop-out rates are a major problem for both girls and boys and this is probably the most serious problem affecting the education system. Improvements are most significant for boys, which increases the gap between girls and boys. Those most likely to continue and complete their primary schooling are still boys; and

- Yemen shows the second to lowest enrollment ratios for girls in the entire Middle East and North African region. On the other hand, it has the highest female primary education completion rate and the lowest female primary education dropout rate by grade 4. It also shows the largest dropout differential with boys.

There are many reasons behind the slow progress in reaching higher enrollment ratios for girls. The economic and political turbulence of the 1980s certainly played a role. Prevailing cultural norms and traditions are slow to change, although it would be a mistake to consider these an overriding factor. As was demonstrated by the Dhamar case study, some very conservative villages have witnessed a great increase in enrollment ratios for girls when the condition of the school changed. Absolute and relative constraints should therefore be differentiated. The latter include lack of awareness of the importance of education and low commitment by the parents. They can be treated by increasing communication between the community and educational bodies, modifying the curriculum to suit the practical and economic needs of rural families and gearing interventions to context related problems at the village or community level. If parents are informed of the danger of their children falling back into illiteracy after fourth grade, this could make a big difference in their decision to

pull girls out of school. In all areas, there is a will to educate girls, but in the absence of adequate facilities or relevant schools, the potential is usually lost.

In spite of the scarce resources available at official level, it would be a mistake to assume that all solutions to the problem of increasing girls' enrollments would be costly and out of reach of the already overburdened education system. Female teachers could provide literacy classes as an additional responsibility and, as in Maabar where there was a surplus of female teachers, these could be bussed to neighbouring areas where there are fewer of them.

The final conclusion in Yemen is that interventions to improve the enrollment of girls need to be individualized to the circumstances of each community. Using a mass, highly centralized approach to solve the problem of girls' education will be inefficient since they will miss most of the real potential that exists at the village level. Such an example can be seen in the administration of the WFP project, which, because it is centrally administered, does not reach sites where it is needed the most. The majority of aid for girls in Yemen works in a similar manner. Resources could be more effectively allocated if the administration of programming were decentralized to the governorate or even district level where educational needs can be more appropriately assessed.

Missed opportunities must be avoided at all costs. In the coming years, population pressures will create a need for more and more schools, classrooms and teachers just to stay at the present level of educational achievement. The role of NGOs and other implementation agencies should be explored as a way to strengthen current programmes and to experiment with new initiatives such as the WFP projects and various pilot projects. Greater coordination between communities, schools, District Education Offices, the Governorate Office of Education and the Ministry will be necessary and must be encouraged and facilitated by the creation or opening of appropriate channels.

The potential for improving basic education, especially for girls, already exists, but a leadership role needs to be taken by the Ministry of Education on how to implement new ideas and by what mechanism. One of the most devastating decisions for the rural girl-child was to close the Teacher Training Institutes in rural areas, an indication of the low priority currently given to the education of girls within the Ministry. Until this is strengthened, commitment to policies which foster the educational advancement of girls will not take place.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO	Central Statistical Organization
GNP	Gross National Product
MENA	Middle East and North Africa Region
MOE	Ministry of Education
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic
YR	Yemeni Rial

DEFINITIONS

Gross enrollment ratio: The total school enrollment, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the officially defined school-age group. Since the GER includes under and over age students, it may exceed 100 per cent.

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