

Girls' Education

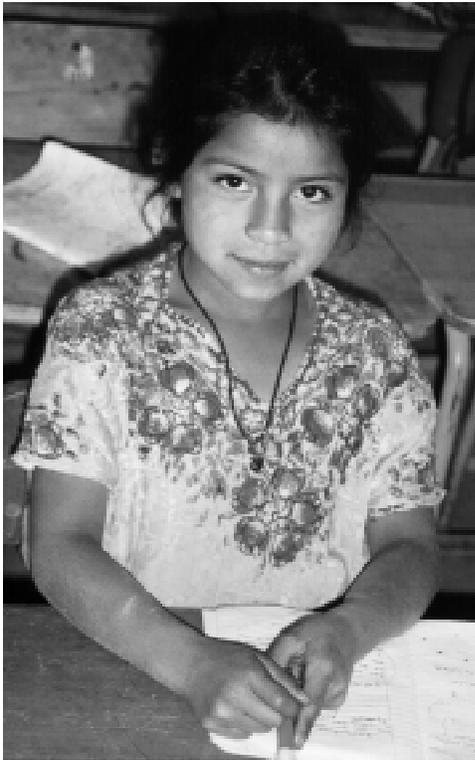
Women's Organizations Can Help: Take on the Challenge

"...where women prosper, countries prosper. We know that investing in women—in their health and education—is vital to improving global prosperity."

Hillary Rodham Clinton,
Forward, Women...a World Forum

"Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development, and peace."

Platform for Action,
Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995)



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Why Is Girls' Education Important?
Educating girls is imperative for national development, as well as being an important human right. Many countries are enacting national policies and programs to enhance opportunities for girls' education. Education plays an important role in the lives of girls. It is key to girls' equitable participation in society, which contributes to social and economic development of the country and quality of life of all citizens.

Education results in improved health and nutrition, decreased maternal mortality, decreased birth rates, and increased education of succeeding generations.

Women's organizations like yours have an opportunity and responsibility to do their part.

What Have Women's Organizations Achieved to Date?

Women's organizations play a crucial role in developing, implementing, and monitoring educational programs and policies. Girls' education was a central tenet of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Governments, educational institutions, NGOs, and women's groups like yours can act to make a difference. For example:

- In Africa, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has been instrumental in educating parents as advocates for girls and in stimulating policy reform.
- During its first year of operation, FEMSA (Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa) —whose goal is to improve girls' participation, performance, and achievement—generated country profiles on the status of girls' participation in science and math in Cameroon, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- In Madhya Pradesh, in central India, a women's organization (BGMS/All India Rural Women's Association) has established nonformal education centers where girls participate in activities to develop literacy, numeracy, family life, and vocational skills.
- In Guatemala, *Foro de la Mujer* (The Women's Forum), a 6,000-member women's organization, is a significant force in establishing a national women's policy that makes girls' education a key priority.

What Are the Problems That Remain?

Despite recent attention to promoting female education, girls still lag boys in literacy, school attendance, and school completion.

For example:

- For every three girls born in South Asia or the Middle East, only one will complete primary school.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than half of all girls ages six to eleven are in school.
- Worldwide, more than two-thirds of the children who never go to school or who drop out are girls.
- About 75 percent of females in many parts of Africa and Asia are illiterate.

What Can You Do?

Your organization can make a difference in girls' education. You can support girls' education through advocacy:

- Inform your organization about the issues surrounding girls' education; become an advocate in your own community.
- Inform policy makers about the value of educating girls and advocate policies that improve conditions for girls.
- Promote girls' education in your organization's public relations and communications documents.
- Lead community dialogues on how to enroll girls in school and help them to stay in school.
- Ask your local newspapers to include stories about the value of girls' education and how it promotes social and economic development. You can provide examples of girls' successes that will help journalists prepare their articles.
- Promote the participation of girls in commercial, community, and cultural life.
- Organize a Girls' Education Fair. Invite community organizations and leaders to explain specific actions they have taken to support girls' education and recognize successful girls in the community. Invite politicians to do the same.
- Recognize girls who demonstrate community leadership or who show outstanding achievement in their schools.
- Reach out to disadvantaged girls (disabled, displaced, refugee, and rural) to make sure they are included in your educational activities.
- Advocate for legal and social mechanisms that support girls' education. Provide legislators with information to support reform and lobby for change.

- Form partnerships with NGOs, the media, businesses, other community groups, schools, and parents to support concrete actions for girls' education.
- Strengthen alliances and networks you have with other organizations in your community to demonstrate solidarity around girls' education.

You can support girls' education through donations or a financial contribution:

- Start or support fundraising activities for girls' education.
- Offer to provide food for family nights and academic celebrations in support of girls.
- Establish or contribute to an award program for outstanding teachers who encourage girls' success in school.
- Reward girls who read, perhaps by starting a reading club or a small library, or by distributing inexpensive books to girls.

You can support girls' education through a personal involvement with the girls and/or the school:

- Organize a field trip for girls — take them to a museum, a historic site, hospital, business, or other places that have educational value.
- Provide in-kind support to schools by mentoring and tutoring students, lending space for school activities, or supporting girls' sporting events.
- Read to young girls in your neighborhood and encourage them to learn how to read and write.
- Demonstrate pride in your daughters' accomplishments in school.
- Encourage members of your organization to send their daughters to school.

IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE EVERY GIRL GOES TO SCHOOL!

**THEN ACT...
FOR THE GIRLS OF TODAY,
FOR THE WOMEN OF TOMORROW.**

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