DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 094 SO 034 915

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TITLE Overview of the Girls' Education Activity.
PUB DATE 2002-03-00
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (46th, Orlando, FL, March 6-9, 2002).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Education; Developing Nations; *Educational Objectives; Educational Research; Elementary Education; Females; Foreign Countries; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS Agency for International Development; Conceptual Frameworks; Guatemala; Peru; *Systemic Change

ABSTRACT

In 1996, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began the Girls' Education Activity (GEA). GEA's goal has been to assist host country governments and private sector and nongovernmental entities in formulating, institutionalizing, and implementing country initiatives for girls' education. These initiatives have been designed to ensure substantially increased educational opportunities for girls at the primary school level. This paper provides an overview of the GEA, presenting the general background of the contracts with the host countries and describing the multi-sectoral approach of the GEA. The paper presents information from a study based on five years of accumulated knowledge about girls' education in GEA countries, previously presented in monthly, quarterly, and annual reports to USAID; project designs and descriptions; and a "Start-Up Handbook for Girls' Education Activities." It states that the analytic study was based on these documents, supplemented by in-country interviews conducted over several trips by U.S.-based project staff between January and July 2001. It notes that between 50 and 75 respondents were interviewed in each country. The paper provides a conceptual framework for analyzing change (CFAC) and addresses systemic change for girls' education in GEA countries. It discusses systemic change for girls' education in Guatemala and in Peru and considers factors that effected systemic change in GEA countries. It also discusses some political contexts, linkages, and in-country control. (BT)

Overview of the Girls' Education Activity

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Presentation prepared for the 46th Annual meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, Orlando, FL, 6-9 March 2002.

Background on the Girls' Education Activity

In 1996, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began the Girls' Education Activity (GEA). The goal of GEA has been to assist host country governments and private sector and non-governmental entities in formulating, institutionalizing, and implementing country initiatives for girls' education. These initiatives have been designed to ensure substantially increased educational opportunities for girls at the primary school level.

The purposes of this contract were

1. To enable USAID Missions to develop, put in place, and manage programs to support host country efforts to increase educational opportunities for girls at the primary school level, and

2. To institutionalize within USAID the capacity to plan, support, and facilitate sustainable government and private sector/non-governmental organization efforts to improve educational opportunities for girls at the primary school level.

This activity directly supports the USAID, Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, Women in Development (EGAT/WID) Office Strategic Support Objective (SSO) #2: *Broad-based, informed constituencies mobilized to improve girls' education in emphasis countries.*

One of GEA's guiding principles has been to serve as a catalyst for local action and innovation. Over the past five years, GEA has accomplished this goal through a series of intermediate results established by USAID for this project. Specifically, GEA interventions in target countries have

- Strengthened the performance of public and private sector institutions to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.1);
- Improved knowledge to implement policies, strategies, and programs for girls' education (G/WID IR 2.2);
- Mobilized leadership to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.3);
- Broadened local community participation to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.4); and
- Strengthened teacher performance to improve girls' primary school participation (G/WID IR 2.5).

It is not our intention in this analytical study to compare GEA's success in achieving systemic change among the three participating countries. The descriptions of the environments and project development in each country bear out that the socio-political situations of the three countries had little in common. As would be expected, projects in each country evolved in different ways in different socio-political and economic environments. In fact, each respective country staff designed and implemented different strategies and tactics for achieving the GEA intermediate results, which coincided with and were in response to variations in the availability of local resources and support infrastructures.

The Multi-Sectoral Approach of the Girls' Education Activity [1]

Many gains have been made in the past four decades in expanding access to quality education for girls and boys. However, the need for more children to obtain and complete education is just as critical today as it ever has been, especially for girls. Although worldwide primary enrollment rates for girls have increased 50 percent since 1960, 130 million school-age children around the world still are not in school, and 56 percent of these are girls. And although girls' enrollments increased in 29 countries between 1985 and 1995, simultaneous *decreases* occurred in 17 other countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East.[2] The ability of governments to continue to improve educational access and quality while keeping pace with population growth and rising social expectations—and especially their ability to reach populations not well served by conventional programs (such as girls)—has been questioned by numerous studies and by many governments themselves. Perhaps in recognition of their limitations, governments are increasingly open to forming partnerships with other "non-traditional" sectors, such as civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the business community, the media, and religious organizations, as they try to cope with their mandate of educating all girls and boys.

In response to these circumstances, USAID's Office of Women in Development (G/WID) implemented a multi-sectoral approach to support girls' education in multiple countries in Latin America and Africa. GEA developed long-term projects in Guatemala, Morocco, and Peru. The G/WID approach focused on *building cross-sectoral partnerships to generate local resources* and *delivering social and technical programs that support increased girls' enrollments, retention, and completion.* A driving rationale behind this approach is that sustainable improvements in girls' enrollment and completion rates will likely come from support programs that are locally developed and rely primarily on local resources. G/WID expects that such programs will be more sustainable because they will be more culturally appropriate and thus have broader local ownership.

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[1] Williams, H. (2001). *Case studies in multi-sectoral strategies for advancing girls' education.* Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development.

[2] Anderson, J. B. (1999). Remarks of the USAID Administrator at the USAID G/WID Symposium on Girls' Education. In *Symposium on Girls' Education: Evidence, issues, actions.* Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development.

The premises of the multi-sectoral approach to supporting girls' education are based in numerous studies and experiences in improving education for girls and boys. These **premises** can be categorized into three groups:

1. First, barriers to quality education affect girls more than boys in many settings in that girls are less likely to attend school and complete their basic education than are boys. Many of these barriers are outside government education sector resources, expertise, or even mandates to overcome. To effect lasting changes in these barriers requires getting other organizations and sectors of society to "own" the problem and adopt changes in their policies, culture, and practices.

2. Second, the formation of partnerships requires that governments be willing to reach out to other sectors for support—and that other sectors have the capacity and willingness to contribute to girls' education. This approach represents a significant shift in government policy as well as a transformation of the government and non-government sectors' perception of their mission and mandate.

3. Finally, the third group of approaches is designed to enable the mobilization of sectors that traditionally have not been charged with supporting education. These non-traditional sectors can generate local resources and programs to support girls' education in partnership with government.

4. The principles that underlie this approach are described in this study and summarized here:

- **Apply a multi-sectoral approach that recognizes the importance of traditional and non-traditional partners in changing both the demand for and supply of girls' education.** This principle has been accepted by the GEA staff and validated by the governments through their acceptance of the project approach and their participation in the multi-sectoral activities at several levels. In addition, non-traditional partners have accepted new working relationships with government and other sectors, and all partners have demonstrated strengths to support girls' education.

- **Use locally designed solutions and programs.** The project has supported technical and

organizational processes for needs assessment, stakeholder consultation, policy and organizational change, and action planning among national, local, and specialty groups. Acceptance and implementation of the plans by local groups and their dedication of resources to accomplish them establish the validity of this approach. GEA provided resources and technical support for agenda-setting conferences for central- and local-level stakeholders across sectors, strategy development for new task forces and alliances, action planning with multi-sectoral partnerships at the central and local levels, and administrative planning of national scholarship and support funds.

- **Locally designed programs need to use a multi-method approach.** The GEA strategy supported the development of partnerships across sectors and linkages and between national or central and local entities. Each sector and partnership has distinct strengths and challenges to its ability to implement girls' education support programs over time, as do national and local entities. Consequently, the program worked with several sectors and multi-sectoral partnerships. The data collection, program designs, and action plans also vary for each set of actors.

- **Local human, financial, and physical resources need to be developed to support girls' education.** The G/WID multi-sectoral approach is based on the conclusion that many barriers to quality education that affect girls disproportionately are beyond the ability of government education sector resources to overcome, and thus non-traditional sectors must be mobilized to generate local resources and programs in partnership with government. However, the viability of this approach and the sustainability of multi-sectoral partnerships and programs depend on the ability of these sectors to mobilize resources to support girls' education. In all three countries, the local resources generated and applied over time have included human and physical resources and, increasingly, financial resources.

- **Capacity building (leadership, technical programming, and operational support) needs to be developed and supported for local institutions in their new roles of supporting girls' education.** The multi-sectoral approach to supporting girls' education has involved non-traditional partners and has supported the creation of new alliances and partnerships involving multiple sectors. Many actors, therefore, have had to learn new

information, adjust attitudes about what can and should be done for girls and schools, and understand what it means to work with new colleagues from other sectors. Capacity building has been a prominent feature of all three GEA countries and is a necessary precursor to extending and sustaining the achievements that have been made.

- **All stakeholders need to be engaged in support of girls' education to "democratize" civic, social, and economic opportunities of girls in each country and community.** Dialogues at the national and local levels and cross-sectoral partnerships that include government, such as those that have taken place in all three GEA countries, are consistent with democratic initiatives that seek to make decision making, finance, and administration more inclusive and transparent to all stakeholders. These dimensions have been preconditions for the agenda-setting and joint actions that actors across sectors have taken on behalf of girls' education. The GEA Morocco and Peru experiences have demonstrated support by the national leadership, including elected and appointed officials, as well as the engagement of local community stakeholders. The GEA Guatemala, Morocco, and Peru experiences have demonstrated how democratizing support can lead to effective actions in particular communities that would not have occurred to people from outside the communities. Media have played a role in all three countries to achieve raised awareness and expectations for educating girls. To varying degrees in each country, the government has rearticulated its responsibilities and has opened up to new relationships with CSOs, NGOs, the private sector, religious organizations, and the media.

These principles of the G/WID model for mobilizing and activating multiple sectors to generate local resources and develop and deliver social and technical programs to overcome context-specific barriers to girls' educational success have been validated in Guatemala, Morocco, and Peru. Although the configurations of sectors and actors and activities and results are distinct from one country to the next, this approach has helped transform girls' education from a marginal issue with little traditional support to a priority issue for a wide range of local stakeholders acting in partnership.

Study Design and Analysis Framework

The information presented in this study is based on five years of accumulated knowledge about girls' education in GEA countries, which has been presented in monthly, quarterly, and annual reports to USAID; project designs and descriptions; and a *Start-up Handbook for Girls' Education Activities*. GEA Country Coordinators and their staffs created most of this information. GEA Country Coordinators were Angela Leal, Guatemala; Najat Yamouri, Morocco; and Ana María Robles and later Johanna Mendoza, Peru.

This analytic study is based on these documents, supplemented by in-country interviews conducted over several trips by U.S.-based project staff between January and July 2001. Interviews were conducted by Johan De Wilde, CARE-U.S.A.; Cristina Elias, American Institutes for Research (AIR); Marina Fanning, Management Systems International (MSI); Cory Heyman, AIR; Roberto Mugnani, World Learning; and Stephen Provasnik, AIR. Among those people interviewed were in-country project staff, business leaders, government officials (national, regional, and local), non-profit organizational leaders, religious leaders, community members, school principals, teachers, parents, and school-age girls.

Between 50 and 75 respondents were interviewed in each country. Participation did not pose a problem. A protocol that included a set of guidelines and topics for discussion was developed to govern the conduct of these interviews. Most interviews were conducted in Spanish or French, as appropriate, and translators were used when needed for monolingual speakers of indigenous languages.

A Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Change (CFAC)

Changing policy involves action by many people—legislators, national leaders, activists, and service providers, to name but a few. It involves developing and approving new laws and regulations and then translating those laws and regulations into action. Given the complexity and inherent difficulty involved in constituting education policies that directly lead to comprehensive improvements in educational practices, where should a reformer begin? Although many countries

have piloted limited innovations, few have adopted specific national education reforms focusing on improved parity and equity in basic education.

The exception is Peru, where the Law on Rural Girls' Education, respectively, has articulated a reform vision. In countries yet to adopt such national policies, such as Guatemala, the immediate challenge remains one of initial consciousness raising, mobilization, policy formulation, and policy adoption. However, as in many developing countries, the challenge in Peru will be how to implement those policies that are now nominally on the books. Implementing new policies can usually be characterized as moving from a "what to do" problem to a "how to do it" problem.

Attacking a challenge of this size benefits from breaking it into manageable pieces or tasks and seeking effective ways to manage each of these tasks. An ambitious effort of this kind is the Implementation Task Framework developed by USAID's Democracy Center project, Implementing Policy Change (IPC), from more than a decade of studying policy change in 40 countries. It is an organizing framework for activists and policy change managers. It divides the overall process of policy change into the six distinct tasks described below, each of which can be managed systematically and strategically. These tasks integrate the political, behavioral, organizational, and technical aspects of the policy change effort to provide a road map for managing the change process and a common vocabulary for discussing priorities and tactics.[3] The Implementation Task Framework has been adapted for this analytical study to serve as a Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Change (CFAC).

In short, it means that systemic and policy change work must be catalytic—that is, in-country staff cannot be the sole agents of change. MSI's CFAC tool outlines the following series of essential tasks within the change process that lead to sustainable change:[4]

1. **Policy Legitimization**—The extent to which an initiative is viewed as legitimate by

[3] Dr. Ben Crosby originally drafted the description of the analytical tool, the Policy Implementation Task Framework, which the authors of this report have adapted to analyze the achievements of the three GEA projects. The genesis of this framework was in USAID's Democracy Center project titled Implementing Policy Change (IPC); seehttp://ipc.msi-inc.com. IPC was led and managed by Management Systems International.

[4] Crosby, B. (1996). *Organizational dimensions to the implementation of policy change*. Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development.

people and organizations that are in positions to commit economic and political capital in support of the project

2. **Building Constituencies**—The extent to which those who stand to directly benefit from the growth of the initiative are advocates and are willing to push for reforms

3. **Realigning and Mobilizing Resources**—The extent to which other public and private donors are willing to realign and allocate limited resources for the initiatives

4. **Designing and Modifying Organizational Structures**—The extent to which organizations implementing initiatives are willing to make reforms and modifications to existing administrative, regulatory, and support structures to support the initiative

5. **Mobilizing Action**—The extent to which resources have actually been mobilized to support the initiative

6. **Monitoring the Impact of Systemic Change**—The extent to which the implementation of an initiative is affecting broader educational reforms and the changes in behavior can be documented.

Systemic Change for Girls' Education in GEA Countries

The ultimate question for the Girls' Education Activity is the extent to which actions taken on behalf of girls' education have led to changes at the local, regional, and national levels as well as the extent to which accumulated policy and organizational changes have led to lasting systematic changes in GEA countries in terms of improved girls' access to and retention in primary education. This section reviews how successful Guatemala and Peru have been in promoting systemic change for girls' education and synthesizes this experience into a set of observations on success factors in implementing girls' education reform.

Systemic Change in GEA Countries

The Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Change has been used throughout this study 1) to

focus attention on actions that can effect lasting systemic change, distinguishing them from actions that are essentially discrete initiatives and 2) to provide a means to qualitatively describe the degree of progress or success achieved toward effecting systemic change in each country. The CFAC represents the process of implementing systemic change. Therefore, its tasks do not merely form a checklist of what needs to be accomplished; rather, they are benchmarks that allow the observer to assess whether a project has prepared the ground for later tasks along a continuum toward sustainable change. The CFAC outlines what is essentially a sequential and incremental process. This does not mean that a reform program cannot or should not initiate actions under all six tasks simultaneously, but it does imply that sufficient success must be met within each task to achieve lasting progress in the next. Depending on the extent of the desired reform, this sequence could involve a 5- to 20-year process.

A reform program, such as GEA, needs to establish the legitimacy of its change agenda in concert with developing and enlarging a constituency, which in turn will foster agreement on the reform and move implementation forward. In this regard, Task 2, building constituencies, requires success in Task 1. In the process of building constituencies (Task 2), reform facilitators will need to help stakeholders address issues of the resources (Task 3) and the organizational structures (Task 4) needed for implementation (Task 5). Lining up resources and supportive structures does not always mean that specific actions will result. Therefore, Tasks 5 and 6 need to focus on making sure that the actions take place and on monitoring the results to make sure that the right things have been affected and that negative unintended consequences are minimized.

The discussion below uses the CFAC as a tool for examining the overall status of a project and its overall progress or success in effecting systemic change in each GEA country. Although this is not a scientific instrument, it does represent our assessment of where each GEA country falls on the CFAC continuum and the relative current status of girls' education reform. It is important that the overall assessment of success in each country *not* be construed as a comparison of success among the three GEA programs being analyzed. As stated in the Introduction, each country context is so different that any evaluative comparisons would be invalid. In addition to the obvious political,

cultural, and environmental differences among the countries, each GEA project's change agenda focused on a unique combination of changes at the national, regional, and community levels. Our interpretation considers the respective GEA successes vis-à-vis their particular change agenda and disaggregates these successes according to the changes consolidated at the national, regional, and community levels.

Systemic Change for Girls' Education in Guatemala

Proyecto Global in Guatemala has had mixed success in implementing the interventions designed to achieve the series of intermediate results established by USAID for the GEA project. The project successfully mobilized regional and local leadership to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.3), broadened local community participation to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.4), and strengthened teacher performance to improve girls' primary school education (G/WID IR 2.5). However, little progress on the national level was made beyond the achievements of the BEST project in strengthening the performance of public and private sector institutions to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.1); improving knowledge to implement policies, strategies, and programs for girls' education (G/WID IR 2.2); and mobilizing national leadership to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.3). As a result, sustained improvements in enrollment and completion rates for girls in primary school are at best localized in El Quiché. Preliminary information from Juarez and Associates indicates that nationally, Guatemala's average enrollment and completion rates have not substantially improved since the beginning of Proyecto Global. This should not be surprising, however, given that the government of Guatemala asked Proyecto Global to limit its geographic focus early in the project, and the project concentrated its efforts in El Quiché.

Using the CFAC, it is possible to see that Proyecto Global's efforts to effect systemic change were constrained by limited success at early tasks. In brief, our assessment found that Proyecto Global had done the following:

- The project had established the legitimacy of girls' education among some key educational stakeholders at the national, regional, and local levels, but legitimization at the national level

was not an unqualified success, because important educational stakeholders in the national government remained indifferent to the policy of promoting girls' education. Moreover, some national NGOs—such as JICA—did not fully accept Proyecto Global's leadership in promoting girls' education. By contrast, at the regional and local levels, legitimization was very successful.

- The project maintained active constituencies for girls' education created by the BEST project, but had limited success in developing additional constituencies at the national level. However, it did develop additional active constituencies at the regional and local levels.
- The project accumulated financial and human capital resources at all levels but was not able to mobilize all those resources or develop and modify organizational structures at the national level. At the local level, these resources were successfully mobilized and some organizational structures in specific communities and schools were modified.
- The project did not engage in monitoring and evaluation activities to chart the progress of girls' education activities in Guatemala beyond evaluating the scholarship program.

On the CFAC continuum, Proyecto Global's national efforts cannot be said to have progressed further than Task 3, whereas its regional and local efforts can be placed somewhere between Tasks 4 and 5.

At the national level, the most promising systemic change will occur if the use of *Sugerencias* becomes institutionalized as part of teacher training in Guatemala. At this point, it is too early to say what will result from the Technical Vice-Minister of Education's requested training for ministry officials at the national and regional levels. By and large, however, at the national level there are substantial institutional obstacles to a policy of promoting girls' education, including the federal government's shift from funding scholarships for indigenous girls to funding scholarships for both at-risk boys and girls; the Ministry of Education's reluctance to appoint persons to hold the offices that were created to promote girls' education and withholding power from those offices when filled; the lack of strong leadership in the private sector to promote girls' education; and, above all, the

overwhelming national preoccupation with economic and infrastructural recovery from Guatemala's years of conflict that has kept education issues largely off the national agenda.

At the local level, where Proyecto Global was most successful in mobilizing action in support of girls' education, some degree of mobilization is likely to continue after the project itself ends, especially among teachers who participated in the creation of the *Sugerencias* and in communities that have come to recognize the value of their daughters' education. Such mobilization, however, will probably only be very localized, and most of the momentum achieved in the past three years of community work will most likely dissipate. As such, Proyecto Global's local actions and interventions, although moving in the direction of systemic change, have not been sufficiently generalized to effect any sustainable change.

Systemic Change for Girls' Education in Peru

The New Horizons project in Peru has successfully implemented interventions designed to achieve the series of intermediate results established by USAID for the GEA project. It has strengthened the performance of public and private sector institutions to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.1); improved knowledge to implement policies, strategies, and programs for girls' education (G/WID IR 2.2); mobilized national, regional, and local leadership to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.3); broadened local community participation to promote girls' education (G/WID IR 2.4); and strengthened teacher performance to improve girls' primary school education (G/WID IR 2.5). Whether these interventions have achieved the aims of sustained improvements in enrollment and completion rates for girls in primary school is too early to say. Preliminary information from Juarez and Associates indicates that Peru has made measurable progress in these national goals since the beginning of the New Horizons project.

According to the CFAC, New Horizons Peru has made substantial progress in each of the six tasks. It has raised awareness about the problems associated with rural girls' education and has raised the issue to the level of national discourse. In brief, our assessment found that New Horizons has done the following:

- The project has established the legitimacy of girls' education with key educational stakeholders at the national, regional, and local levels, as well as the existence of the New Horizons project and Florecer as legitimate agents in the process of social transformation.
- The project has developed active constituencies for girls' education at the national, regional, and local levels.
- The project has accumulated financial and human capital resources and has mobilized those resources effectively to develop and modify organizational structures to be more supportive of girls' education.
- The project has engaged in some monitoring and evaluation activities to chart the progress of girls' education activities in Peru.

On the CFAC continuum, New Horizons can be placed somewhere between Tasks 5 and 6. It has mobilized substantial action in support of girls' education and will likely be able to sustain such mobilization after the project itself ends. In addition, local girls' education committees in pilot communities have done an excellent job of monitoring children's and teachers' school attendance, but similar monitoring systems are not yet institutionalized at the regional and national levels. National and regional networks will have to work to ensure that appropriate mechanisms will be in place to monitor girls' enrollment and completion rates in rural areas as well as the quality of educational opportunities for girls. They will also have to establish strategies to monitor the implementation of the new law for rural girls' education.

Other social issues obviously share the national spotlight with girls' education in Peru, and many of them will take some of the national and regional focus away from girls' education in the future, but there is very little resistance to the idea that rural girls' education is an important issue to resolve. We predict that regional and national advocacy will remain strong. Recent interviews, for example, indicate that the Ayacucho Network for Rural Girls' Education will remain strong in the future. Partners have developed a detailed sustainability plan that delineates specific actions and responsibilities, and they have developed strong, long-term relationships with departmental Ministry of Education officials as well as with local communities. Partners have also clearly seen that

involvement in the network has obvious benefits for their organizations: Sharing information on a regular basis and interacting regularly with partners from other sectors facilitates their organizations' work outside the network and therefore provides additional justification for continuing their participation in network activities.

We are similarly optimistic about continuing advocacy on behalf of rural girls' education at the national level. Government, business, and NGO stakeholders have proven their active commitment to girls' education over the past three and a half years. In addition, partners have begun to take concrete steps to fortify the national movement by maintaining Florecer as its organizing body.

Factors That Effected Systemic Change in GEA Countries

Without question, the most important factors in determining the success of a girls' education project are the people and organizations that take leadership roles. Their hard work and dedication; passion and compassion; flexibility and persistence; ability to convince, motivate, and listen to others; ability to inspire action and take advantage of opportunities all have an effect on a project's ability to create and advance a girls' education agenda. Similarly, the backing of a strong and supportive organizational structure can provide the logistical support, credibility, and outreach necessary to help girls' education projects succeed. However, the best staff and organizations can be helped or hindered in facilitating the change process by the context in which it is working. On the basis of the overall experience of the three GEA countries over the past five years, we have identified three key factors that affected the project's ability to influence systematic change on behalf of girls' education:

- *Tailoring the Approach to the Political Context:* The extent to which the project is able to develop an effective means for mobilizing civil society, consistent with the country's current political climate and state of democratization

- *Linking Change at the Local, Regional, and National Levels:* The extent to which the project is able to work simultaneously at local, regional, and national levels and to use each to reinforce change at the other two levels

- *Maximizing In-Country Control Over Project Activities:* The extent to which the project effectively manages to reconcile the objectives of different stakeholders in ways that give primacy to the views of those most directly affected

Political Context

Some political contexts are clearly easier to work in than others, especially on an issue such as girls' education. In particular, the political climate for participation; the existence or willingness to create suitable civil society organizations; the protections afforded to free speech and right of assembly; the receptivity of executive and legislative branch leaders to engage in policy discourse with civil society actors; the extent of empowerment of women and women's groups; and other related issues dictate what is possible and what is likely to be effective.

The three cases suggest, however, that progress is possible in a variety of political contexts. The conditions presented specific opportunities as well as firmly closed doors for change. An essential challenge in developing each country's strategy was an assessment of the conditions—the forces that needed to be tapped to advance girls' education and those forces that restrained reform. Such a Force Field Analysis is valuable for discovering which of the motivating or restraining forces at play could possibly be reinforced or mitigated to advance the status quo in favor of a girls' education agenda.

The enabling environment for changes in policies and procedures includes economic, social, historical, and cultural dimensions as well as political ones. Two insights from the GEA experience, however, are that these other dimensions both affect and are affected by a country's political context and that girls' education is an extremely political issue. The GEA experience thus suggests that strategies to promote girls' education need to be sensitively tailored to the political context in which they operate.

Linkages

One of the assumptions of the GEA model was that projects would work at a variety of levels to improve girls' education in target countries. Specifically, it was assumed that projects needed to

engage leaders at the national, regional, and local levels to reform policies (G/WID IR 2.3) and, at the same time, mobilize communities (G/WID IR 2.4) to change practices and become more supportive of girls' education. Such parallel goals raise the question of whether project resources need to be efficiently and sufficiently allocated among these levels to achieve the most wide-reaching, systemic gains for girls' education.

It can be posited that an exclusive focus on leaders might enable projects to affect discourse on educational policy at the community, regional, or national levels, but it is unlikely that such discourse would be informed by local circumstances or have a meaningful effect on local practices. In contrast, an exclusive focus on communities might increase local support for girls' education in specific communities, but it does not necessarily create opportunities for scaling projects up or effecting systemic reform on the country level. Therefore, projects designed to catalyze local action need to strike a balance between focusing attention on leaders and communities. They need to strike a similar balance in focusing on changes at the community, regional, and national levels. Each GEA country negotiated this balance in different ways with different sorts of consequences for each.

Guatemala, for example, had developed an active national network in support of girls' education—the AEN—prior to the start of GEA. USAID/Guatemala therefore asked the GEA Country Coordinator to focus her efforts on bilingual education at the regional level. The Mission was particularly interested in having the project work in the Department of El Quiché, one of the most rural departments in Guatemala and one with relatively large numbers of indigenous people with low completion rates for girls in primary school. GEA/Guatemala therefore began with a strong regional and local focus and a more limited focus at the national level.

These priorities had a clear impact on the evolution of project activities in Guatemala. GEA staff provided extensive technical assistance to 17 communities in El Quiché, helping them conduct situational analyses and sensitizing workshops and develop community action plans to promote girls' education. At a regional level, staff worked with teachers from across El Quiché to develop the *Sugerencias* (teachers' manuals) and with a media consultant to develop multilingual and multicultural social communications materials. At the national level, project staff worked with the

AEN and hosted a variety of national conferences, but the work that was taking place at the regional and community levels had little effect on the national girls' education agenda. The one striking exception is the current interest of the Ministry of Education in the *Sugerencias*. The Technical Vice-Minister of Education is requiring central and regional Ministry staff to be trained in the use of the manual, and USAID has agreed to fund the reproduction of 10,000 copies for wide distribution. It is too early to determine to what extent teachers will use these manuals on a broad scale in Guatemala.

The GEA/Peru project is an excellent example of careful project planning at the local, regional, and national levels. It is also a good example of how to create a productive balance between work with leaders and communities. GEA/Peru generated an extensive number of activities at the national, regional, and local levels. At the national level, the national network sponsored a country-level situational analysis (*The Open Agenda*), radio and television spots about the importance of girls' education, national conferences and meetings, and the development of a draft law on the rights of rural girls' to education. At the regional level, the national network inspired regional networks, one that received extensive support from the GEA project and three that were largely self-supporting. Regional networks then worked closely with local communities to develop girls' education awareness campaigns and action plans. In addition, 19 communities in the Department of Ayacucho hosted an array of small-scale projects to demonstrate the possibilities and the methods of improving girls' access to and persistence in primary school.

In most instances, the relationships among levels and between leaders and communities that were involved in the project were mutually reinforcing. For instance, the regional girls' education network in Ayacucho held a series of meetings with local communities to learn about the barriers to girls' education. The regional network then summarized these experiences in a document and shared this information at the Second National Conference on the Education of Rural Girls—information that fed directly into the development of the draft law on rural girls' education that was ultimately enacted by the Peruvian Congress.

Unfortunately, fostering close collaboration among partners at multiple levels can lead to

potential problems as well. For example, there was some consternation among members of one regional girls' education network in Peru, who felt that the national network was making too many decisions about regional technical assistance activities without receiving enough input from regional partners. Close collaboration among levels can also make people more sensitive to decisions about resource allocation. Members of the same regional network, for example, were frustrated about the disproportional national support for another regional network because they believed that girls' education experienced similar problems in all rural parts of the country.

Similar to the projects in the other two GEA countries, GEA/Peru also faces the challenge of turning actions and local policies into systemic change at the country level. Interviews suggest that the pilot project in Ayacucho communities has had a positive effect on increasing girls' enrollment and completion rates in primary school. The challenge is how to turn these actions, which have fostered policy changes at the community level, into systemic change for girls' throughout Peru. In many instances, GEA partners have taken an important next step. They have been educating Ministry of Education officials at the district, province, and department levels about their activities, and they have been working with these officials to develop and implement long-term action plans for girls' education. Much work is yet to be done, however, before local actions can effect systemic change at the country level.

The experiences of the three GEA countries demonstrate that working on multiple levels is essential for creating systemic change for girls' education at large in a given country and that a dialectic process between the local and the national levels is necessary to achieve the following goals:

1. Identify specific, local impediments to girls' schooling;
2. Develop appropriate community-based solutions;
3. Build community-level and national constituencies for the interventions;
4. Implement the interventions; and
5. Develop a mechanism to monitor and evaluate progress.

Further interaction between local and national partners in this chain occurs when a pilot or

demonstration project is ready for scaling up—at this point, actions and individual-level policies begin to effect change at the system level. Even under the best circumstances, effecting change at the system level is a daunting and arduous process. At the very least, it requires excellent communication and coordination among stakeholders at the local, regional, and national levels.

In-Country Control

A key assumption at the heart of the GEA model was that the projects would serve as catalysts for change, not as agents of change. The reason goes back to the aim of sustainable change: Experience has shown that changes are rarely sustained when they are imposed from the outside, but they are likely to command continued support when they are selected and implemented by stakeholders within the system. To provide facilitating support for in-country initiatives that promote girls' education is a tangible and clear mission for project staff. It is not, however, project staff's only objective; they are supposed to achieve the prescribed intermediate results set by the G/WID office and those set by their country's USAID Mission. Therein lies a challenge faced by all GEA offices: resolving the tension between *facilitating* systemic change for girls' education and *directing* the achievement of project goals. On the one hand, the GEA model encourages staff to support in-country educational stakeholders to develop and implement plans for girls' education instead of taking primary responsibility for development and implementation. It encourages leaders from the private and public sectors in countries to craft a girls' education agenda and then take responsibility for the steps necessary for carrying out appropriate activities. On the other hand, USAID has established specific intermediate results that projects were obliged to meet as part of contractual requirements.

In Guatemala, this tension manifested itself at the very beginning of the project when USAID/Washington wanted the project staff to facilitate teacher training in Guatemala by having the Ministry use teacher training materials prepared by BEST. When the Ministry of Education's DIGEBI found the BEST materials unsuitable to use with rural teachers and sought assistance from Proyecto Global to prepare better materials, the project staff was placed in an irreconcilable

situation. The same dynamic reoccurred throughout the life of project in Guatemala, affecting both the allocation of staff time and energy (e.g., expending considerable energy to expand private sector involvement in promoting girls' education to comply with prescribed multi-sectoral goals when the probability of return from the Guatemalan private sector at the time was lower than pursuing other plans) and staff morale (e.g., engendering frustration and cynicism).

Although it is easy to recognize that tensions about control over project activities affect the success of project staff's efforts, there is no easy solution. Sustainability necessitates giving project staff a free hand to facilitate endogenously directed actions, yet the principles of management and accountability necessitate directing what outcomes need to be achieved. At the very least, however, recognizing this tension should make it possible to (1) clarify priorities for project staff; (2) define project goals in terms of ends rather than means; and (3) review the theory of change that underlies the project's framework, model, and objectives.

A review of the GEA projects' histories suggests that flexibility in the formulation and revision of Intermediate Results is of utmost importance to maximize efforts, take advantage of opportunities encountered, and minimize staff frustration. Efforts can and should be made to bring Intermediate Results more in consonance with the application of change theory—both at the level of G/WID and at the country Mission level.

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