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Advocacy Brief

Education in Emergencies:
The Gender Implications

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Contents

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Introduction to Education in Emergencies

'Education in emergencies' refers to a broad range of educational activities – formal and non-formal – which are life-saving and life-sustaining and, therefore, critical for children, youth and their families in times of crisis. Crisis situations include natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods, as well as man-made conflicts. Emergency education programmes are designed according to the particular context of the environment and may be short-term, temporary solutions such as 'tent schools' for when school buildings are destroyed, damaged or inaccessible. However, education in emergencies also refers to longer-term education policy and programme development in chronic crisis situations. These include situations where refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are uprooted for many years and have long-term education needs, or where the state is chronically 'fragile' and unable or unwilling to provide quality education services for the population. In addition, education in emergencies covers education activities in post-emergency recovery, reconstruction and peace-building periods. Education activities evolve over time and generally span different phases of the crisis – acute emergency, recovery and reconstruction. Even short-term, improvised education interventions should be planned with an awareness of the longer-term education needs of the community and of the vision and policies of relevant authorities.

No clear dividing line exists between 'emergency' and 'regular' education, especially in chronic crisis and reconstruction contexts, and much accepted 'good practice' applies equally across both. However, education in emergencies does have particular features. Over recent years, awareness of the importance of education in emergencies has grown, and education is now included in international disaster relief funding appeals alongside other 'traditional' humanitarian sectors such as water and sanitation, health and shelter. Education programmes are then supported by international and national NGOs and UN agencies. This is particularly necessary when the state education system is not fully functioning. Where teachers have been killed, injured, have fled, or are otherwise occupied with fighting or with their own survival and that of their families, 'emergency teachers' may need to be recruited from within the local population. Condensed, rapid training programmes for new, inexperienced teachers are a common feature of emergency education programmes. The programme content has to be adapted according to specific, local needs, but the protection and promotion of students' psychosocial well-being[1] underpins most interventions. In times of crisis, the restoration of formal and non-formal education programmes as early as possible is a significant step towards restoring normalcy and providing reassuring routine, continuity and hope for the future of both the children and their communities.

Quality, relevant education is a right of all children. Children in crisis situations often need new and different knowledge, skills and learning experiences in order to survive and to thrive in changed circumstances. They are particularly vulnerable, facing increased risks of physical and emotional harm. Education content to counter these risks may include, for example, land mine education, health and nutrition education, and other life skills such as HIV/AIDS prevention. Refugees or internally displaced children may need to learn in

1 Psychosocial well-being refers to the close connection between psychological aspects of experience (thoughts, emotions and behaviour) and wider social experiences (relationships, traditions and culture). It is broader than concepts such as 'mental health', which run the risk of ignoring aspects of the social context, and ensures that the importance of family and community are recognized (PSWG, 2003).

a different language than that of the local, host population and to follow a curriculum that will allow them to transfer back into the education system when they return home. However, for children and youth displaced over a long period, learning the language of the host community may be important for ensuring future income-generating possibilities, as well as for building bridges between communities. Emergency education programmes often contain elements of disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation, such as lessons for students about how to protect themselves in the event of an earthquake or what to do if rebel forces come to their village. In conflict-affected contexts, the inclusion of peace education and conflict resolution in education programmes for children and youth should support peace processes at different levels and contribute towards more peaceful futures. In this respect, careful attention to revising traditional curriculum content is required, especially in potentially-sensitive subjects such as history and social science. This is particularly the case when notions of ethnic, religious or geographical superiority have been emphasized within the curriculum and may actually fuel tensions or conflict between different groups within the population.

A number of international policy developments have helped to shape an evolving field of practice known as 'education in emergencies', which is now integrated into education policy frameworks of relevant UN agencies (primarily UNICEF, UNHCR and UNESCO) and multilateral and bilateral donors. Education in emergencies is also gaining ground as a new field for study and research. Graça Machel's 1996 report to the UN on children affected by conflict and the follow-up report of 2000[2] were significant in raising awareness of the extent to which children suffer in times of war. These reports also highlighted the importance of education and the fact that many children affected by conflict – most notably girls – do not have access to schooling. The World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, also recognized that the Education for All (EFA) targets will not be met unless education systems in conflict-and disaster-affected contexts are given specific attention. 'Fragile states' – many of which are crisis or post-conflict states – are now a focus for policy development of donors and UN and other agencies. Aware that reaching the Millennium Development Goals – especially those relating to education[3] – in fragile states is highly challenging, donors are developing policy guidelines for alternative forms and approaches to service delivery in such countries.

Gender and Emergencies

There is now increased awareness of how emergencies such as conflict and natural disasters are experienced differently by men and women, boys and girls. The different roles, activities, skills, positions and status of men and women in families, communities and institutions create gender-differentiated risks, vulnerabilities and capacities in an emergency situation. For example, many more women than men died in the 2004 South Asian tsunami because

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2 See Machel, 1996, 2000

3 MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education. (Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.)

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. (Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.)

women were more likely to be at home at the time – or in the case of a community in Sri Lanka, taking their baths in the sea, close to the shore. In many locations, men were further out to sea and so were safer. Women were also physically less able to run from the enormous waves and to climb trees.[4] In conflict situations, men and young boys may be at greater risk of recruitment into fighting forces and into potentially-lethal active combat, but women and girls may be forced to serve as sex slaves and cooks, or to take on other non-combatant roles. They may be targeted for rape and sexual abuse by fighting forces, but may also be subjected to sexual violence by the men of their own community and family. Levels of sexual violence and exploitation of women and girls can also increase when natural disasters strike, as well as in the aftermath if displaced families are crowded into poorly-designed camps with few protective features such as good lighting and separate toilet/washing facilities for females. Unfortunately, the desire to protect women and girls from such risks can also mean that they are prevented from accessing education, health and other critical support services.

At the same time, emergency situations and the priority to survive mean that *both* men and women often have to take on non-traditional gender roles and activities. In the aftermath of the South Asian earthquake of October 2005, for example, widowed men were cooking food for their children for the first time in their lives. In some circumstances, women affected by a crisis may also benefit from the 'window of opportunity' to access new opportunities – for example, to go out to work and control family finances for the first time. However, these shifts may not be sustained in the long term and women may end up carrying a double burden – that is, continuing to do both their traditional activities such as household chores and childcare *and* additional tasks that would otherwise be carried out by men. In some emergency situations, especially conflicts in which ethnicity and cultural identity are threatened, traditional gender differences and patterns of activity become even more rigidly adhered to, and women and girls are subjected to increased limitations on mobility and participation.

Emergency Situations: The Gender Implications in Education

Machel's reports highlighted the disproportionate impact of conflict on girls and, in particular, on girls' access to education. Subsequent studies, reports, programmes and policy interventions have raised awareness of the gender dimensions of emergency situations and of the critical need to ensure that both girls and boys have early and equal access to, and benefit equally from, relevant education (see bibliography). Although there are exceptions, in most emergency situations, girls' educational opportunities are more limited than boys'. Even under very difficult conditions, however, 'windows of opportunity' may also open up for girls and women to access education. It is critical to establish gender-responsive emergency education programmes early on as these lay the foundations for increased participation of women and girls in recovery/reconstruction activities, as well as in community and national development processes, including, for example, standing in newly-democratic elections. If women and girls are not equally included from the beginning, then it can be very difficult to encourage them into the system later because of the tendency for emergency arrangements to set patterns for the future.

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4   See, for example, Oxfam International (2005)

Factors that limit girls' educational opportunities in stable contexts often intensify in crises. For example, there may be even greater preference given to sons when family resources are limited by collapsed markets and reduced access to income. Boys' school attendance is prioritized in many stable countries, but this can become even more pronounced in times of crisis when there is usually less money available to pay fees and buy uniforms or supplies. At the same time, emergency situations create particular disadvantages for girls, such as the often extremely unbalanced demographics with large numbers of women-headed households. When these women have to take up work outside the home, older daughters care for siblings, increase their household chores and, as a result, stay home from school.

Sexual violence also affects girls and boys in many so-called 'normal' situations, but at times of crisis and in conflict situations, the magnitude may be greater and the impact intensified because prevention, referral and support mechanisms collapse. The risks of HIV/ AIDS and sexually-transmitted disease (STD) infection are also heightened. Conflict creates exaggerated cultures of male domination, aggressiveness, violence, and impunity. Girls and women inevitably suffer. In the 'abnormal' world of a refugee camp, sexual violence can become normalized. This adversely affects girls' education in different ways. The risk of sexual violence on the way to school, or even in and around the school, may convince parents to keep their daughters at home. Increased risk is created by, for example, large numbers of soldiers, rebels, police or even peacekeepers in the area, or by having to go further than normal to find firewood, food or water. Girls who do go to school may find that they are subjected to harassment, exploitation and even rape by male students or teachers, with no one to turn to for protection, response or reporting. In an emergency education programme, checks and balances such as professional orientation sessions for new teachers, codes of conduct and regular supervision for teachers may not be in place, and new 'emergency' teachers may have far lower levels of professionalism than 'regular' teachers. Furthermore, large numbers of over-age male students, who are trying to catch up on years of missed schooling, often contribute to an uncomfortable classroom environment for girls. This is especially true if, as is the case in most programmes, there are very few women teachers.

Girls drop out of school because of early marriage and pregnancy in many non-emergency contexts, but the pressures to do so may be increased or slightly different in emergencies. Diminished family resources may force families to marry off their daughters earlier than they normally would in order to obtain a dowry payment, for example. Families may also be forced to compromise their daughters to marry in order to win favour – and security – from soldiers, rebels or others with power and influence.

Even when both girls and boys affected by crises are able to access education, gender inequalities with respect to the quality and appropriateness of education may remain. Particularly in emergency programmes, the teachers are usually male, and it can be very difficult to ensure that there are women in school who can act as mentors, role models or resource persons for girls. Women teachers – if they are present in the school – may be too preoccupied with their own concerns to provide additional support to girls. Finding other women who have the time, capacity and willingness to work in schools may also be difficult. Crash teacher training courses may only cover the very basic topics of how to organize and teach a class. Furthermore, teachers more often struggle to manage with basic classroom management and instruction (especially with large, multi-age classes) during crises and thus may be unable to ensure that the lessons relate to girls' experiences as well as to boys'. Teaching materials often have to be pulled together quickly from what is available, with little regard for any gender stereotyping they may contain.

Hence, in addressing the gender dimensions of emergency situations, one must examine the issue from both supply and demand sides:

Supply Factors

- When schools are destroyed, and children have to travel long – and possibly dangerous – distances to attend the nearest functioning facility, girls are more likely to stay at home.

- When schools are damaged or just not maintained and no sanitary facilities exist, girls – and especially adolescent girls – are disproportionately affected; they may have to miss school during menstruation.

- Boys may be at risk of abduction and forced recruitment by fighting forces at school or on their way to and from school, but girls may also be at increased risk of abduction and of sexual violence and exploitation.

- In emergencies, there are usually far fewer women who are able to volunteer as teachers, and girls are disproportionately affected when schools are dominated by men.

Demand Factors

- Where parents are unable to pay school fees and buy the necessary supplies, boys may be more able – and it may be safer for them – to go out and engage in income-generating activities to pay their own school fees than girls.

- For refugees, IDPs and others affected by crises, the symbolic power of education as a force for change and as a passport to a different and better life is particularly strong; children often want to go to school, whatever the costs. Girls who are desperate to attend school and to get good grades may have to engage in transactional sex with older men – and even teachers – in order to pay their fees, cover the costs of supplies and ensure good grades, thus exposing them to higher risks of STD and HIV/AIDS infection.

- Children who are separated from their families and living in temporary conditions with relatives or foster families may lack the support and encouragement to continue their education. This is especially the case for girls who are often expected to do household chores and have no time to study.

- Teenage pregnancy rates are often very high in refugee and IDP camps, and girls with their own babies may not be able to attend school because of exclusionary policies, social stigma, no extended family to provide childcare, lack of appropriate facilities, etc.

- Girls who are disabled, disfigured or severely mentally affected by the crisis are likely to be kept at home, possibly even hidden from outsiders, and very unlikely to be able to go to school.

It is also important to point out that in emergency situations, such gender inequalities exist at a time when the political will, resources, and expertise to address these issues are usually least available. Often, the more pressing imperative is to occupy boys and young men to keep them from trouble, involvement in gangs, violence and other anti-social behaviour.

Gender, Education and Protection in Emergencies

In times of crisis, children are particularly vulnerable. There are new risks and dangers such as contaminated water supplies, falling masonry, landmines, forced recruitment, and family separation and increased risks of abduction, sexual exploitation and HIV/AIDS and STD infection. Education plays a critical role in protecting children and youth in these situations; the protection afforded by education can be physical, cognitive, psychosocial[5], or a combination of the three. Physical protection is provided when safe learning spaces are created free from dangers such as falling debris and landmines, as well as from violence such as forced abduction and sexual violence. Cognitive protection is provided when the content of education meets the needs of the children and provides important health and safety messages relevant to the context. Psychosocial protection is provided when children feel safe and comfortable and are able to interact freely with adults and with peers they trust, sharing their ideas, hopes and fears for the future. Open expression of such feelings is a powerful antidote to the stresses and trauma of a crisis situation. Opportunities for various forms of expression such as art, music, poetry and dance present children with a range of different coping strategies, thereby helping them to build internal strength and resiliency even in the most difficult times. When children are separated from family or when parents and family members are present but are dealing with their own stress and trauma, and when traditional community coping strategies and mechanisms have been disrupted, schools and teachers play vital roles in ensuring children's psychosocial well-being.

In emergency situations, girls and boys have different vulnerabilities and capacities and, therefore, different protection needs. Education interventions that are designed to be protective for children affected by crises should be gender-responsive. Protection from physical violence requires particular attention to protection from sexual violence for girls and young women; the location of school buildings and facilities should be decided with this in mind, as should the schedule of classes. Administration processes also need to be in place to ensure that girls and boys are protected in and around school (for example, a code of conduct for teachers and other education personnel, as well as for non-teaching staff such as guards and cleaners) and to make available male and female mentors, teachers or counselors for confidential discussions. Information should be available in school on the different services and other sources of help in the community for survivors of violence. For optimum cognitive protection, male and female youth affected by crises need to learn about reproductive health and have access to information, support and skills, particularly on how to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. Girl mothers – and young fathers, too – need to be supported in their new roles with information on baby care, health and nutrition, as well as about how to look after themselves. The emphasis, however, will probably be different for each, and single-sex groupings with male and female teachers may be the most appropriate means of providing such information. With regard to psychosocial protection through education, it is important to note that emergencies often create situations where men's and boys' work decreases, but girls' and women's work increases. This means that whilst men and boys have opportunities to interact with each other and to share ideas, concerns and stories, girls and women have little time for such healing experiences. Concern for their daughters' safety may also mean that parents restrict girls' movements and confine them to the home. It is, therefore, particularly important to create opportunities within the school day for girls to engage in creative activities, to work in groups with peers, to play and to do physical activities such as sports or dance.

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5 Nicolai and Triplehorn (2003)

General Policy and Programme Development Guidelines, Strategies and Approaches

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)[6] has facilitated the development of the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction. The INEE Standards fill a significant gap by providing consensual programming guidelines for education in emergencies.[7] They are a common framework around which quality education interventions can be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. Grounded in the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All commitments, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international and regional[8] rights instruments, the Minimum Standards also provide a framework for promoting gender equality, ensuring that girls' and boys' rights to quality and relevant education are met and that the education provided is gender-responsive and empowering for all. Since the launch of a handbook in December 2004, the Minimum Standards are being integrated into ongoing education programmes. They have already been used in a number of new crisis situations, most notably the natural disaster emergencies of the December 2004 tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the Pakistan earthquake.

Gender equality is a theme that is integrated across all categories of the Minimum Standards.[9] Working towards fully meeting the Standards necessarily implies attention to gender equality and the gender-based needs and aspirations of male and female learners, teachers and community members. Ensuring equal access to education for girls is clearly a priority issue (Access Category, Standard 1), but the Standards convey the need for gender to be considered in all components and in all dimensions of education provision. From the onset of an emergency, an in-depth gender-based analysis of the situation is required, as well as consistently gender-focused monitoring and evaluation processes. Coordination amongst different actors should ensure that gender equality is a common theme, that it is embedded in education policy, and also that gaps in programming can be identified so that resources are targeted to reach specific groups of marginalized boys and girls, with programmes tailored to their specific needs (see Minimum Standards category: Education Policy and Coordination). The Gender Task Team of the INEE has developed some field-level tools for promoting gender equality in education during emergencies that complement the Minimum Standards (see www.ineesite.org/gender).

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6   See www.ineesite.org. The INEE was formed in 2000 and has since grown to have a membership of over 100 organizations and 800 individuals. Its mandate is to share knowledge and experience, to promote greater donor understanding of education in emergencies and advocate for education to be included in emergency response. It also seeks to make teaching and learning resources available as widely as possible, to ensure attention to gender issues in emergency education initiatives and to document and disseminate best practices in the field. Within INEE, a Gender Task Team works specifically on ensuring that gender concerns are integrated into education during emergencies.

7   The Sphere standards, widely used to guide humanitarian actions in other sectors, do not include education. See www.sphereproject.org

8   Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, notably Article 11

9   The categories of the Minimum Standards are: Community Participation, Analysis, Access and Learning Environment, Teaching and Learning, Teachers and Other Education Personnel, Education Policy and Coordination.

Specific Programme Strategies

Increasing Access to Education

Targeted and gender-responsive measures are required to ensure that girls and boys, particularly adolescent girls and boys, have equal access to education in emergency situations. Strategies include:

- Locating schools and learning spaces close to the learners' homes and away from different kinds of dangers, such as soldiers' quarters and dense bush

- Involving community members to ensure safe travel to and from school, particularly for girls

- Proactively recruiting women teachers and providing support for additional professional development activities to complete these teachers' own education

- Timing classes to enable girls and boys with other responsibilities to attend

- Providing childcare facilities for women teachers and girl-mother students

- Providing sanitary materials and facilities for girls and women teachers

- Providing school feeding programmes or take-home rations for girls (and for the babies of girl mothers)[10]

- Engaging girls and boys in the preparation of a 'missing-out map' – that is, a map of the children in the community who are currently not in school – and in the design of gender-responsive education programmes to reach out-of-school children[11]

Ensuring that Education is Empowering and Protective for Girls and Boys

As highlighted earlier, attention is also required to ensure that the curriculum content and teaching methods within emergency education programmes provide physical, cognitive and psychosocial protection for girls and boys. With input from the community, curricula should be designed with this in mind, and special topics may need to be developed to address specific risks. Quality teacher training and ongoing professional support are critical to ensuring that inexperienced male and female teachers are able to promote the academic, social and emotional well-being of students and to create safe and nurturing learning environments. Ensuring that girls and boys have equal opportunities to gain essential literacy, numeracy and relevant life skills in an environment in which they are considered as equals and in which their potential for equal participation in community and social development is fully respected is critical preparation for the future. This is so for the youth themselves, for their families and communities, and for society as a whole.

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10 The Sphere standards on nutrition highlight the need for mechanisms to target adolescent girls with additional nutritional support (Sphere Project, 2004, p. 142).

11 This exercise needs to be adapted for the country in which it is being carried out, and this is especially so for emergency contexts. The focus is on problems of access to education for young children, especially girls. But in countries where the situation is different, it can be on dropping out or persistent absenteeism, particularly among boys.

The table below highlights priority gender strategies across emergency education programmes:

Area of Focus	Strategies	Minimum Standard Reference
Programme Design	• Gender-focused needs analysis is conducted at the onset of the crisis and regularly updated as the situation evolves • Attention is given to assessing the particular vulnerabilities and capacities of boys and girls • Male and female youth and community members are involved in needs assessment and programme design; specific efforts may be needed to reach out to women and girls • Learning spaces are established in safe and accessible locations for girls and boys, and adequate sanitary facilities are provided	• Analysis, Standards 1 and 3 • Community Participation, Standard 1 • Access and Learning Environment, Standards 1, 2, 3
Curriculum Content	• Curriculum includes protective content for girls and boys, e.g. life skills, HIV/AIDS prevention, conflict resolution and nutrition • Textbooks and learning materials contain positive messages about the roles and status of men and women, boys and, girls, and in particular, their complementary roles in peace-building, reconstruction, nation-building, etc.	• Teaching and Learning, Standard 1
Teacher Development	• Teachers receive training in child-centred, gender-responsive methodologies and in psychosocial support and protection for children • Teacher training includes sessions on teachers' roles as community leaders and agents of child protection • Teacher training includes positive classroom management and behaviour management practices as alternatives to corporal punishment • Male and female teachers are encouraged to act as role models for male and female youth whose parents and elders may be unable to offer the support and advice they would normally provide	• Teaching and Learning, Standard 2 • Teaching and Learning, Standard 3
Teacher Management and Support	• Teachers are involved in developing a code of conduct which highlights exemplary conduct for child protection • Teachers are actively engaged in ongoing discussions and decision-making to ensure child protection and well-being in and out of school • Teachers receive regular professional advice that is supportive and encouraging • Gender-responsive psychosocial support or counselling is available for teachers	• Teachers and Other Education Personnel, Standard 3
Monitoring and Evaluation	• Indicators are developed to reflect gender equality, student protection, and well-being concerns • Appropriate sex-disaggregated data is collected on a regular basis • As far as possible, male and female community members, education authorities, teachers and learners are involved in monitoring and evaluation • Monitoring and evaluation data feed into ongoing programme review and improvement to ensure that differentiated needs are met and capacities developed	• Analysis, Standard 3 • Community Participation, Standard 1 • Analysis, Standard 3

Conclusions

Education in emergencies is a critical intervention in the promotion of gender equality. It can create opportunities for girls and women for cognitive development and individual empowerment that may not have existed before. Beyond this, education opportunities can help to improve the status of women and girls in society. Women's and girls' participation is critical in post-emergency recovery, reconstruction and peace-building efforts and gender-responsive education programmes that give girls opportunities to learn new skills and develop their confidence help to pave the way in this process. Strategies outlined above can help to ensure that education programmes – formal or non-formal – established by governments, UN agencies, international NGOs or community-based organizations, fulfil their protective potential and meet the needs of all learners. The Minimum Standards represent a significant step forward and should contribute to increased access and enhanced quality of education. Other complementary tools, aligned with the Minimum Standards, are now being developed to promote gender equality and to ensure the protection of girls and boys in and through education. These include guidelines on gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings and on mental health and psychosocial well-being.[12]

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12 See www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/products/docs/tfgender_GBVGuidelines2005.pdf and
   www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/mentalhealth_psychosocial_support

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Also available are the following advocacy/policy briefs:

- Getting Girls Out of Work and Into School
- Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education
- Mother Tongue-based Teaching and Education for Girls
- Providing Education to Girls from Remote and Rural Areas
- Impact of Incentives to Increase Girls' Access to and Retention in Basic Education
- Role of Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equality
- A Scorecard on Gender Equality and Girls' Education in Asia, 1990-2000

For more information, please visit UNESCO Bangkok's Gender in Education website at www.unescobkk.org/gender or write to gender@unescobkk.org