

# Girls' Education

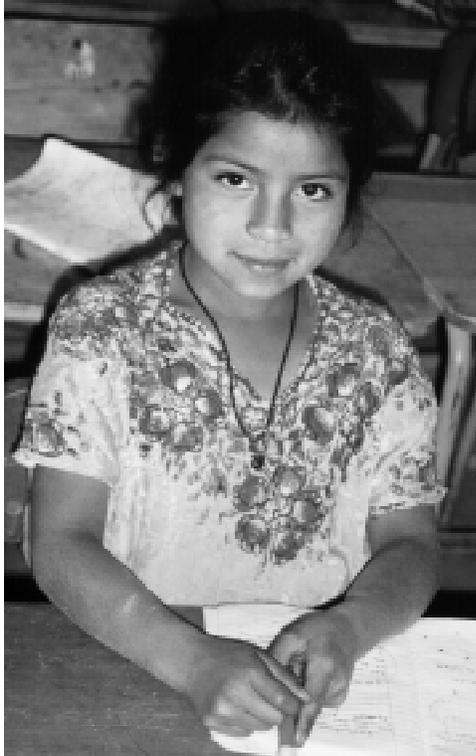
## DID YOU KNOW? Facts About Girls' Education

*"...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)



Abigail Harris

*The Girls' and Women's Education Activity is implemented by the Institute for International Research Consortium under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*

**R**esearch shows that the education of girls can be considered the single-most important investment that a country can make in its social and economic development. Girls' education not only supports increased productivity and incomes but has important social and political implications as well. The following are facts about girls' education:

### Many girls do not have access to education

- Thirty-six million girls in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to basic education.<sup>1</sup>
- In Africa, 9 percent of girls who start primary school drop out before completion.<sup>2</sup>
- In India, less than one-third of girls complete primary education.<sup>3</sup>

### More women than men are illiterate

- Almost 65 percent of illiterate adults are women (565 million). Most of these women live in the developing regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.<sup>4</sup>
- In 1995, in 7 countries the female illiteracy rate was greater than 70 percent. In 45 other countries the female illiteracy rate was greater than 50 percent.<sup>2</sup>
- In 66 countries (a third of the membership of the United Nations), the gap between the male and female adult literacy rates is estimated to be greater than 10 percentage points.<sup>5</sup>
- In Africa, the literacy rate for women is 36 percent compared to 59 percent for men.<sup>6</sup>

### Girls receive less education than boys

- Eighty-five million girls, nearly a quarter of the world's population of 6-to 11-year-old females, are estimated to be out of school.<sup>4</sup>
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 10 percent of girls, compared

to 30 percent of boys, attend secondary school. Four times as many boys as girls continue on to higher levels.<sup>6</sup>

- In Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, girls' education costs more than boys' because girls' uniforms are more expensive.<sup>7</sup>
- In Peru, the proportion of school-age children enrolled in secondary school is 9 percent higher for boys than for girls. In rural areas this figure climbs to 17 percent.<sup>4</sup>

#### Girls' education increases earnings

- A 10 to 20 percent increase in women's wages is associated with each additional year of schooling.<sup>8</sup>
- In 57 developing countries, girls' enrollment in secondary education is highly correlated (.63) with per capita GNP.<sup>5</sup>

#### Girls' education leads to improved child health and a drop in child mortality

- Maternal education has a greater influence on child health than paternal education.<sup>9, 10</sup>
- The higher the average number of years of schooling in a country, the lower the mortality rate for children under 5, and the higher the incidence of child immunization.<sup>11</sup>
- In poor countries, each year of maternal education is associated with a 5 percent to 10 percent decline in child mortality for a woman's children.<sup>11</sup>
- In 13 African countries, a 10 percent increase in the female literacy rate is associated with a 10 percent decline in child mortality.<sup>10</sup>
- In Peru, 7 or more years of maternal education correlates with a 75 percent reduction in risk of mortality for children.<sup>4</sup>

#### Girls' education lowers fertility

- In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, completion of seven or more years of schooling, as compared with less than two years of schooling, is associated with a family size of two or three fewer children.<sup>3</sup>

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>UNICEF/UNESCO. (1993). *The Owagadougou Declaration and Framework for Action*. Pan-African Conference on the Education for Girls. Burkina Faso: UNESCO Publishing.
- <sup>2</sup>King, E. M. and Hill, M. A. (eds.) (1992). *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits, and Policies*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- <sup>3</sup>Colclough, C. and Lewin, K. M. (1993). *Educating All the Children*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>4</sup>Herz, B. and Khandker, S. (eds.) (1991). *Women's Work, Education, and Family Welfare in Peru*. World Bank, Discussion Paper #161.
- <sup>5</sup>UNESCO. (1995). *World Education Report*. Oxford: UNESCO Publishing.
- <sup>6</sup>Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). (1995). *Girls and African Education: Research and Action to Keep Girls in School*. Nairobi, Kenya: FAWE International House.
- <sup>7</sup>Odaga, A. and Heneveld, W. (1995). *Girls and Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World Bank Technical Paper Number 298.
- <sup>8</sup>Summers, L. (1992). The most influential investment. *Scientific American*. August 1992, p. 132.
- <sup>9</sup>Bellew, R., Raney, L., and Subbarao, K. (1992). La educación de las niñas. *Finanzas y Desarrollo*. March, 1992.
- <sup>10</sup>World Bank. (1993). *World Development Report*. Washington D.C.: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- <sup>11</sup>UNICEF. (1992). *Educating Girls and Women: A Moral Imperative*. New York: United Nations' Children's Fund.

**IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE EVERY GIRL  
GOES TO SCHOOL!**

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

Produced by the Institute for International Research, a fully owned subsidiary of the American Institutes for Research, as part of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Girls' and Women's Education Activity. The Activity is funded through the Agency's Office of Women in Development, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support and Research, Contract #HNE-5848-C-00-6046-00.

The Institute for International Research implements the Activity in collaboration with Abt Associates, CARE, Management Systems International, Plan International, and World Learning.

For additional copies or further information, please contact the American Institutes for Research at: 1815 N. Fort Myer Drive, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22209, USA. Tel: (703-527-5546, Fax: (703) 527-4661, E-mail: girls\_education@air-dc.org.