Educating Girls: A Map to Context Analysis

SAGE Project

November 2000

Produced by the Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) project
Academy for Educational Development
1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009-5721
Funded under the G/WID WIDTech Activity with Development Alternatives, Inc.
USAID Contract No. FAO-0100-Q-6006-00

Context Analysis for Girls' Education: Mapping Constraints and Charting Solutions

Context analysis should be the first step in developing any activity or intervention. Context analysis is used to identify *the status and condition of girls' educational participation, the multiple factors affecting them*, and *their solutions*. Context analysis can provide an idea of scope, magnitude, and frequency of the factors—positive and negative—that affect girls' education. Context analysis can occur at any point in the life cycle of a girls' education activity—at the design stage, during midcourse adjustments, or for the addition of new activities. The methodologies used for inquiry and analysis may also vary according to the suspected constraints to girls' educational participation, the objective of the activity, the type of information needed, the cultural and political context, the resources available, and other factors.

A context analysis should identify and characterize:

- the statistical and demographic situation of girls and schooling;
- economic and social dimensions of education service delivery from supply and demand perspectives;
- cultural norms affecting girls' participation and completion;
- actors who influence individual and collective decisions about schooling and girls' education; and
- priority educational needs of girls, and what changes are desirable and possible in that context.

How to read the investigative map (see other side). The map illustrates the "landscape" of the context of girls' education. It shows that much of the information needed to diagnose the problems of and develop solutions to girls' education is not found exclusively in one particular office, sector, or segment of society.

1. Diagnosis of the problem: analysis of the statistics/indicators of girls' educational outcomes.	Girls' educational outcomes—such as enrollment, completion, promotion, attainment, and achievement rates—can identify the type, extent, and severity of the problems affecting girls' education. They do not necessarily reveal the reasons behind them or the constraints causing them.
2. Identification of the supply-side factors that affect girls' educational outcomes: analysis of the policies, institutional services or procedures, and school attributes; the reform environment; and who mediates them.	There are both supply-side and demand-side factors influencing girls' education. Supply-side factors refer to the availability and type of schooling and educational services offered to girls.
3. Identification of the demand-side factors that affect girls' educational outcomes: analysis of social, cultural, and economic behaviors, expectations, and environments; how they interact with supply; and who mediates them.	Demand-side factors refer to those characteristics that reside outside the school—in the community and the household—that influence girls' ability to participate.
4. Identification of the different stakeholders in girls' education: analysis of the beneficiaries, decisionmakers, implementers, and enablers.	Not all the actors (and factors) in education are based at the central or national level; many are found at the local or intermediate levels, in the community, or in district offices. Not all are in the public sector; many are in the private sector, such as business, and religious communities, the media, and non-governmental organizations.

The map also serves to remind us that:

- the constraints and barriers to girls' education can vary with the country, the region, or even the community;
- popular interventions may not always be the answer, and there is probably no one-size-fits-all solution;
- the government agenda may not necessarily reflect or respond to what parents want for their daughters; and
- many groups in the private sector and civil society can be mobilized to support girls' education.

Credits

Map: Developed by Karen Tietjen and Howard Williams, SAGE Project. *Illustrations:* Adapted from Mrs. Beatrice Byakutaga, *Community Mobilization Training Manual* (1997), Uganda Ministry of Education and USAID's SUPER Project; and USAID/WID SAGE Activity, Guinea. Additional artwork by Ruhiyyih Hartwell and Natalie Buda. *Text:* Based on materials presented by Karen Tietjen, Kristi Fair, and Laurie Krieger at the USAID/WID SAGE Girls' Education Workshop (August 1999). Classroom observation text based on Diane VanBelle-Prouty and Haddy Sey, *Girls' PLACE* (1998), USAID/AFR/SD. *Map preparation and text design:* Nora Kruk, SAGE Project.

Educating Girls: Methods of Inquiry

There are many ways of collec
strategies and interventions to
classroom observations, focus
activities (PRA), and many oth

Part I The Statistical Landscape

Educational statistics and indicators (which are data organized and presented as information) are a good place to begin to determine the extent to which girls are undereducated and the magnitude of the problem. Although their accuracy and validity may be questionable, student outcome statistics are generally available from ministries of education. However, they must be interpreted before being used to inform further inquiry, strategy development, or program planning. Keep in mind that:

- Indicators "do not explain, but only point," meaning that they can permit inferences about the constraints affecting girls' education or whether a girls' education program is accomplishing its goals. They must be supported with additional information and analysis.
- Indicators are often multidimensional, meaning that they may measure several different phenomena. For example, an increase in girls' enrollment may indicate an improvement in educational quality as well as an increase in number of school places available.
- Indicators point to progress or change, but must be placed in context, which includes the socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic characteristics of the population; the conditions in the ministry of education; programs and reforms underway; and the quality of the curriculum, teachers, school management, school facilities, etc.

The primary indicators used in preliminary analyses of girls' education are generally the same as those looked at for basic education; however they are disaggregated by sex. These include: gross or net enrollment ratio, first grade enrollment ratio, repetition rate, dropout rate, completion rate, learning achievement or performance rate, and transition rate to higher levels of schooling. If possible, these indicators should also be disaggregated by geographic, ethnic, urban-rural, socioeconomic status, or other relevant categories that can reveal dimensions of the problem often masked by national statistics. Indicators should also be looked at as a time series to spot trends or discount anomalies. These data can be used to create gender disparity indices, comparing girls to boys.

Some techniques for looking at gender disparities

In discussing the measurement of change in gender disparity, consider the gross enrollment ratio (GER) in a relatively low-enrollment country at two points in time. In this particular country, in 1985, the GER was not particularly high for boys (65%), and was quite low for girls (35%).

There are several different approaches to measuring the change in the gender gap. The absolute gender gap is the male GER minus the female GER. In 1985, the absolute gender gap was 30 percentage points (65 – 35), compared with 35 percentage points in 1995 (see Table 1). This indicator shows that the absolute difference in GER increased from 1985 to 1995.

Table 1: Gross enrollment ratio (GER) by sex, 1985 & 1995

Year	Male GER	Female GER
1985	65	35
1995	85	50

Table 2: Primary school gross enrollment ratio (GER) by sex, 1985 & 1995

Year	Male	Female	Absolute General Gap: M – F	Gender parity index (GPI): F/M
1985	65	35	30	0.54
1995	85	50	35	0.59

Another indicator of change is the gender parity index (GPI), which is the ratio of the female GER to the male GER. The closer the GPI is to 1, the lower is the gender disparity in favor of males. The closer the GPI is to 0, the higher is the disparity in favor of males. A GPI of over 1 would indicate a gap in favor of females, a comparatively rare circumstance. In this particular country, in 1985, the GPI was .54. In 1995, the GPI was closer to 1, at .59, suggesting that the gender gap had narrowed (see Table 2).

Table 3 presents two other ways of examining the change in the gender gap. The proportional change in GER measures the change in GER as a proportion of the GER at the first point in time, using the formula:

$$\frac{[(\text{GER at time 2}) - (\text{GER at time 1})]}{(\text{GER at time 1})}$$

Table 3: Rate of increase in GER for primary school by sex, 1985 to 1995

Sex	Proportional change in GER from 1985 to 1995	Annual growth rate in GER
Male	31%	3%
Female	43%	4%

For males, the proportional change is: (85 – 65)/65, or 31%. For females, the proportional increase is considerably greater, at 43%. Yet another way of looking at the change is to examine it in annual terms—in this case, dividing the 31% or 43% increase over the 10-year period.

Table 4 summarizes the direction of change in the gender disparity across the four measures discussed. While the absolute percentage point difference suggests an increasing gap between the male and female GER, the other three measures indicate that proportional gains in GER were greater among females than among males.

Tips

- Use of one approach to examine the change in gender disparity is not enough; more than one approach gives a more complete view of the change.
- One indicator is not enough; a cluster of indicators, including measures of gender disparity, gives a more complete picture of change in the system.
- Change may not be unidirectional. While we may know which direction we want indicators to go (enrollments up, dropout down), reform may not bring uniform progress. For example, if access and enrollments are increased, dropout and repetition may go up, and achievement down—as more marginalized and vulnerable students enter the system.
- Indicators point to, but do not determine, what is reasonable or desirable.
- Indicators do not explain why things are as they are, e.g., why girls' enrollment is lower than that of boys, or why change occurs. To understand why change occurs, data should be gathered through qualitative studies and other methodological approaches.
- Interpreting indicators requires an understanding of the policy environment. For instance, if enrollment rates soar, as they did in the early 1990s in Malawi, it may be because schooling became fee-free. Or if repetition rates plummet, it may be because automatic promotion has been instituted.

Table 4: Direction of change in gender disparity by measure, 1985 to 1995

Measure	Gap decreases	Gap increases
Absolute gender gap		**X**
Gender parity index (GPI)	**X**	
Proportional change	**X**	
Annual growth rate	**X**	

Part II Classroom Observation

Classroom observation allows direct study of the teaching-learning process. It can provide a clearer understanding of the complexity of instructional methods, classroom management, teacher-learner interaction, peer relations, and material usage that will form a girl's educational experience and affect her school performance. Using a detailed observation form, trained observers systematically record what they see and hear in a classroom during the school day.

Analysis of co-educational classrooms in many countries reveals a systematic bias by teachers against girls. Teaching methods and styles present fundamental barriers to effective learning. Teachers' low expectations inhibit girls' confidence levels and potential to succeed academically. Cultural stereotypes of girls' roles are perpetuated in the classroom. Girls receive less attention in class, and their interactions with the teacher are less positive than those of boys. Girls are often harassed and teased by teachers and male students. Lack of sanitary facilities can rob girls of privacy and dignity.

Instructional Interactions. Multiple factors influence what goes on in the classroom. The table below presents observational areas and some illustrative questions the observers should consider.

Area of observation	Illustrative questions
Instructional materials	*Who has them/who doesn't? How are they used by the student, by the teacher?*
Lesson presentation	*What methods does the teacher use? Are girls treated equally? Are girls taught indirectly by boy's direct instruction? Who talks?*
Questioning patterns	*Who does the teacher call on with what type of questions? How does he/she respond to incorrect responses?*
Motivation/feedback	*Are there differences in teacher feedback? Does the teacher make negative, sexual, or stereotype-based comments to girls?*
Management	*Are girls given chores and boys not? Do girls provide child care for younger children in class? Do leadership tasks or punishments differ?*
Physical environment	*Where do girls sit? Are there separate latrines? Is there a security fence? Do girls get to play with sports equipment?*
Student behaviors	*Do girls raise their hands or volunteer answers? Are girls teased or harassed, and with what consequence?*

Tips

- Determine the focus of the observations, selecting a few key areas.
- Develop classroom observation forms to describe (not interpret) interactions; train observers to use them.
- Allow ample time; observations should occur in blocks of time sufficient to describe an interaction.
- Select classrooms according to a sampling frame developed to suit inquiry (random, stratified, etc.).

g and analyzing information to pinpoint the problems, barriers, and constraints affecting girls' education, as well as to develop the prove girls' enrollment, persistence, and performance in school. These include school, community, and household surveys, oup discussions, key informant interviews (with teachers, religious leaders, and government officials), participatory research . Four of those often used for context analysis are described below.

Part III Policy Analysis and Assessment

Examining the policy framework is an essential part of determining the factors that may keep girls out of school, cause them to drop out, or to do poorly.

What is policy and why is it so important?

- It provides a set of rules and procedures that govern and define resource allocation and service provision.
- It establishes parameters and provides a blueprint for the education system.
- It serves as a contract between government and civil society by stating priorities and providing benchmarks for accountability.

What is policy analysis?

- It is a method for determining the impact and efficacy of policies in bringing about desired (stated) outcomes.
- It may use several methodologies, e.g., document review/content analysis, interviews with ministry and school personnel, parents, and community.
- It delineates a "policy continuum" (see below) that examines to what extent a policy has been operationalized and implemented.

Policy declaration or statement (Equal access to schooling for girls) *Operational sub-policies* (Fee waivers for rural girls, preferential quotas) *Services, programs, structures* (Latrines, mentoring programs)

How can policies be classified for analysis?

- Policies can have either a distinctively negative or positive effect on girls' participation or affect girls and boys equally.
- Policies can also be classified according to the type of impact they are intended to produce in terms of improving access or quality, although often even ostensibly gender-neutral policies will have unequal effects.

Policy matrix	Gender-neutral	Girl-positive	Girl-negative
Access	Universal primary education School construction Community schools No absenteeism	Single sex schools Fee waivers Quotas	Expulsion for pregnancy
Quality	Increased teacher qualifications Self-learning curriculum Learner-centered pedagogy School breakfast	Stereotype elimination Relaxed performance criteria Female school director	Girls required to take domestic science

What are the steps in policy analysis?

Policy analysis should answer:

- Has the policy done what was intended?
- Who has benefited?
- Is the policy framework coherent, consistent?
- Are these policies most effective and efficient?
- What else is needed?

1 Policy Mapping

Develop matrix (see above).
Scrutinize entire education system.
Consider policies outside education system, e.g., tax collection policies and policies on how banks or religious groups can support girls' education.
Categorize according to matrix.
Desktop analysis questions:

- What are policies?
- What are intentions?

2 Sub-policy identification

Field questions:

- Have policies been operationalized?
- What are sub-policies?
- Are they actionable?

3 Determine impact and effectiveness

- Was policy implemented? As intended?
- Was policy "resourced"? Were mechanisms and procedures put in place to carry out the policy?
- Was policy "enforced"?
- Was policy communicated, disseminated, and understood?

4 Assess impact on girls

Compare policies with factors known to affect girls' education participation (e.g., access, distance, security, quality, pedagogy, curriculum, political will, and community support). Ask:

- Do girls benefit?
- Was policy framework consistent?
- Was policy framework complementary?

5 Off the page—what we don't see

Questions:

- What is *de facto* policy (unofficial policy) framework?
- Who will support or oppose reformed policies?

Tips

- Policies are not always as they seem; they do not always have the intended effects.
- Identifying and considering *de facto* (or unofficial) policies is often as important as *de jure* (official) policies.
- "Neutral" policies seldom are, and often will, affect either girls or boys disproportionately.
- Backlash effects of targeted "positive" discrimination can subvert policy intentions and affect reform efforts.
- Some policies have greater symbolic value than significant impact on girls' participation, such as policy declarations.
- As good education is good girls' education, the analytic focus should not be limited to "girl-specific" policies.

Part IV Focus Groups

Focus group interviews can reveal the causes underlying girls' educational participation rates. Focus groups bring together homogeneous groups of people (e.g., teachers, mothers, religious leaders, adolescent girls) to freely discuss issues, ideas, and experiences among them in order to delineate commonalities and differences in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

Focus group discussion methodology is still evolving, although it was first described in the late 1920s. A focus group discussion is a type of qualitative, group in-depth interview on one topic. Focus group discussions are led by a trained moderator. A trained note-taker records comments of the focus group participants, as well as important nonverbal cues. In addition, focus groups are usually tape recorded and may also be videotaped. After each focus group, the moderator and note-taker go over the notes and tape recording of the discussion, discuss their impressions, and analyze the data.

Focus group discussion researchers develop a guide to fully explore the topic of the focus group discussion in depth. The moderator must make sure that all questions or subtopics are covered during the discussion, but the moderator tries to follow the flow of the discussion rather than the specific order of the guide. Focus groups usually last about one to one-and-one-half hours.

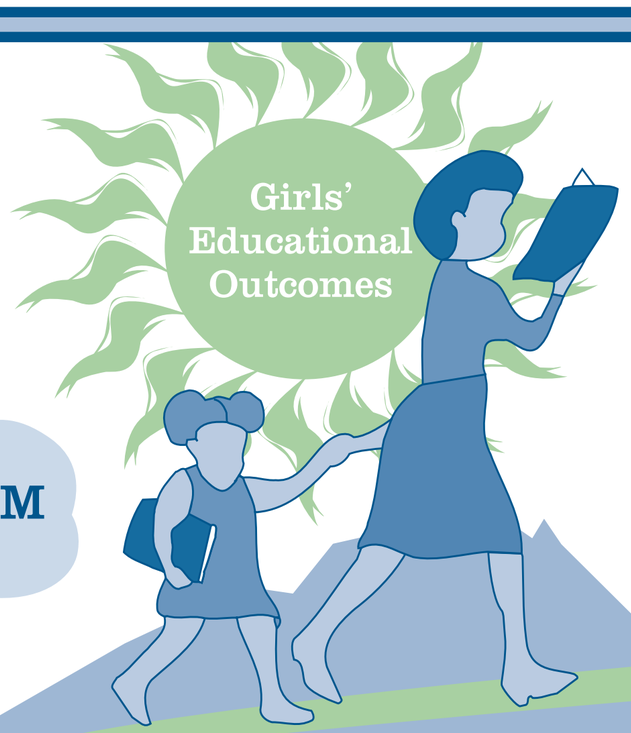
There are a variable number of participants in focus groups. The optimal number of participants depends on the culture. Participants are often seated around a table (the moderator and sometimes the note-taker also sit at the table). Focus group participants are chosen so that they are homogeneous for characteristics that are important for the study's purpose or that are important so that the group members will feel comfortable together. For example, focus group participants might be selected to be mothers of daughters ages 6–10 who are attending school. This focus group could be used to gather data on mothers' perspectives on girls' education and problems mothers encounter when they send their daughters to school. It would be important to get fathers' and important community members' perspectives on sending girls to school as well. However, the presence of fathers in this group might inhibit mothers from talking and would make it more difficult to get adequate information from either the mothers' or the fathers' perspectives.

Focus group discussions have advantages and disadvantages. They rely on the process of group dynamics. Interaction between members of the focus group may raise points that some participants have not previously thought of. When the point is brought up by other participants, everyone has the opportunity to comment on it. When the subject of the focus group is a school policy or communication material, this kind of group reaction may be very important. Although a focus group discussion is not a natural context for behavior, the group dynamics of focus group discussions may give the researcher insight into how discussion of a topic occurs in everyday social life.

The presence of group dynamics also has disadvantages. When the topic is sensitive, the presence of other participants may inhibit open and honest responses. Shy participants may be less likely to talk in a group. In a group people sometimes express more extreme positions than they really feel; or when someone in the group confidently expresses an opinion or several participants express the same opinion, those who disagree may not feel able to say their real views.

Another disadvantage is that the focus group discussion guide is prepared by the researchers in advance of the focus group discussion. Therefore, the guide reflects the researchers' perspectives rather than the perspectives of the participants. If the guide directs the discussion in certain directions, extremely important points that lie outside these directions may not be mentioned by focus group participants. Researchers would not learn the important information and programs based on the research results could suffer.

Mapping Girls' Education



POLITICAL SYSTEM

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS

LEGAL SYSTEM

ECONOMY

LOCAL

SCHOOL
Location and structure
Management and organization
Teacher qualifications
and behavior
Environment

Consult: Directors, teachers, students

CHILDREN
Aspirations
Self-image

Consult: Children

HOUSEHOLDS
Costs of schooling
Household labor
Returns to schooling

Consult: Parents

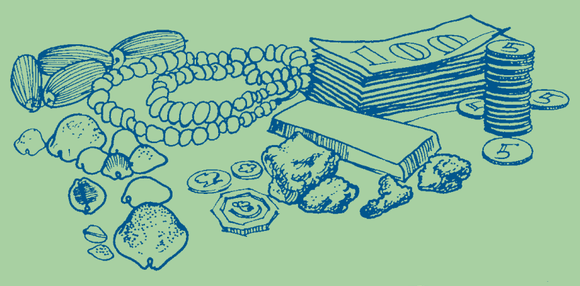
REGIONAL

INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS AND SERVICES
Infrastructure
Teachers
Curriculum
Materials
Planning and finance

Consult: Central and regional
Technical and administrative staff

COMMUNITY
Roles and expectations of girls

Consult: Local leaders, community groups



ECONOMIC ACTION
Skills requirements
Hiring norms

Consult: Business leaders, employers

NATIONAL

POLICY
Declarations
Regulations
Budget and expenditures

Consult: MOE officials,
cabinet members

RELIGION
Role of women
Female rights to schooling and knowledge

Consult: Religious leaders

EDUCATION SYSTEM

CIVIL SOCIETY

SUPPLY-SIDE FACTORS

DEMAND-SIDE FACTORS