

BUILDING GENDER EQUALITY IN URBAN LIFE

TOWARD UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION: UN MILLENNIUM PROJECT REPORT ON EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

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Countries that are unlikely to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015 face two challenges: they must simultaneously address shortfalls in access and in quality. They must significantly accelerate the enrollment of children and improve their ability to keep children in school, and they must achieve major improvements in learning outcomes and educational attainment at a level required to have an economic and social impact. Increasing access and improving quality are mutually reinforcing; if schools cannot offer a good-quality education, parents are far less likely to send their children to school.

Achieving more education and better education will require efforts in a number of domains within the education sector, as well as within the broader social and economic context. There are lessons to be learned both from countries that have succeeded — sometimes at levels far above what would have been predicted given their economic level — and from those whose progress has been slow.

Two major strategies can be used to address these challenges: getting out-of-school children into school and creating better institutions and more favorable incentives. The first strategy involves overcoming both demand- and supply-side constraints to enrollment and retention. The second requires successfully addressing serious and pervasive institutional shortcomings, many of which are linked to dysfunctional incentives for administrators and teachers. These strategies and interventions are intended as a menu from which country-level decisionmakers can craft approaches and solutions that are appropriate to local contexts.

Strategy 1: Get Out-of-School Children into School

Higher levels of enrollment and longer retention in school can be stimulated in three ways: focusing on specific interventions to reach out-of-school children, increasing the educational opportunities (formal and nonformal) for girls and women, and increasing access to post-primary education. All of these approaches take into account the powerful demand-side influences that affect the propensity of parents to send their children to school.

Reaching out-of-school children will take special efforts, beyond what is typically thought of as scaling up. Expanding access to and completion of primary schooling implies reaching children from households at society's margins. Most of the roughly 104 million school-age children who are not attending school are poor and have parents who are uneducated and illiterate. In all countries poor children are less likely to start school, more likely to drop out, and more likely to engage in child labor or domestic chores that keep them from schooling. In most countries, girls are less likely to be in school than boys. Universalizing primary schooling cannot be achieved without addressing the specific reasons that poor children and girls do not attend school, repeat grades, and drop out.

Some interventions target getting poor children and girls into school and keeping them there by making schools affordable, reducing the direct costs for all children, and compensating for some of the added opportunity costs for girls. Other measures do so by increasing demand for schooling, through such measures as conditional cash transfers and school feeding and health programs.

No intervention is guaranteed to work, and the appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of each must be assessed given the particulars of the supply of and demand for education in a country, and the resource constraints it faces. Presented below are examples of the types of interventions that appear to work — and in some instances have been definitively shown to work — in improving education outcomes. It is

important to note, however, that the evidence base is weak, particularly with respect to the type of rigorous evaluation findings that would be required to be able to make clear statements about what works and what does not work.

Eliminate school fees

Eliminating or reducing school fees has substantially increased enrollment, particularly for girls. When free schooling was introduced in Uganda in 1997, primary school enrollment nearly doubled, from 3.4 to 5.7 million children, rising to 6.5 million by 1999. According to the World Bank, girls' enrollment increased from 63 percent to 83 percent, while enrollment among the poorest fifth of girls rose from 46 percent to 82 percent. In Tanzania the elimination of primary school fees in 2002 resulted in additional enrollment of 1.5 million students. A scholarship for girls in Tanzania significantly increased their enrollment in secondary school (the program was subsequently extended to boys as well). In Bangladesh a stipend for girls in secondary school substantially increased their enrollment, particularly in rural areas.

The increased enrollments that result from eliminating fees represent an important achievement. For girls especially, just the opportunity to leave home daily and participate in a larger social setting may matter. Indeed, that opportunity may help explain why women with five or six years of schooling, who may barely have retained literacy as adults, have fewer and healthier children and are more likely to ensure that their own children attend school.

It is also true, however, that a surge in enrollment can significantly strain educational systems. In Malawi the elimination of school fees in 1994 led to a 55 percent increase in enrollment. The addition of 1.2 million students overwhelmed the capacity of Malawi's schools and was followed several years later by drop-out rates that brought primary completion rates virtually back to where they had been. In the immediate aftermath of fee elimination, the sudden lack of resources at the school level and surging enrollments are bound to overwhelm the education system, unless there is adequate planning and new resources reach the schools. A second generation of education reforms in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda, which focused on quality improvements and replacement financing, has had far more success in sustaining enrollment and increasing completion rates.

Of course, reducing or eliminating tuition has little impact if school districts are permitted to levy additional fees, such as building funds and student activity fees. Kenya first tried eliminating tuition in 1974, but these other fees quadrupled the cost of schooling to parents in some districts, resulting in a substantial increase in the drop-out rate, particularly in poorer districts. Experience shows that eliminating fees will not help poor families unless more equitable and efficient sources of financing are provided, either by transferring district, provincial, or central government funds to the local level or by providing funding from locally raised revenues, something that occurs only rarely.

Provide conditional transfers

Programs for conditional cash transfers for education provide resources directly to targeted beneficiaries only when they keep their children in school. Such programs serve as social safety nets, raising the immediate incomes of impoverished families while also increasing the human capital of the poor by educating their children. Conditional transfer programs are well established in Mexico (Progresa), Brazil (Bolsa Escola), and Bangladesh (Food for Education). Such programs also exist or are being planned in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Turkey. In addition, the World Food Program assisted 27 countries with "take-home rations" programs in 2002 (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, China, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Iran, the Republic of Korea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Uganda, and Yemen participated in the program).

In Mexico, Progresa (the expanded form of which is now known as Oportunidades) provides cash transfers to poor households in the most marginal rural areas. The transfers are provided as long as children attend school regularly. The program has increased enrollment rates at the primary and especially the secondary levels, for boys and especially girls. The greatest impact was during the important sensitive transition year to secondary school, during which girls' enrollment rose 20 percent and boys' enrollment rose 10 percent. The program is expected to increase educational attainment for the poor by 0.66 years of additional schooling by grade 9.

In Bangladesh the Food for Education program provides a monthly inkind food transfer (primarily wheat) to poor households as long as their primary school-age children attend school. Enrollment at participating schools increased 35 percent (44 percent for girls and 28 percent for boys). For the country as a whole, school enrollment had risen just 2.5 percent over two years. Attendance was higher and drop-out rates lower in Food for Education schools.

Nicaragua's conditional cash transfer program for poor households with children in primary school has also produced results. Enrollment increased 22 percent, with the poorest households benefiting most. Grade progression also improved, particularly among the poorest students.

Offer school feeding programs

School feeding programs disproportionately benefit poor children by creating incentives to enroll in and attend school and by improving health, attentiveness, and capacity to learn. Offering meals at school is an effective way to encourage children who are poor and chronically hungry to attend classes. In Bangladesh school-based food distribution increased enrollment 20 percent at a time when enrollment at nonparticipating schools fell 2 percent. In Jamaica, Tamil Nadu (India), and other places where school feeding programs have been evaluated, attendance and retention generally rose. In Kenya a randomized control study demonstrated that children's school participation was 30 percent higher among students attending schools with feeding programs.

World Food Program case studies in Cameroon, Morocco, Niger, and Pakistan have documented strong improvements in enrollment and attendance when families receive food incentives in return for good school attendance. In Pakistan enrollment of girls increased 247 percent in the North West Frontier Province and 197 percent in Balochistan Province between 1994 and 1998. Student attendance and dropout rates were also positively affected. Each month a five-liter tin of vegetable oil was distributed to the family of each female student who attended school for at least 20 days. In Morocco girls in targeted rural communities who attended school regularly were given 100 kilograms of wheat and 10 liters of vegetable oil per year for good attendance. Within the first two years of the program, the number of girls in the first grade doubled, and in one province covered by the project girls made up 43 percent of total primary enrollment in 1999, up from 10 percent in the early 1990s.

Hunger and chronic malnutrition reduce learning achievement of children already in school. In poor households the problem begins early, with malnutrition and poor health of mothers. Poorly nourished women give birth to children of low birth weight. In the absence of special interventions, these children often lack the micronutrients and energy required for normal development, critical to their learning once in school.

The Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that 300 million children, most of them in developing countries, are chronically hungry. Without breakfasts, students are more easily distracted in the classroom and have problems staying alert and concentrating on lessons. Studies in many countries suggest that hunger affects cognitive functions and may therefore impair a child's ability to benefit from schooling. A program that provided breakfasts to primary school children in Jamaica significantly increased arithmetic scores. School feeding programs that address specific micronutrient deficiencies have also been shown to improve school performance. Iron supplementation raised test scores of

preschool children in India. In Kenya students participating in a feeding program had higher test scores, but only in schools where teachers were relatively well trained before the program started.

This evidence led the International Food Policy Research Institute to conclude that "hunger is a barrier to learning.... A hungry child cannot concentrate. A hungry child cannot perform. Hungry children are unlikely to stay in school. School-based feeding programs have proven effective in encouraging enrollment, increasing attention spans, and improving attendance at school".

Offer school health programs

School health programs, such as deworming and iron supplementation, also increase school attendance and raise scores on tests of cognition or school achievement. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified worm infections as the greatest cause of disease among 5- to 14-year-old children. School health programs have provided deworming medicine, with great success. In Kenya school-based mass treatment of children for hookworm reduced student absenteeism by one-quarter. In India a program to provide iron supplementation and deworming medicine to pre-school students decreased absenteeism 7 percent among 4- to 6-year-old children. A recent study in Indonesia by the World Bank and the Partnership for Child Development, investigating the association between helminth infection and cognitive and motor function in school-age children, found that children infected with hookworm scored significantly lower on tests of cognitive function than did uninfected children. Deworming treatments are safe, inexpensive (the average cost is US\$.30 per child per year), and so easy to administer that teachers and even semiliterate community workers can be trained to successfully manage school- and community-based deworming campaigns.

Recent evidence demonstrates the benefits of deworming treatments in addressing other critical health problems as well. Deworming appears to improve the effectiveness of malaria control measures. People free of soil-transmitted intestinal parasites have "the same degree of protection against malaria as that provided by sickle-cell trait carriage, the most potent factor of resistance to malaria identified to date". Worm infections make their hosts more susceptible to HIV infection and enable the virus to replicate more rapidly; chronic worm infections may also account for the higher prevalence of tuberculosis in low-income countries.

Providing water and sanitation facilities at school is critical, especially for girls. According to the Ugandan Health Minister, Dr. Crispus Kiyonga, "Lack of latrines, especially separate latrines for girls, was identified as the worst school experience for girls.... Privacy issues relating to sanitation are a major factor forcing girls out of school". A Department of Public Health Engineering-UNICEF study conducted in Bangladesh in 1994-98 showed that provision of water and sanitation facilities in schools increased girls' attendance 15 percent.

Recognizing the need to improve approaches and strategies to health and nutrition in schools, UNESCO, UNICEF, the WHO, and the World Bank launched an interagency initiative in April 2000. In 2001 the World Food Program joined the initiative, called FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health and Nutrition). Collaborators identified a core set of best practices from health programs that promote learning through improved health and nutrition. They also identified interventions that would be feasible in resource-poor schools and in hard-to-reach and urban areas. Policymakers can consult this framework to develop their own strategy.

Create programs for girls

Increasing girls' educational attainment is essential to fulfilling education's potential for positive social transformation. Education is the key intervention for increasing inclusion of women in decisionmaking in public life, as well as empowering them within the home and the workplace. Given the barriers to girls' education, specific interventions are needed to make schools more accessible and secure for them.

Providing female teachers for girls may address some security concerns, as well as provide positive role models. International cross-sectional data suggest some positive correlation between gender parity in enrollment and the proportion of female teachers. Qualified female teachers, however, are in short supply.

Schools need to be safe places for girls. Girls need to be protected against harassment from male peers and predation by male teachers. The problem is a serious one: in Cameroon 27 percent of girls surveyed reported having had sex with teachers, according to UNICEF. Changing this pattern of behavior involves significant cultural changes.

Decreasing the distance to school raises girls' enrollment and attendance by assuaging their concerns about safety and reputation. Research in such diverse places as Ghana, India, Malaysia, Peru, and the Philippines indicates that distance matters for all children, especially for girls. Providing schools in local communities substantially increased enrollments in Egypt, Indonesia, and several African countries. The impact is particularly pronounced for girls. In Egypt, for example, following a campaign to construct rural primary schools, girls' enrollment grew by 23 percent, while enrollment of boys rose 18 percent.

Girls and their families may find little reason to attend school if they are taught that girls are of less value than boys or if they are tracked into fields of study or low-paid occupations considered traditional for women. Analyses of textbooks in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East consistently find stereotyped material, with women portrayed as subordinate and passive while men are shown as displaying intelligence, leadership, and dominance. Many developing countries also practice gender streaming in secondary school, directing girls away from math and science. Teaching practices — such as giving boys more opportunities than girls to ask and answer questions, use learning material, and lead groups — may further discourage girls. Several countries in Africa and Asia are beginning to use gender sensitivity training for teachers and administrators to encourage girls' participation.

The opportunity costs for girls' education that arise from their heavy burden of household chores can be addressed in a variety of ways. Some measures reduce the need for girls' work by establishing day care centers and preschools for younger siblings or students' children or improving the supply of accessible water and fuel. Others — such as flexible school schedules — enable girls to pursue an education while assuming household responsibilities. Take-home food rations for the families of girls in school can offset the loss to the household of the girls' labor. Flexible schedules, double sessions, and evening school hours have been introduced in Bangladesh, China, India, Morocco, and Pakistan.

No programs appear to be in place that encourage boys take on a larger share of the domestic load, although preliminary evidence suggest that at least in some situations, declines in boys' school attendance may be associated with significant increases in girls' attendance. If such an association does exist, it is likely to be because boys must perform some or all of the household labor previously performed by girls. In Latin America the fact that girls' enrollment often exceeds boys' enrollment may reflect the higher opportunity cost of boys' time (working in the fields or in the streets). This illustrates the need to shape specific interventions based on local conditions.

Educate children in conflict and postconflict societies

Lack of access to education is often severe among children in regions experiencing or recovering from armed conflict. A review of the limited evidence suggests that provision of education during and after conflicts is possible, despite the hardship imposed on children, teachers, and program administrators. It is essential that education programs start during and immediately after conflict; countries cannot wait until "security" is established without losing a generation of children. Education must be seen as a core part of national healing and reconstruction.

To respond to the needs of these conflict and postconflict countries, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) created the collaborative Initiative on Education in Situations of

Emergency and Crisis. INEE creates forums for communities, practitioners, researchers, and experts to share resources and information, identify problems and issues that affect education programs, and share best practices. It encourages all donors to put more resources into education for emergency programming and to ensure an early reconstruction response following conflicts.

UN agencies, especially the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, and the World Food Program, have worked together and with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to support education in emergencies and refugee situations. UNICEF and the World Food Program have cooperated to implement large-scale Back-to-Peace, Back-to- School campaigns in a variety of postconflict situations, including Afghanistan, Angola, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

Educate children with disabilities

Of the 40 million children in the world with disabilities, UNESCO estimated that more than 90 percent do not attend school. Both developing countries and donors need to target this group if efforts to increase enrollment are to reach many children with disabilities. Country plans should include teacher training, school construction, outreach, retention efforts, and performance assessments. Early child development programs are important, as screening can identify disabilities early enough to make timely, effective interventions. Without better data and research on children with disabilities and their experiences in the education system, such targeting will not be possible.

In many cases a small investment can have a dramatic impact on a child's ability to learn and stay in school. In Brazil, for example, more than one-third of the 14 percent of children with disabilities have visual problems that are correctable by glasses. As new schools are built to respond to increased demand for education, they can be made accessible to children with physical disabilities for less than 1 percent extra in construction costs.

Developing countries are slowly beginning to address the education needs of children with disabilities. An effort launched in Panama in 1995, as part of a broader education reform, created a national directorate for special education to help students with disabilities enter the public school system. Implementation of this reform initially was slow, but the recently elected government has made a new commitment to educating children with disabilities. Beginning in 2005 the government will launch a three-year inclusive education plan to end segregated classes for children with disabilities and enroll them in regular classes. The government will also train teachers to address the needs of these students in integrated classes.

Break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by educating mothers

Educating girls and mothers leads to sustained increases in education attainment from one generation to the next. It can change a society in which not sending one's children to school is socially acceptable into one in which the expectation is that every child completes school. A wealth of cross-country and individual country studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America over the past 25 years reveals that mothers' education is a strong and consistent determinant of their children's school enrollment and attainment.

Multiple studies find that a mother's level of education has a strong positive effect on their daughters' enrollment. The effect on daughters' enrollment is stronger than the effect on sons' enrollment, and it is significantly greater than the effect of fathers' education on daughters. Studies from Egypt, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, and Peru all find that mothers with a basic education are substantially more likely to educate their children, especially their daughters, even controlling for other influences.

Moreover, the more educated a mother is, the better. A study by the Inter- American Development Bank found that in Latin America 15-year-olds whose mothers have some secondary schooling remained in school two to three years longer than the children of mothers with less than four years of education.

A study of 57 internationally comparable household datasets from 41 countries found that the education of adults in the household has a significant impact on the enrollment of children in all of the countries studied. The effect of mother's education is larger than that of fathers in some but not all countries. In countries in which the marginal effect of maternal education is significant, it increased the likelihood of enrollment by less than 1 percentage point to 6 percentage points. The study supports the view that women's education often has a stronger impact than men's education in breaking the cycle of low educational outcomes.

How does maternal education affect children's enrollment? Several mechanisms have been suggested. First, education is related to an adult's long-term earning capacity and to women's bargaining position for resources within the family. Educated mothers may have the resources they need to send their children to school. Second, more educated mothers may provide a more cognitively stimulating experience for their children. They may play a more effective pedagogical role, encouraging, monitoring, or helping their children do their homework or prepare for examinations. Third, educated mothers serve as role models for their children. If children, particularly girls, know that their mothers attended and valued schooling, they may aim to follow their example.

Several studies have sought to isolate these different causal mechanisms. Research in Latin America suggests that the pedagogical model does not apply there. "Were this a pedagogical story," concluded the Inter-American Development Bank in 1999, "mothers who do not participate in the labor market would be expected to have more time to improve their children's schooling. However, children of working mothers actually attain higher educational levels than those of mothers who do not work." After controlling for a variety of factors, the study finds that a mother's participation in the labor force increases a child's likelihood of being enrolled in school. In 13 of the 15 Latin American countries for which data were available, this positive effect of a mother's participation in the labor market on a child's educational enrollment is positive and statistically significant. On average if a mother participates in the labor market, her child will remain in school two or three more years.

Is there still a positive and significant impact on children's education where educated women do not participate in the labor market? A 1999 study in the *Journal of Political Economy* examined the relationship between maternal education and children's schooling in a region of India with very low participation of women in the formal labor market. Their findings underscore the potential pedagogical effect of maternal education. Despite the absence of market returns to female schooling, their study reveals a rapid increase in demand for schooled wives in areas of high agricultural growth. They interpret this as derived demand for female schooling as an input in the production of child schooling. Returns to women's schooling are found in the household sector, where schooling increases "the efficiency of maternal time in the production of child human capital". Children of literate women study two hours more a day than children of illiterate women. Increased investment in female schooling thus has social payoffs, even where there are not substantial labor market opportunities for the women themselves. The authors of the study conclude that increasing labor market opportunities for women is not necessary to justify increased investments in female schooling, which have payoffs even in settings with increased demand only in male-dominated occupations. The conclusion from these studies is obvious: improving educational opportunities for girls is essential to improving the next generation's educational outcomes.

Whether providing educational opportunities to uneducated or illiterate mothers of young children today can break the cycle and facilitate better education outcomes in the current generation remains unclear. But some evidence suggests that it can.

In one study by the Central American Health Institute on the survival of children of women who acquired literacy exclusively through the adult education campaign that took place in Nicaragua in the 1980s, researchers demonstrated a strong association between maternal literacy and child health. Socioeconomic status did not account for the survival and nutritional advantages of children born to educated mothers.

A longitudinal study in Nepal concluded that women's literacy programs had a positive impact and contributed to women's empowerment or advancement or their social and economic development. Women who participated in the program were poorer than women who did not, more likely to send their children to school, more knowledgeable about family and reproductive health issues and several health and related political issues, and more likely to participate in income-generating, community, and political activities.

A 2002 USAID longitudinal study with a similar focus carried out in Bolivia found that NGO-sponsored literacy programs had a significant positive impact on women's social and economic development. Controlling for education level, marital status, locality, home material possessions, and season, the study found that program participants experienced greater gains in reading skills and were better able to help their children with homework than were nonparticipants. Few mothers were reading to their young children, however, and the program had little impact on women's involvement in their children's school. Whether or not women were participating in these programs, when faced with difficult economic times, their daughters were at greater risk of dropping out of school than their sons.

In light of these results, support to women's literacy programs should be considered an important complement to interventions to increase access and retention at the primary school level. Adult literacy programs may be particularly useful in settings in which there are pockets of undereducated women, such as ethnic minorities or members of indigenous communities.

Expand post-primary education

The Millennium Development Goals have focused much of the world's attention on the completion of a five- or six-year cycle of primary education. The commitments at Dakar referred to basic education of eight or nine years of schooling. Different countries define "primary," "basic," and "secondary" in terms of different numbers of years. However defined, the task force believes that a focus on completion of just five or six grades is too narrow, for several reasons.

First, the hoped-for economic and social benefits of education may be unattainable with only five or six years of schooling. One of these benefits is reduction in the incidence of HIV/AIDS (see box). Between 1990 and 2000 the likelihood of a young person who attended secondary school contracting HIV/AIDS declined by 12 percentage points; the figure for students who had not completed primary school was just 6 percentage points. By 2000 young rural Ugandans who were in secondary school had a prevalence rate of just 3.2 percent — one-third the rate of those with no education and half the rate of those with some primary education. Evidence shows that girls who have attended secondary school are more likely to assert their rights to protection in a sexual relationship, reducing their vulnerability to HIV infection, according to a 2003 Council on Foreign Relations study by Barbara Herz and Gene Sperling. A 32-country study found that women with post-primary education are five times more likely than illiterate women to know the facts about HIV/AIDS. Illiterate women are three times more likely to think that a healthy-looking person cannot be HIV-positive and four times more likely to believe that there is no way to avoid AIDS. In Zimbabwe only 1.3 percent of girls ages 15-18 who were still enrolled in school were HIV-positive. Girls of a similar age who had dropped out of school were more than six times as likely to be HIV-positive.

Educating children can help slow the spread of HIV/AIDS	<p>Universal primary education could save at least 7 million young people worldwide from contracting HIV over a decade (700,000 cases a year), according to a recent report from the Global Campaign for Education. About 36 percent of young adults in low-income countries never completed primary school, but they account for an estimated 55 percent of new HIV cases among young people.</p> <p>Education can serve as a “social vaccine” against HIV, especially for school-age children and young adults. A review published in 2003 in <i>Social Science and Medicine</i> on 11 studies of school-based HIV prevention programs for youth in Sub-Saharan Africa found that it is easier to establish low-risk behaviors and build knowledge around prevention among younger students who are not yet sexually active. Reaching children when they are young is thus very important.</p> <p>Given that the HIV infection rate in many developing countries is growing fastest among teenage girls, educating girls may be critical to breaking the pattern. Girls who attend school are far more likely to understand the risks involved in risky behavior, to reject the myths associated with sex, and (in the case of good school programs) know how to use effective refusal tactics in difficult sexual situations.</p> <p>Schools provide a ready-made infrastructure for reaching the world's children with education to change behavior before they become infected. Unfortunately, HIV/AIDS is also undermining education systems and pulling children, especially girls, out of school. In Zimbabwe, for example, a UNESCO study of five provinces found that more than three-fourths of the children pulled out of school to care for relatives with AIDS are young girls. In these circumstances, it is critical to simultaneously attack HIV/AIDS and work to preserve and improve the school system, incorporating education on HIV/AIDS as a critical part of teaching.</p>
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Second, the demand for primary education may be determined in part by the availability of secondary education slots, because parents may understand that the economic benefits of primary schooling alone are not great enough to offset the opportunity cost. Particularly where the quality of primary schools is low, parents see primary school as a necessary step their children need to take before continuing their education, not an end in itself. Of course, success in moving close to universal primary school enrollment generates new challenges. As more children complete primary school, the private benefits, in higher wages, will decline (the social benefits remain large, which justifies making primary school access universal). Private rates of return to primary education — perceived and real — cease to be seen as much of a reason for sending one's children to primary school unless access to post-primary education increases.

Third, expanding the existing education systems in many developing countries and scaling up other public sector functions (particularly health services, water management, and general public administration) requires a larger cadre of educated and trained workers.

In most developing countries, secondary and other forms of post-primary schooling are heavily slanted toward better-off segments in society — and, in most countries, toward boys. Countries must begin to identify and implement strategies such as need-based scholarships to reverse the tendencies toward inequitable access.

Spending on post-primary education should be additional to spending needed to provide universal access to good-quality primary education. The greater demand that post-primary opportunities can generate for primary school is unlikely to create the kinds of efficiencies that will reduce the cost of providing primary education. Donors will thus need to provide additional financing for post-primary schooling.

Implications for strategy 1

These findings suggest several actions that can be taken by country-level decisionmakers seeking to increase the number of school-age children in school:

- Depending on local conditions, introduce, test, and scale up specific strategies to attract out-of-school children to school.
- Support adult literacy programs designed for mothers of young children, evaluate the programs to determine whether they are working, and use that information in future decisionmaking.
- Balance investments in primary education with selective support to post-primary education, paying particular attention to educational opportunities for girls and young women. Include planning for expanding post-primary education with planning for achievement of universal primary education.

Strategy 2: Create Better Institutions, Increase Transparency, and Provide Better Incentives

Sustained improvements in education are impossible to achieve without improving both parental involvement in decisions affecting their children's education and the way key institutions in the sector function. These institutions include the schools and local and national authorities that have influence over funding and school management. Many of the countries that are performing poorly suffer from institutional weaknesses, including low management capacity, nontransparent resource allocation and accounting practices, and substandard human resources policies and practices. Incentive structures fail to reward good performance over bad create and reinforce the most deleterious characteristics of weak institutions.

Parents who are both well informed about policies and resource allocations in the education sector and involved in decisions about their children's schooling exert considerable influence and contribute solutions. Involved communities are able to articulate local school needs, hold officials accountable, and mobilize local resources to fill gaps when the government response is inadequate.

While recognizing that context-specific solutions will be required, the task force identifies five specific ways that education institutions can be improved: strengthening the national commitment, improving accountability through local control, improving the quality and availability of the information base, investing in serious evaluation to learn what affects learning outcomes, and strengthening the role of civil society organizations.

Strengthen the national commitment

Successful education requires a strong national commitment, expressed in the legal and institutional framework as well as in budgetary outlays to the sector. A commitment to compulsory primary education signals that the nation's leaders place high priority on education as a central pillar of development and supports healthy debate about what constitutes education and how it can be funded. Having a strong national framework for primary or basic education is a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the full set of institutional changes required to accelerate progress.

Improve accountability through local control

One part of the solution to institutional problems is parental and community involvement in education, which anchors education in the social fabric of the community, fosters demand, and ensures that schooling provides social benefits and economic returns that reflect local priorities and values. Whether parents and communities provide financial support, administrative support, or simply play an oversight role, local engagement, commitment, and support remain vital to ensuring that schooling is a priority for the community. Because the direct and opportunity costs of schooling and the real or perceived lack of economic returns dampen demand for education, such support cannot be taken for granted.

Experiments that have devolved authority and fiduciary responsibilities to parents and communities have produced encouraging results. Evidence suggests that greater parental and community control leads to higher teacher attendance. Evaluations in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, and a number of Indian states link reduced absenteeism to involvement by parents, the community, or the school leader.

Oversight and authority by parent-teacher associations or parent councils were found to raise student test scores in Argentina, Brazil, Honduras, India, Indonesia, and Nicaragua and to reduce drop-out and repetition rates in some of these countries. A cross-country regression of 10 Latin American countries found that parental participation has the strongest impact on student achievement and that autonomy without parental involvement is only marginally important.

Probably the most celebrated case of successful parental control is that of the Community-Managed Schools Program (EDUCO) in El Salvador, where parents select, hire, supervise, and dismiss teachers — all responsibilities traditionally controlled by the central government. The program links teacher salaries to performance and leaves budget management in the hands of parent committees. Although program households are poorer, parents have less education, and access to services is below the average for El Salvador, EDUCO led to greater parental participation in school affairs, lower teacher absenteeism, more textbooks, and lower teacher-to-pupil ratios. Government transfers were more reliable in the EDUCO schools, and EDUCO students tested almost as well as students in other schools, a remarkable result given that these students came from the poorest communities.

In what may be the most extensive reform in Latin America, Nicaragua delegated management and budget to autonomous local school councils, who hire and fire school staff, set salaries, and establish and handle school fees. The intent of the reform was to devolve control to communities and to generate local fee revenue to finance bonuses for well-performing teachers. This feature of the program led to support from teachers, whose union opposed the reform. Broad parental participation raised additional revenue for schools from school fees and ensured community control of the schools.

The arrangement proved popular with communities. Between the inception of the reform (in 1993 for secondary schools and 1995 for primary schools) and 2000, more than half of all primary schools and 80 percent of secondary schools became autonomous, all at the initiative of communities. Teachers expressed mixed views on the new structure, but they have also paid more attention to student performance and become more responsive to school councils.

In Honduras the Community-Managed Education Program (PROHECO) shifted school management, and teacher hiring, salaries, and oversight to school directors, teachers, and communities. The degree to which responsibility is exercised by the three players varies across communities. Relative to traditional schools, PROHECO schools report longer teaching hours, fewer school closings, smaller class sizes, and more homework. The fact that teachers and directors complained about parental intrusion suggests that parents are actively involved in efforts to influence education. Despite the lower socioeconomic status of students and the lower level of training of teachers, PROHECO students performed better on science tests and no worse on math and language tests than students at other schools. Both repetition and drop-out rates appear to be declining.

In the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, parent-elected community education associations work with public school directors and administrators in managing an extensive after-school program for disadvantaged youth. The program focuses on socialization, tutoring, and curriculum enrichment. The associations manage their own budgets and appoint the school director. Test scores and enrollment, repetition, and drop-out rates all improved at participating schools, and improvement was greater than at nonparticipating schools.

Small studies in El Salvador, Mexico, Nepal, and Pakistan suggest that increasing school autonomy can help reduce teacher absenteeism and increase motivation. In India and Peru active parent-teacher

associations (those that had met in the previous three months) were associated with lower teacher absenteeism.

Despite their potential, parent associations face limitations in low-income settings, and in some cases they have at best a minimal effect on teachers. In Ghana parents did not feel competent to oversee schools, and teachers, who were unfamiliar with collective decisionmaking, felt unsure of their roles.

An innovative program in the Brazilian state of Parana, the school report card program, engaged parents and encouraged them to rate their school, the teachers, and overall performance. Parents attended meetings, but like parents in Ghana they found it difficult to criticize and take on the education establishment. Indeed, they were unsure about what to assess. According to the then Secretary of Education, getting parents to change their perceptions of their roles and their behavior toward schools and teachers is the hardest step. This initiative will therefore take time to become effective, but both the process and the result are critical to improving the accountability of school administrators and teachers and to raising performance in the sector.

Improve the information base, especially for parents and communities

Information at the local level. Information is an essential element in local control and accountability. Parents and school administrators need information about the effectiveness of their local schools. Simple indicators of relative performance — spending per child, preparation of teachers, educational outcomes compared with other schools — are essential. Such information is generally unavailable to parents, particularly parents who are most likely to face failing primary schools.

Examples from Brazil and Uganda illustrate the point. In 2001 the Education Secretariat of the State of Parana in Brazil introduced the Boletim da Escola, an annual school report card of the performance of each primary and secondary school under its jurisdiction (www.pr.gov.br/cie/boletim). The report cards seek to increase accountability of the schools and the government to the community. The cards help the community, the government, and the school adopt a shared vision of universal primary education. The report cards also seek to empower parents to participate in the education process and inform decisionmaking at all levels. The report card covers student achievement, parents' opinions (based on a survey), and other information. In 2002 about 1.3 million report cards were disseminated to parents and community members, stirring significant interest. Teachers, parents, and administrators are already using the cards as their primary source of information for implementing solutions and monitoring progress.

A 1991-95 survey in Uganda revealed that only a small fraction of central government funding destined for local schools was actually reaching them. In response, the central government launched an information campaign. Each month data on grants to school districts were published in newspapers and broadcast on the radio. Equipped with such information, local communities were able to monitor the flow of federal funds precisely and effectively. By 2001 fully 80 percent of federal funds was reaching schools. Many other changes were occurring in Uganda during the same period, making it difficult to isolate the impact of the transparency in information. But it is noteworthy that schools with access to newspapers increased their funding on average by 12 percentage points more than schools without access to newspapers.

Strengthen the role of civil society organizations

Civil society organizations play a major role in advocating for children and parents and in holding local governments, national governments, and international organizations to their commitments. These organizations engage in advocacy, service delivery, and sometimes both. They are particularly effective in the areas of community participation, empowerment, literacy, community schools and development centers, and reproductive health and early childhood education.

Civil society organizations are active at the local, national, regional, and international level. At the local level, the Le Minh Xuan Commune is a network of unsuccessful state farms southwest of Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, that has left thousands of families unemployed and children out of school. To provide basic education to children who left government schools, Friends for Street Children founded the Le Minh Xuan Development Center. Friends for Street Children provides uniforms, books, and school supplies to children from poor families. The curriculum includes literature, math, natural sciences, health, vocational training, and family-centered activities. Parents meet monthly with teachers to keep informed of their children's progress.

In rural Bangladesh the Dhaka Ahsania Mission creates community development centers to respond to the demand from the local community for learning life skills among adults and adolescents. Established in 1981, the program, called Ganokendra, has created more than 1,150 community development centers, which offer literacy programs. The program targets women. The Movement for Alternatives and Youth Awareness (MAYA) is a nongovernmental organization at the local community level in India working to reform education through community ownership. MAYA's Prajayatna Process addresses issues of quality in 15,000 government schools in six districts in the state of Karnataka by working with students' parents, school committees, the education bureaucracy, and the state bureaucracy. This method of participation in school governance incorporates the culture and characteristics of local communities and trains excellent facilitators and volunteers with leadership skills. Karnataka registers relatively high levels of enrollment and retention in comparisons with other regions in India, and MAYA has been successfully scaled up in the state. The model of community participation is replicable in different contexts after redesigning to take into account the culture and context of each community.

At the international level, the Global Campaign for Education and the national civil coalitions affiliated with it in the North and the South play a strong advocacy role, urging developing country governments to abolish primary school fees and increase government spending on education, while pushing for increased debt relief and aid from donor countries. The African Network Campaign on Education for All builds the capacity of African civil society to reach the goal of free and good-quality education for all by engaging civil society in the national and international dialogues on such issues as gender equity and the impact of conflict on education. It also monitors and evaluates the achievements of Education for All targets. ActionAid UK helps communities secure education rights and ensure that schools are places where education is respected. They hold governments accountable and assist them in developing practical, innovative, and flexible solutions. They hold international agencies, such as the World Bank, and developed countries accountable for their promises on education funding.

Implications for strategy 2

Strengthening the institutions that manage and deliver education services represents a huge challenge, particularly because weak education institutions are typically only part of widespread weakness in public administration. However, the experiences highlighted above suggest that, depending on local conditions, countries can take specific actions, including the following:

- Develop, strengthen, and bolster the constituency for a national commitment to education with a legal and institutional framework that places high priority on public sector provision of quality education.
- Promote mechanisms for local control of education, in which parents and other citizens are given an explicit role in holding schools and teachers accountable for delivering results.
- Improve the quality of information about education sector performance, so that the agents and agencies charged with planning and monitoring have accurate and up-to-date knowledge of how many children are in school, how many teachers are employed and on the job, whether children are remaining in school, and so on.

- Institute systems to assess the acquisition of skills and knowledge based on an international standard. Ensure transparency in the dissemination of this information, at both the national and local levels.
- Create an environment in which civil society organizations are recognized as legitimate participants in debates about the direction of the education system.

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