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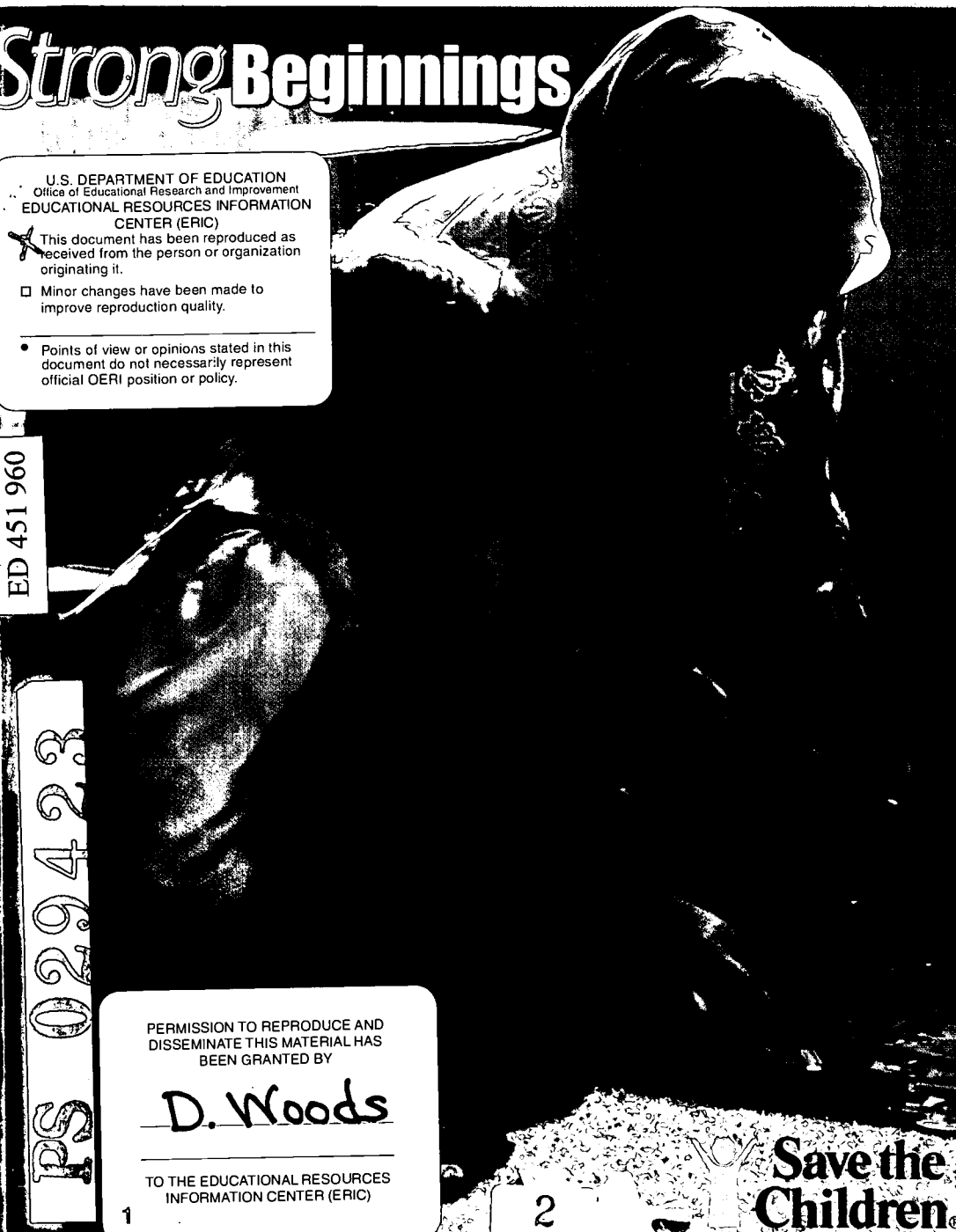
ABSTRACT

Noting that girls' lack of access to education is related to a number of economic, social, religious, and cultural factors as well as a scarcity of places in schools and that promoting gender equity in school may help equity spread throughout the entire community, this report illustrates the gender equity approach used in the Save the Children's basic education programs. The report highlights how investing in girls' education can enhance girls' productivity, and later access to credit, civic involvement, and childrearing practices. Also discussed in the report are community-based strategies that support girls' education, in the areas of enrollment, persistence, learning enhancement, and reform between Save the Children and its partners. Strategies to promote enrollment include establishing new schools, agreeing on gender parity as a condition of beginning a school, and raising community awareness of the benefits of girls' education. Strategies to promote persistence of school attendance include establishing local systems of monitoring and addressing girls' absence, offering scholarships or other incentives, altering school schedules, and employing female teachers and others. Strategies to enhance learning include developing early childhood opportunities and training teachers to use techniques that view every student as an individual, active learner. Strategies to promote reform among Save the Children and partners include experimenting with cost sharing formulae and supporting partnerships to bring paraprofessional and parent elements into provision of basic education. (Contains 13 endnotes.) (KB)

GIRLS' EDUCATION

Strong Beginnings



Save the Children

COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO ACCESS AND QUALITY

"After studying in the circle, I am teaching my daughter the alphabets and numbers. I tell everybody that there is no age for learning. One can learn at any age."

-Nibaran Bibi
Mitali, Burishwar, Bangladesh

Malawi

In a village in rural Malawi, girls and boys sit side by side learning the national curriculum in a school managed by a partnership between their parents, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, and Save the Children (SC). They begin a writing lesson with pupil demonstrations on the blackboard, and then head out the door in pairs to practice forming their letters using sticks to write in the dust. Next comes a math lesson in which a guessing game has them practicing their addition with stones. Both boys and girls participate, and they are called to lead the class in equal numbers. The teaching is well-prepared, interactive, and pupil-centered.

The school these boys and girls attend lies close to their homes in the district of Mangochi in southern Malawi. The daily study schedule set by the local school committee meshes well with the harvest work schedule and the domestic chores of the students, especially the girls. Community members work with teachers if a pupil is absent for a number of days. They meet to discuss the situation and often make home visits to speak with the family of the child. In this local support system, families and teachers meet to discuss the benefits of girls' education, obstacles to it and local means to enhance it.

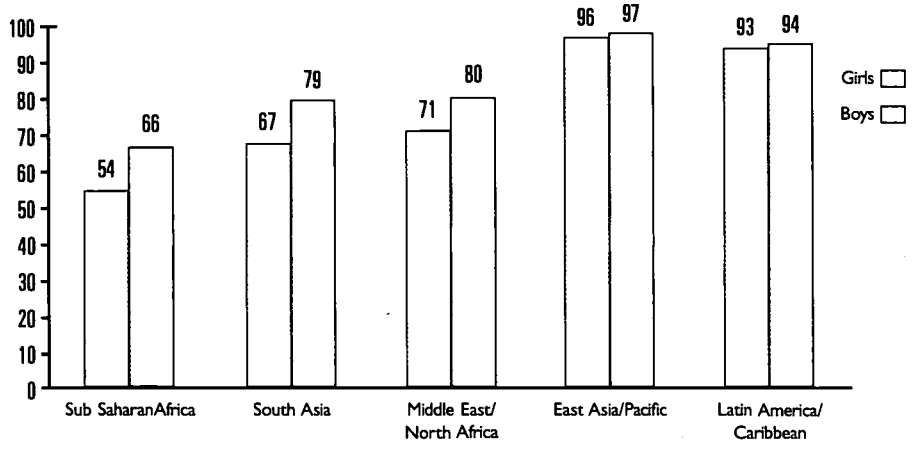
This community-based model not only increased girls' access to primary education between 1995 and 1998, but offered them a quality education. In 1996, pupil achievement in Chichewa and English was significantly higher in these pilot schools than in nearby government schools.[1] In 1997, their learning was greater in both languages and math.[2] Today, the lessons of enhancing access to quality education for girls and boys in Mangochi are being taken into every school in the district.

INVESTING IN GIRLS' EDUCATION

There are different approaches to investing in girls' education. The above example from Save the Children (SC) experience in Mangochi, Malawi is one of several that illustrate how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) support girls' education efforts and contribute to the realization of Education for All. SC does so in partnership with local communities, NGOs and government ministries around the world.

Many investments in girls' education in the 1990's addressed the widespread lack of access to primary education in developing countries. Net primary school enrollment ratios by region and sex in Figure 1, however, suggest that despite progress made, girls still have less access to education than boys of their same age.

Figure 1: Net Primary Enrollment Ratios by Region and Sex (%)



Source: UNESCO. 2000. Education for All Assessment 2000: Statistical Document.

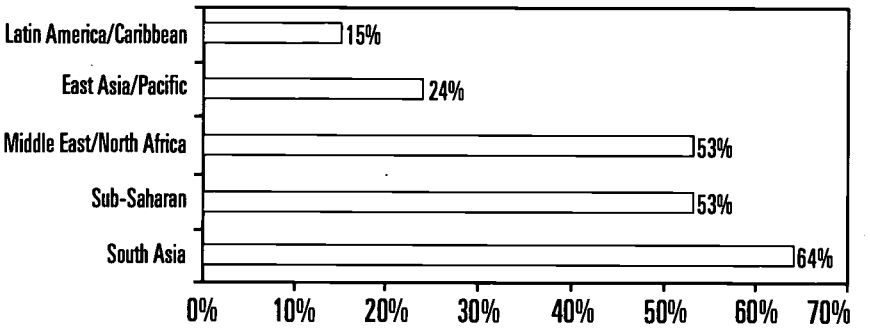
In fact, "the absolute number of girls of primary age (worldwide) out of school has risen since 1990 and is expected to continue rising up to 2005".[3] Girls' lack of access to education isn't always related to scarcity of places in schools. It also emerges from expectations, attitudes and biases in communities and families. Economic costs, social traditions, and religious and cultural beliefs limit girls' educational opportunities. Whatever the underlying reason(s), having large numbers of girls outside of the formal schooling system brings developmental challenges to both current and future generations. Individuals, families, communities and

nations are affected. Inability to read, write and calculate complicates a girl's efforts to engage in both market-focused production and household activities as effectively and efficiently as possible. This affects her family's welfare and diminishes her potential contribution to the development of the household, local and national economy.

When girls do enroll and participate consistently, or persist, in schools, they often face obstacles inside classrooms that favor boys in interaction, expectation, responsibilities and organization. Boys often get more teacher attention, while girls are expected to be passive. Girls are often silenced by taunts, body language, texts, not being called upon or even having their hands physically lowered by male classmates. They are also called upon to undertake "domestic" tasks in the classroom such as sweeping and erasing, while boys are assigned academic and leadership tasks. Teachers of both sexes participate in these acts, often expressing expectations that boys work harder and are more analytical than girls.[4] The "attitudes of teachers, administrators, and other pupils convey the message to girls that they are inferior to boys and should have lower aspirations for themselves."[5]

When obstacles to girls' enrollment, persistence and learning go unaddressed and traditional roles keep women from utilizing what few educational skills they might obtain, large blocks of the adult female population remain illiterate. The regional averages of Figure 2 show the percentage of the female population that is illiterate in each region of the world.

Figure 2: Female Adult Illiteracy: Regional Averages



Source: UNICEF. 1999. State of the World's Children. New York: UNICEF.

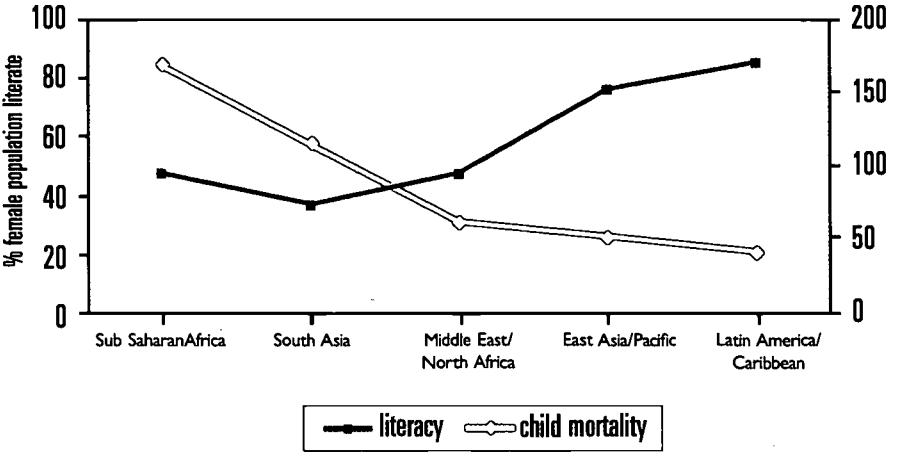
Reasons to enhance girls' education emerge from personal perspectives and professional sectors concerned with individual welfare, as well as family and national development. Moreover, education is a right of all children, as established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Readily apparent arguments for investment in girls' education in particular spring from the most quantifiable benefits of girls' education: health and economic impacts. While less often quantified, educational and political impacts offer additional arguments in favor of promoting girls' education. These perspectives and the evidence behind them are reviewed here briefly.

Healthy Learners, Healthy Children [6]

An educated girl takes better care of herself and her future family. Educated women are more likely to seek health care and often have lower rates of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. In addition, the more literate the female population, the more likely their children are to survive beyond age five. This can be seen in the trends of regional literacy and child mortality rates in Figure 3 below.

A higher literacy rate is associated with a lower child mortality rate. This relationship is also seen in the research on women's years of education

Figure 3: Female Literacy and Child Mortality: Regional Averages



Source: UNICEF. 1999. State of the World's Children. New York: UNICEF

and child mortality in individual countries which concludes that for each additional year of education, child mortality is lowered by five to ten percent.

In addition, research findings suggest that higher levels of female education are associated with lower fertility rates. And lower fertility reduces maternal mortality by default. With fewer children, a woman can spread earnings, meals and time for both productive and child care activities more easily and evenly. This in turn benefits the next generation of learners as healthy, well-fed boys and girls who attend school more consistently, repeat grades less often and are better prepared to learn in the classroom.[7]

The ability to bear and take better care of fewer children affects a girl and her family directly. Having the skills and time to partake in local decision-making and development action may also transform her community as well as her nation, as she sets an example of healthy, active motherhood.

Productive Learners, Productive Society [8]

Education raises the expected earnings of anyone, male or female, by an estimated 10 to 20 percent or more for an additional year of schooling. Education also significantly improves girls' chances of obtaining wage-earning positions, if they are available, and increases girls' ability to successfully adopt new productive technology outside of the formal labor market.

Rates of return to educational investments also promote girls' basic education. Rates of return are higher for girls than for boys and higher for primary education investments than for investment at any other level. This is true even though such calculations very likely underestimate returns to girls' education by not accounting for the contribution of "externalities" – such as production of home consumption and non-marketed goods and services as well as child care – to local and national economic development.

Active Learners, Active Citizens

Educating girls has an important intergenerational educational impact as well. The daughters of an educated woman are as much as 40 percent likely to enroll in school than the daughters of a woman with no

schooling.[9] This benefit applies to the sons of educated women as well. More educated girls are more likely to have a range of opportunities in their lives as they participate increasingly in making political and economic decisions in the family and beyond. They are also more likely than their uneducated counterparts to avoid situations of exploitation and oppression. Tales of newly literate girls and women in Nepal banding together to address violence, drunkenness, or other local issues have been noted in other contexts as well.[10]

Conclusion

A girls' enhanced literacy and numeracy – her ability to read, write, calculate and analyze – facilitates her adjustment to change and challenge in the market place, the local community and the home. Education can enhance her productivity, increase her access to credit, raise her civic involvement and improve her childrearing practices. Drawing from this evidence SC, has offered its programmatic strengths to increasing girls' access to quality education.

El Salvador

Photo by Rebecca James

Photo by Carolyn Watson

COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIES SUPPORT GIRLS' EDUCATION

SC experience in the past decade has enhanced girls' access to quality education in countries around the globe. SC has built schools, involved communities and trained teachers in such diverse settings as isolated villages in Africa and refugee camps in Asia. SC efforts have addressed girls' enrollment, their persistence, their learning and, more broadly, educational reform in support of equal access and quality. These areas of effort are reviewed below along with illustrations of how SC-community partnership strategies address the issues and overcome many, long-standing local obstacles to girls' education.

Enrollment

SC strategies to promote greater enrollment of girls in educational opportunities include the establishment of new schools, imposition of equal enrollment as a partnership criterion and a range of awareness raising techniques. These take different forms depending upon context, need and resources as described below.

New Schools

Building schools is the most immediate strategy used to increase girls' access to education. In any context, the most disadvantaged group – girls – stands to gain the most from such expansion. SC builds new schools in partnership with communities in many countries, including: Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Honduras, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda,

Malawi, Haiti and Mozambique. This has a special benefit for girls' education in places like the Sudan when the new schools are placed *in* rather than simply *near* communities and therefore remove parents' fear of long walks for girls. In many of the countries above, SC negotiates the best location for the school with the community to address this obstacle directly.

In Afghan refugee camps, however, SC has worked with communities to devise a different enrollment solution to the tradition of purdah, or seclusion of girls and women. They have established home-based schools for girls above grade three. These one-teacher schools meet in the home of the teacher (always female) and up to 25 girls from the local area follow the primary school curriculum. Finally, in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro, SC and local communities cooperate not only to build new pre-schools, but to repair war-damaged primary schools. Depending upon the context, SC and its partner communities are establishing or rejuvenating places of learning for girls.

Bosnia

Photo by Gary Shaye

New Schools in Afghan Refugee Camps

In Afghan refugee camps by 1999, SC and partner communities had created 1,087 opportunities for girls to study beyond grade three in Home-based Girls' Schools (HBGS). The schools are far away from existing girls' and mixed primary schools. They are not to be an alternative to the primary schools, but a supplement to meet the very specific needs of adolescent Afghan girls in purdah, or seclusion. With the HBGS, SC and its partner communities also created employment opportunities for fifty-four women to work as teachers in their homes. Teacher qualifications include an adequately sized room, the ability to pass a test based on the primary school curriculum, and enthusiasm. Once a teacher is selected she, together with SC staff, identifies up to twenty-five girls who can enter into the school. The girls are enrolled and the teacher is trained and then observed and supported with further training monthly by SC.

Girls and women are affected in a variety of ways by the HBGS. Some mothers fear that attending such a school will "ruin her daughter's good reputation and destroy her chances of being married to a good man." Another mother ensures a challenger who wants her to stop sending her daughters to an HBGS: "only women are teaching... and this home is right next to our home so we are not going to stop." Women are also enjoying a new status as teachers. A teacher in Loralai camp reports, "the whole community appreciates what I'm doing. If they have a problem, they come to me. My family, especially my husband and mother-in-law, respect me a lot. I am the main provider of the whole family." Finally, the girls are learning in these new schools. A fifth grade girl relates, "I really like to study. I feel happy when I study. We now buy the newspaper every day and I read the newspaper to my whole family in the evening. This way we know the news about Afghanistan and Pakistan and get to know what is happening in the world." Developing new schools in Afghan refugee camps has changed the lives and attitudes of many women and girls. Mothers become staunch supporters, female teachers are respected as both educators and role models and girls more empowered participants in family life.

Sources: Save the Children Pakistan Field Office. (2000). Education Programs in Balochistan Refugee Villages. Briefing Paper March 2000.
Save the Children Pakistan Field Office. (2000). Home-based Girls' Schools in Balochistan Refugee Villages. Briefing Paper March 2000

Enrollment Criteria

In establishing new schools, SC staff in Mali describe parity in enrollment as a "non-negotiable principle" in the terms of their partnership with a community. The 16 Malian NGOs with whom SC partners in Mali also hold to this criterion, as do SC staff in Guinea and the Sudan. In these countries, if the community does not agree to classes that are half boys and half girls, the partnership to establish and manage a new school is placed on hold while additional negotiating and awareness raising efforts are undertaken.

Recently in Mali, a new practice has grown out of this criterion in the form of a further agreement between strong school management committees and parents. They agree to maintain the 50-50 ratio in the classroom until the end of the primary school cycle (six years) and parents are subject to fines for removing girls from school. This shows strong support for girls' persistence once they are enrolled!

Awareness Raising

This strategy is common to all SC programs enhancing girls' education, but the specific approaches used vary across contexts. The general message is that girls' education can be a benefit to the family and community in myriad ways. Often the goal of further awareness raising is to engage the local population in both discussing the obstacles they perceive to fuller girls' participation and in devising ways to remove them. In Burkina Faso, village workshops undertake analysis and discussion of gender issues in education, while in Morocco involvement of community members in community mapping as well as definition of a school development plan looks to enhance girls enrollment. In Mali, SC staff and NGO partners sensitize communities; in Sudan they focus on school committees; while in Haiti they sensitize teachers too. In Malawi, SC staff and Ministry partners hold regular meetings and focused training for key members of the community (school committee members) on how to encourage girls to begin and/or continue education. Finally, in Afghan refugee camps community mobilization workers meet with PTAs and other groups to promote awareness of girls' education. Thus, whether for the entire community or a few targeted people/groups – and whether done by SC staff, partners or a combination – SC aims to raise community awareness of the importance of girls' education and mobilize action on its behalf. These efforts can influence not only girls' enrollment in school, but also their persistence.

A final strategy for awareness raising is the establishment of non-formal education programs for illiterate girls and women as undertaken in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro as well as in Afghan refugee camps. The Afghan program staff demonstrate this raised awareness of the benefits of education as they report that it is rare to meet women in non-formal education classes who do not send their children to school, including girls.

Raising Awareness in Morocco

With the support of facilitators trained by SC, parent teacher associations (PTAs) in Morocco raise their awareness of girl's education by conducting needs assessments. Together the PTA members aim to understand constraints to girls' education and identify activities for addressing the obstacles. To do this, they map the community, take a census of school-aged children, and inventory community resources to support education (human, material, financial). They then develop and prioritize their ideas for action in a school development plan. Finally, they undertake the top options with $1,000 of funding. These micro projects have included activities that range from building more classrooms to devising early childhood development activities. Alongside these local efforts, PTA board members and SC organize and participate in activities covering all project schools. In an advocacy and information mobilization campaign, entertainers went to each school and performed a show promoting the benefits of girls' education.

Persistence

SC strategies to promote greater persistence of girls once they have enrolled in school include: monitoring their absence; utilizing economic incentives; shifting schedules to fit their other commitments and priorities; and ensuring the presence of a range of female role models. Again, depending upon context and resources, these take different forms as described below.

Monitoring Absence

A range of stakeholders in and around the school can monitor girls' absence. In Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro, this is the domain of teachers who notify families of attendance problems. In Guinea, a PTA member leads the monitoring effort, and in Haiti the school management

committee and school staff collaborate to follow up on absences. In Malawi, monitoring absence is a partnership between community, teachers and children who follow up with the families of girls who are frequently absent. This effort includes child-to-child strategies as well as home visits by school or PTA members, headteachers, teachers or mentor teachers from neighboring schools. SC and its Ministry partners offer training for these participants in guidance and counseling techniques for use with girls as well as their parents during such visits.

Economic Incentives

A family often perceives direct and indirect costs to a girls' schooling. If a girl's labor ensures economic survival or the family values it more highly than her education, her education gets second priority. Direct costs arise from the government's formula for educational cost-sharing with families. This formula most often calls upon parents to contribute to the school financially by paying tuition fees, or to purchase uniforms, books or other stationery materials.

Bolivia

In Egypt and Nepal, SC has removed this economic obstacle to girls' enrollment and persistence by providing scholarships to girls who attend regularly. Similarly in Afghan refugee camps, edible oil is given as an allowance to girls who attend school regularly. While the use of such incentives can be somewhat controversial due to issues of sustainability, gender equity and management, the strategy can remove, in the short term, an economic barrier to girls' education, allowing time for other benefits to surface.

Schedule Changes

The indirect costs of education comprise the loss of wages or otherwise valued work that the family would experience if a girl attends school. As noted in the Malawi experience presented above, scheduling school and girls' calendars of chores in the home and on the farm can

minimize this opportunity cost. This strategy was also used in the experience of SC in Mali where the daily and annual school schedules were altered to allow families to allocate time to their girls' education. Taking a different approach in Uganda, the national curriculum has been reorganized into an abbreviated school day focusing upon basic skills to accommodate the time required for girls chores in the home and fields. Finally, in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro, shifting schedules to meet the needs of working parents keeps all children in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) program, enhancing their school readiness.

Photo by Rebecca James

An alteration of the annual school schedule to benefit the persistence of girls in school is also under discussion in Malawi. High absenteeism and drop out led to a dialogue about how initiation ceremonies held in July/August affect girls' persistence as well as their learning. SC and the Ministry of Education co-sponsored a one day meeting of 80 traditional leaders and District Commissioners to discuss the issue. At day's end, the group proposed scheduling solutions to address this problem and submitted them to the Ministry for consideration at the national level. This strategy for addressing girls' persistence from the community up may lead to a change in the national school schedule.

Female Role Models

Involving and/or hiring females is a final strategy for promoting the persistence of girls in the education system. Female teachers, school committee members, trainers, NGO staff, education officials and professionals provide role models for girls as well as female employment opportunities – both locally and beyond – in SC's girls' education efforts. In the home-based Afghan refugee program, all teachers and support staff are female, while in Mali SC staff encourage visits by female education officials. In Guinea, at least 3 of the 9 school committee members in each community are women, and in Bosnia, Herzegovina

and Montenegro, SC has female ECD trainers that provide support to professionals and paraprofessionals and has partnered with a local NGO of women physicians to implement health-related programs in the camps. This broad range of women involved in enhancing girls' educational experiences shows that in each context, SC searches for female role models to promote the persistence of these girls in their education. Beyond their mere presence, SC works with the women in supporting girls' education in their actions and in their circles of influence at all levels.

Another effect that such role models can have upon girls' persistence is via the reduction of parents' fears of harassment by both male teachers and students in school environments. This decreased parental apprehension is particularly apparent when female teachers are recruited.

Learning

SC has focused more recently upon strategies to enhance girls' learning once they are enrolled and persisting. Tested strategies include:

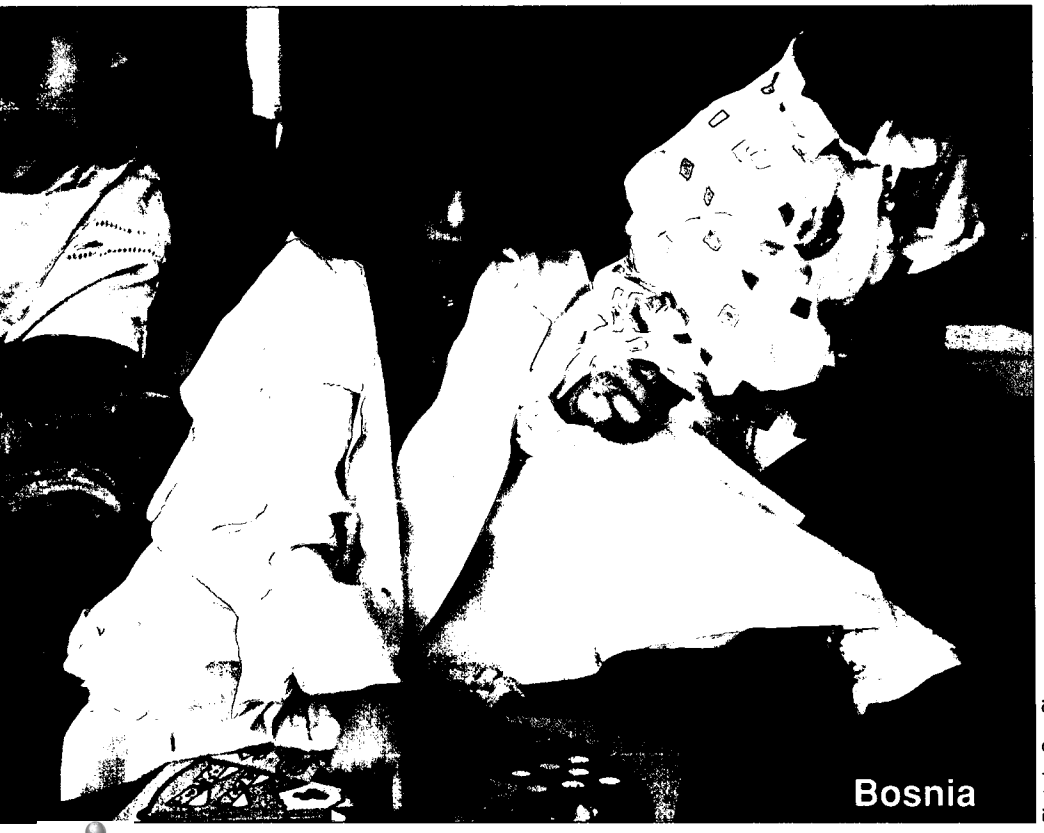


Photo by Gary Shaye

promoting ECD opportunities and parent education, and training teachers to use active learning approaches and techniques that recognize the child as an individual learner.

ECD Programs

SC programs in Ethiopia and Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro promote ECD programs with equal enrollment of girls and boys. Here, girls get an equal opportunity to get ready for learning in primary school. In the Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro program, more girls are attending and are taking advantage of these opportunities than boys. In El Salvador, the ECD program works with both parents and children on gender equity aiming to break the cycle of disparity by identifying and addressing its causes at this early stage of life. Similarly in Honduras, ECD programs benefit a range of female generations with learning opportunities for children, teens and women.

Preschool Education in Honduras

In Honduras, SC supports eighty-one non-formal preschool education centers serving approximately 2,000 children between the ages of three and six. The schools are run and managed by community volunteers and members of each center's parent committee assist with various activities, including increasing community awareness of the importance of pre-primary education. Adults and teenagers volunteer as child care workers. Most are women. Each volunteer receives training every month from SC and the Ministry of Public Education and applies her new knowledge with enthusiasm in her daily practice.

The main incentive for adult volunteers is the experience and increased credibility they have on the job market. Occasionally, parents pay a small stipend per child for the volunteer workers. The program mobilizes teenage girls for a two year term in the early childhood centers. Their motivation for participation is twofold: the girls receive access to credit in a parallel SC Youth Development economic opportunities program, and they obtain in-kind support from the parents of children attending the center. The Honduran SC staff feel that the ECD program prepares the adults, teenagers and the children they work with for a better future in and out of their communities.

Active and Individual Learning

SC trains teachers in Ethiopia to utilize active learning techniques with all children in the class. And in Malawi the use of continuous assessment techniques assists teachers to treat boys and girls equally in the classroom. In the Sudan, teacher training courses focus upon child-centered methods and incorporate the perspective of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Similarly, SC staff are moving away from teacher-centered curriculum in Afghan refugee camps and aiming to train teachers to see children as individual learners with different learning styles. These SC programs explore how active engagement of girls in learning opportunities can enhance their educational outcomes. SC staff in Haiti take the matter on more directly with teachers as they train them to enhance their awareness of discrimination present in teaching methods, school texts, etc. and take action.

Reform

By establishing programs and testing strategies to benefit girls' education in such a wide variety of settings, SC has emerged as an experienced voice promoting community-based reforms that favor girls' education. Re-examination of the costs of schooling, curricular relevance and promotion of government-NGO partnerships in education are common strategies in SC's reform efforts.

Costs of Schooling

Costs often determine whether families send their girls to school. As noted above, the costs that families consider in this equation are both direct and indirect. The direct costs arise from the government's formula for educational cost-sharing as families pay fees and/or buy materials. SC has experimented with promoting cost-sharing formulae that differ from this standard. These efforts divide the costs of school construction, teacher recruitment, day-to-day school and teacher oversight, as well as other management functions between community and government. Such alternative formulae enlist parents and communities in contributing in ways that increase access and alter family calculations of education's direct costs. With lower direct costs to education, families are more likely to send their girls to school.

Decreasing the direct costs of schooling by enlisting community resources to fill alternative roles and expand school access is the

basis of the Village Schools program of SC in Mali. Each community interested in supporting a Village School names a School Management Committee (SMC) consisting of village leaders, parents of students and at least one literate person. Each SMC mobilizes local resources to build the school and recruits classes. Once oriented, the SMC manages the school, collects and distributes families' payments to the teachers, maintains asset logs, monitors teachers, and maintains the school building.

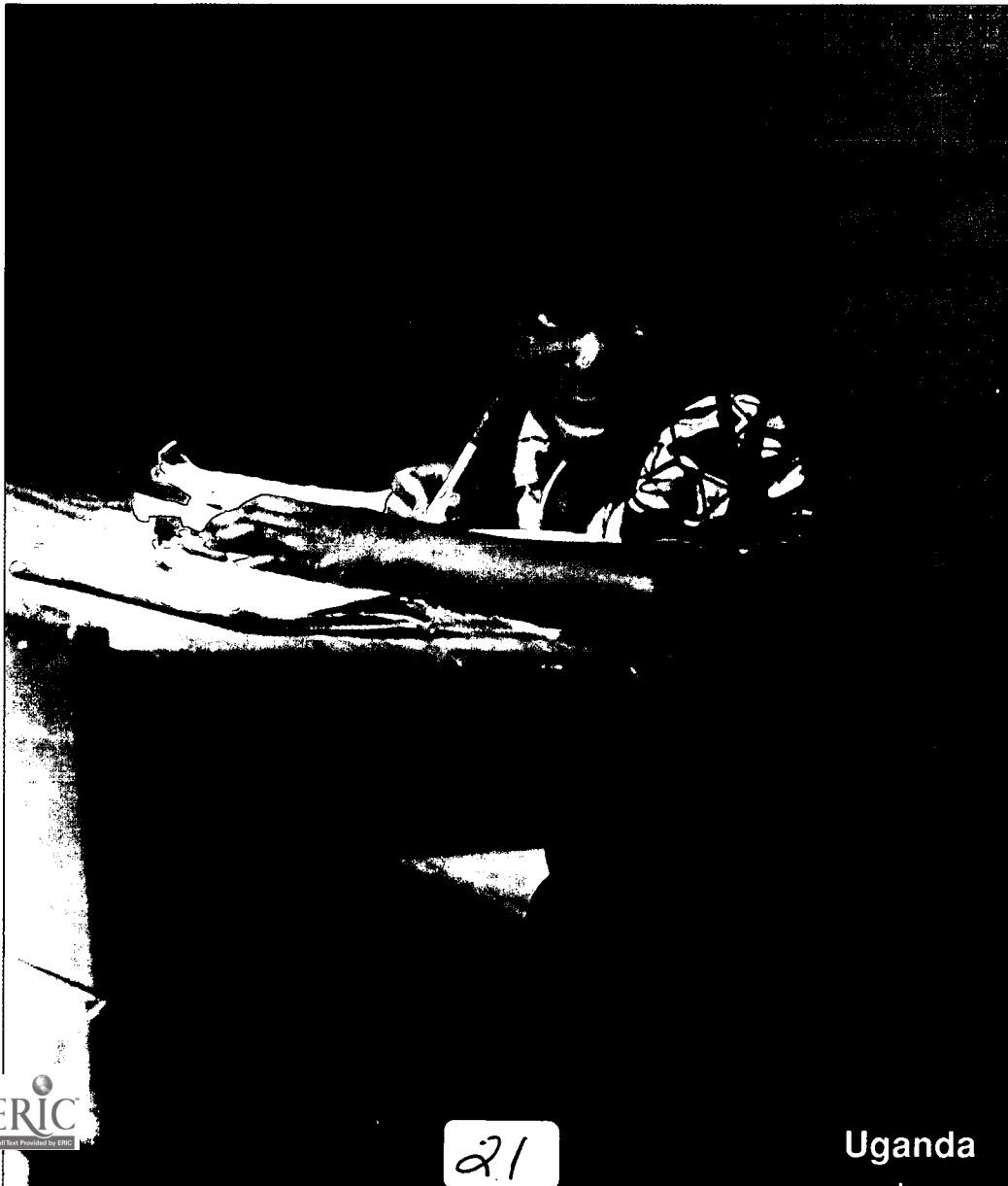


Photo: Michael Bisceglie

Uganda

In 1995, the capital costs of these schools were estimated to be $1,500 each as compared to $10,000 each for a government school.[11] This cost-sharing formula for community school establishment is further buoyed by a partnership in which community manages the school and also pays the teachers' salaries to meet recurrent costs. In Kolondieba, a district of Mali where in the early 1990's only 8.5% of school-aged girls attend primary school, this approach to meeting direct costs of schooling has greatly extended basic education opportunities for girls.

Relevant Curriculum

When curriculum focuses upon skills necessary for civil service positions or other jobs in the wage economy and girls' work dominates the informal economy, the benefit of her education is not apparent. This also happens when the curriculum is overloaded with "subsidiary" subjects to the point that basic skills are not acquired over a period of several years. In these situations, parents accurately assess education's relative lack of importance in their household investment priorities.

Photo by Michael Bisceglie

Egypt

To address the former situation in Mali, SC collaborated with the National Languages Unit of the National Pedagogical Institute (IPN) during the early 1990's to develop local language and relevant curriculum. The Village School's curriculum in years one to three teaches students both basic instrumental skills (reading, writing, and calculation), as well as specific knowledge about village life, health, natural resources, and income generation. Enhanced childrearing and health knowledge as well as skills in credit management and mircoenterprise increase the value that families and girls place upon schooling in these rural communities. Importantly, the performance of students in these schools in 1996 was on par with children in government schools in math and significantly better in language.[12] Now, the

children begin learning French in grade three to enhance their opportunities to continue within the education system.

In Malawi, SC and the Malawi Institute of Education are testing an integrated curriculum that focuses upon basic skills by integrating "subsidiary subjects" such as creative arts, physical education and music into the teaching of math and languages. The goal is to ensure greater time allocated to the development of these skills so that pupils realize literacy and numeracy by grade four. Such basic literacy and numeracy is not routinely achieved today and is believed to lead to widespread drop out, especially of girls.

Government-NGO Partnerships

In a number of countries, government has been slow to recognize that innovative alterations in the primary school model offered by more developed countries can make universal access to primary education an obtainable goal. In order to address conditions of extremely low access as seen in Figure 1 (on page 2), SC and a number of NGOs across the globe have experimented in altering the traditional primary school model.

In essence, these NGOs have implemented context-appropriate programs in partnership with community and other agencies to increase girls' enrollment, persistence and learning. Central to this experimentation is the hiring of local teachers, the creation of efficient systems of local training and support, and the mobilization of communities. In some instances, teachers are paraprofessionals, in others they meet the minimum qualifications to enter into government employment. In all instances, community support for education enhances the quantity and quality of education offered. Together governments, NGOs and communities enhance girls' access to basic, quality education.

CONCLUSION

Girls' education is among the best possible investments in developing countries. SC contributes to increasing the efficiency and impact of these investments. The experiences above enhance girls' education through their community base by promoting the enrollment, persistence and learning of girls as well as reform efforts that support girls' education. In addressing each issue, SC and its partners utilize a variety of strategies:

To promote enrollment, SC and its partners:

- establish new schools, often in locations near girls' homes;
- agree on gender parity as a condition of beginning a school; and
- raise community awareness of the benefits of girls' education and mobilize action on its behalf.

To promote persistence, SC and its partners:

- establish local systems of monitoring and addressing girls' absence;
- offer scholarships or other economic incentives;
- abbreviate or alter school schedules to alleviate opportunity costs of girls' schooling; and
- employ female teachers, train female school committee members and work with others to provide local female role models.

To enhance learning, SC and its partners:

- develop early childhood opportunities; and
- train teachers to utilize techniques that view every pupil as an individual, active learner.

To promote reform, SC and its partners:

- experiment with cost-sharing formulae to provide alternative contribution schemes;
- alter curriculum to increase the relevance and effectiveness of schooling for girls and the value of girls' education for families;
- support systems of community-NGO-government partnership to bring paraprofessional and parental potentials effectively into the provision of basic education.

Importantly, SC country teams simultaneously employ many of the dozen strategies above to enhance girls' educational opportunities. Combining seven or eight strategies, they target the range of stakeholders who make decisions about girls' education: parents, community leaders, teachers, peers, and the girls themselves. This brings to life the call from the World Conference on Education for All 2000 in Dakar that "Girls' education is not just a matter of concern for educators – it is everybody's business."[13]

The above experiences provide lessons for enhancing girls' access to a quality primary education. They also illustrate the comparative advantages of community-based efforts such as those advocated and employed by SC in the global endeavor to educate all girls. Together with communities, governments and donors, SC and its national NGO partners bring these strengths to investments in girls' education. Partnerships across the globe devise flexible solutions from these community-based program elements to address local barriers to girls' education. With these strategies, SC and its local partners address the great need for girls' education and create demand for more.

Photo by Michael Bisceglie

Notes

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