



## SNAPSHOT

# Reaching Girls, Transforming Lives

2016

### Overview

Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be healthier than uneducated women, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and enable better health care and education for their children. All of these factors combined can help lift households out of poverty.

In many countries today, primary and secondary school enrollment rates are the same for girls and boys. Two-thirds of all countries have reached gender parity in primary school enrollment. Globally, however, 62 million girls between the ages of 6 and 15 are not in school, and girls continue to lag substantially behind boys in secondary school completion rates. Sixteen million girls between the ages 6 and 11 will never enter school compared to 8 million boys. Poverty remains the most important factor for determining whether a girl will go to school and research reinforces that girls who face multiple sources of disadvantage such as low family income level, living in remote or underserved locations, and/or minority ethno-linguistic backgrounds remain farthest behind in terms of enrollment and learning.

### Key Interventions

Worldwide, girls have to overcome barriers to education caused by poverty, cultural norms and practices, substandard service delivery, poor infrastructure, and fragility. Many countries have experimented with multi-sectoral approaches to overcome these challenges, including:

#### Providing scholarships or conditional cash transfers (CCTs).

A large body of rigorous evidence from CCT programs implemented

around the world over the last 15 years demonstrates that financial and other incentives can effectively bring girls to school and keep them in school. For instance, Bangladesh pioneered CCTs to make schooling affordable for girls and indirectly reduce instances of child marriage.

#### Reducing distance to school.

Location and accessibility of schools can play a significant role in children's ability to go to school. The distance between home and school is a greater problem for girls, especially in rural areas, where secondary schools are more likely to be distant from small villages. Safety concerns make parents reluctant to let girls walk long distances to school. Building schools closer to villages or providing affordable, safe public transportation have been successful interventions to encourage girls' attendance. In the province of Balochistan in Pakistan, the government constructed over 200 community schools in areas without any girls' schools within a 2 km radius. New school construction, which included boundary walls, positively impacted female enrollment, and further improved gender equity in rural areas.

#### Ensuring gender-sensitive curricula and pedagogies.

Research reinforces the importance of gender-sensitive curricula and learning materials to promote the principles of gender equality and reduce gender stereotypes. Armenia, following the 2010 adoption of the *Gender Policy Concept Paper*, launched an assessment of high school textbooks that led to clear recommendations for the integration of gender-sensitive perspectives in school curricula and textbooks.

#### Hiring qualified female teachers.

Absence of female teachers can be a deterrent to girls' participation

in schools. Yemen addressed this issue by hiring and training over 1,000 female teachers to work in rural areas. These female teachers not only help ensure that school attendance and retention for girls improve but also serve as positive role models for their students.

#### Building safe and inclusive learning environments.

Young girls may forego education because schools are not safe or lack girl-appropriate facilities such as separate latrines. Kano State, Nigeria, expanded access to girls at the Junior Secondary School level through upgrading of single sex girls' schools and providing separate toilet facilities for girls at co-educational schools.

#### Ending child/early marriage.

Studies suggest that, in some countries, child marriage may account for 10-20 percent of drop-outs among girls at the secondary level. Yet in 60 countries over the last 30 years, the share of girls marrying before the age of 18 only decreased from 51 to 40 percent. Malawi banned child marriage through legislation that increases the legal age of marriage from 15 to 18.

#### Addressing violence against girls and women.

Experiencing violence in and outside of school can negatively impact girls' enrollment and quality of life. In Liberia, which recently emerged from a civil war, and where violence against girls and women often prevents girls from completing school, the government has made violence-free school environments a priority area for primary and secondary education so that all students, especially girls, feel safe.

## Knowledge

The World Bank Group (WBG) is a partner and one of many stakeholders in the international drive, reinforced by adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to improve gender equality and empower girls and women. This commitment to action is captured in the WBG's Gender Strategy 2016 - 2023: *Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth*, as well as the WBG's Education Strategy 2020: *Learning for All*. The WBG recognizes that a systems-driven, evidence-based approach to address the multiple sources of disadvantage that many girls and women face – whether in terms of employability, income, health, or the education of their children – is required to fully realize the many benefits of educating girls and women. This approach is supported through analytical work to further the global evidence base of “what works” to improve gender equality.

Working across the WBG, the Education Global Practice is leading and contributing to the global knowledge base. Across regions, analytical work is underway and new programs have been launched to better understand constraints to girls' education, such as the economic impacts of child marriage. Reports across the WBG are also informing girls' education activities and engagement including: *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* and *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal*.

## Lending

The World Bank International Development Association (IDA) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) commit significant portions of education lending each year to activities promoting girls' education through a variety of interventions including stipends to improve primary and secondary school completion, skills development programs, gender-inclusive and -responsive teaching, recruitment and training of female teachers, and building of safe and inclusive schools. WBG projects include:

**Bangladesh** Implemented since 2008, the IDA-financed Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement

Project (SEQAEP) aims to improve the quality of secondary education and to increase access and equity among poor boys and girls, including those living in remote areas. The project provides proxy means-tested stipends and tuition to disadvantaged girls and boys as well as incentives to teachers and schools in 125 upazilas. Students eligible for the stipend receive between US\$15 and US\$40 a year depending on their grades; benefits are conditional on students maintaining at least 75 percent attendance, achieving a passing grade in final examinations, and remaining unmarried until completion of the 10th grade. 1.24 million girls in 6,700 secondary schools are benefitting from the project.

SEQAEP is building on the transformational Bangladesh Female Secondary School Stipend Projects I and II (1994-2008), also financed by IDA, which helped the country reach and exceed gender parity in secondary education. In 1994, at the start of the project, the gender parity index was 0.83 at the secondary level. By 2008, when the project's second phase closed, the gender parity index had risen dramatically to 1.13. The interventions: providing stipends for girls for secondary school enrollment, conditional on school attendance and performance; as well as providing clean drinking water in schools, and separate toilets for boys and girls.

**Ghana** The Secondary Education Improvement Project which includes IDA lending of US\$156 million, aims to increase access to senior secondary education in underserved districts and improve quality in low-performing senior high schools. Scholarships will be provided to 10,400 students from low income families including a target of 60 percent girls. Approximately 2,000 of the targeted 6,000 girls have already received scholarships under the project.

**Nigeria** From 2005 to 2015, IDA supported 3 education projects in Nigeria to promote adolescent girls' education activities, amounting to nearly US\$400 million in lending. One of these projects, the State Education Sector Project was launched to involve 3 targeted states and local authorities in developing the work force by improving primary and lower secondary education. Between 2007 and 2011, Junior Secondary School

(JSS) completion rates successfully rose from 7 percent to 34 percent in Kaduna, from 3 percent to 9 percent in Kano, and from 40 percent to 54 percent in Kwara. In Kwara State, girls' transition rates from primary to JSS increased from 38 percent in 2007 to 59 percent in 2011. In 2010, to further boost girls' education, a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) pilot program was introduced to improve girls' retention rates and promote transition to secondary school.

**Yemen** The Secondary Education Development and Girls Access Project included IDA lending of US\$20 million and was implemented in 5 governorates. The project contributed to the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in secondary gross enrollment increasing from 0.43 to 0.63 and an increase in the retention rate of girls in grades 10-12 from 78 percent to 85 percent. Over 8,000 students benefited from a transportation allowance and conditional cash transfers for school attendance. Over 14,000 teachers were trained in subject modules, and nearly 100 female teachers were trained and hired, encouraging parents to send daughters to school. In addition, over 40 schools were built, and 50 schools were equipped with libraries and science/computer labs. This contributed to creating a safe environment conducive to learning for both girls and boys—and concrete results for girls.

## Partners

The WBG works closely with governments and other development organizations to identify and advance interventions that improve girls' education outcomes and provide resources to support countries implementing such initiatives.

The WBG is a member of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, which is comprised of over 20 partners representing multilateral, bilateral, civil society, and non-governmental organizations.

Since 2002, the WBG has also worked closely with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The WBG supports the partnership in general, as a Board Member, host of the GPE Secretariat, trustee, and grant agent for the vast majority of GPE grants.