THE FORUM
For Basic Education and International Development
Vol. 1, Issue 1, June 1991

Solving Access Problems

To Our Readers

Education, environment and economics: these are the major concerns of people and governments throughout the world at this point in history. The cover photo that we've selected for the inaugural issue of The FORUM *for Basic Education and Development dramatizes these concerns.*

Kili Sharif is a desolate area located in the Nushki District of Balochistan in Pakistan. The students of Kili Sharif Khan Middle School sit on mats, their attention directed toward their teacher who stands by an easel where the day's lesson is being presented. In the foreground are the building materials for the construction of a school. In the background are cattle herders who may themselves be school-age children. If you look carefully at the group of children, you can find one figure dressed in white — the only girl in the school.

When Jorge Valdez sent us this photo (see below), we were struck by its intensity. As educators working in developing countries, we are aware of the enormity of the task of increasing basic education and improving living conditions. This photograph brings many questions to mind and points out the interrelatedness of the issues: What is the delivery system for this school? Where are the water, food, and energy supplies, and are they imported, produced and available locally , or exported? Where are the roads? What are the financial resources? Who is paying for this school — the parents, the community, the government? What about the education of the cattle herders? Why is there only one girl in the classroom? Will the cattle herders and the girls attend the school when it's built, or is the school considered irrelevant to their life needs? Is the formal classroom structure appropriate in the desert? Is the teacher from the local area, and are the lessons being taught in the vernacular language? These are the kinds of questions we plan to address in this and future issues of The FORUM *magazine.*

Jorge Valdez

This issue of The FORUM *begins a new phase in the history of the publication.* The FORUM for Basic Education and Development, *originally published as* The BRIDGES Forum, *began as a newsletter for the Basic Research and Implementation in DevelopinG Education Systems (BRIDGES) Project. The new* FORUM *will continue to report on research, issues, and programs in basic education and development but with an expanded format. The magazine will use the broad concept of education adopted at the March 1990 World Conference on Education for All. That is, basic education will be viewed comprehensively — as learning that begins in early childhood and forms the basis for lifelong learning, whether it is delivered through formal, informal, or nonformal systems. Particular attention will be paid to reporting on research and inventive and innovative programs that address some of the obstacles to achieving universal access to, and completion of, primary education, including social, environmental, political and economic factors. Basic education will be viewed within the framework of programs that provide individuals and families with the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound, sustainable development.*

The FORUM *will be published quarterly. This year, each of the four issues will be dedicated to a major theme relevant to basic education worldwide. Our first issue is devoted to access to basic education; subsequent issues will deal with efficiency, quality, and equity.*

Next year we plan to publish The FORUM *in English and one other language. Feature articles will be written by authors from developing countries. If you have articles, reprints, or applied research that have been tested in your own setting and feel would be of interest to other educators, policymakers, and researchers, please submit them to* The FORUM *Editor.*

The new FORUM *is funded through the ABEL (Advancing Basic Education and Literacy) Project in collaboration with the Academy for Educational Development, prime contractor for the project; Creative Associates International; Research Triangle Institute; and the Harvard Institute for International Development. We are grateful to the Office of Education, Bureau of Science and Technology of U.S.A.I.D., for their support for the new expanded format. We hope that our readers from the past will enjoy the new* FORUM *in style and content.*

The success of The FORUM *depends on our readership — please let us hear from you!*

— The Editors

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On Access, Retention, and Equity

Nothing is more important to the development of a country than the education of its people. Yet in 1990 over 125 million children between the ages of 6 and 11 were not enrolled in school in developing countries (UNESCO, 1990). While enrollment ratios have increased in the past decade in Asia and Latin America, they have decreased in Africa (see chart at right). In all three regions dropout rates remain high, and the education of women and girls lags behind that of men and boys.

Primary Education Enrollment Ratios in First and Final Grades
(excluding repeaters)
1980 and 1987

	Grade 1		Final Grade	
	1980	1987	1980	1987
Africa	84%	72%	47%	47%
Asia	107%	110%	69%	77%
Asia (ex.China)	98%	103%	53%	62%
Latin America	140%	138%	64%	65%

Source: The World Bank, 1990

Initially, limited enrollments are a problem of limited supply. Building more schools and training more teachers is the obvious response. But ultimately the supply of education is a function of the demand for it, and not simply a matter of a country's income or wealth. Some developing countries have achieved full enrollment (for both boys and girls) with per capita GNP levels lower than those of other countries that are still far from enrolling all their children in 1st grade. This was possible because the demand for education was so high that both the state and individual families were willing to forego other uses of income in order to educate all their children. In fact, family expenditures on public education were often as large as state expenditures.

But this kind of situation is rare. In some instances, even when there is space in school, enrollments are low and dropout is high, either because communities are not committed to their children's education, or because government policies discriminate against certain children. Or enrollment can be high, but dropout is also high, in which case efforts to improve retention can have a greater impact than efforts to increase access to school.

Both access and retention are strongly influenced by a child's gender, place of residence, and social class, and by ethnic, religious, or cultural affiliations. The failure to educate particular groups of children can have far-reaching consequences in the development of the country. For example, some countries have expanded overall enrollment rapidly by favoring boys over girls, creating a gender gap. But countries with a low proportion of educated girls and women risk high fertility and infant mortality rates. The overall health of the population suffers when a high proportion of women and girls are not educated.

These are some of the complex relationships explored in articles offered in the following pages of The FORUM. This issue begins with an article by Dr. Mary B. Anderson that presents a typology of the barriers to access and identifies the range of policy options that MOEs have for addressing each barrier. The discussion and examples focus primarily on the problems of girls (and women), but Dr. Anderson's approach is generalizable to all groups. Following Anderson's discussion, EPICS presents a new way of thinking about planning for increased access. Other articles focus on specific approaches developed at local and national levels. SHAPE Zambia and RADECO are written by country nationals about integrating local initiatives into national education systems. Articles on the Occupied Territories begin to examine issues that are often difficult to discuss, about the problems of education within restrictive political conditions, while the profiles of educational innovators describe the work of two people bringing about change within their communities.

–The Editors

UNICEF/Stephenie Hollyn

Policy Options for Improving Access to Education

by Mary B. Anderson

Because educational resources are limited, it is inevitable that some children will gain access to education before others. But the processes by which certain groups of children are disadvantaged tend to be self-reinforcing. Rural, minority, poor, and female children usually have less access than other children. Because the resources allocated to education will continue to be inadequate in most countries, the patterns of disadvantage will not be changed by simply expanding educational opportunity over time. Even when the schooling capacity exists, some parents limit their children's access. Policies to overcome educational disparities are most effective when they consider what the access barriers are, analyze how they overlap, and develop multi-faceted policy packages to deal with them. To make an accurate diagnosis of access problems, there are two simple questions to ask: Do access disparities exist? What circumstances led to these disparities?

If access disparities exist, the children most likely to suffer from them are: poor; rural or otherwise hard-to-reach; female; and minority children. A policymaker needs to know if any of these groups are low-access (and at which levels of schooling). The only way to find this out is to collect disaggregated data. That is, data on who comes to school should be collected for each grade level, disaggregated by location (to pinpoint issues of poverty, remoteness and ethnicity); by gender; and by ethnic or tribal group. This will very quickly reveal whether there is a significant educational disparity in any society.

To understand the circumstances that led to the disparities, it is important to know what people do and the values associated with what they do. What do school-aged boys do? School-aged girls? How central are children's tasks to family survival? **When** and **where** are these jobs done by children? Are they daily tasks, requiring a lot of time (such as fetching water and wood from distant places), or are they seasonal and limited in duration (such as planting and harvesting crops)? By determining which jobs adult men and women do, one can identify the parents' probable expectations for their children and, therefore, whether or not they will regard the time and expense of education as worthwhile.

It is also important to collect information on people's values. What values are associated with the jobs, activities, and roles that different classes, sexes, or ethnic groups perform? Do these activities reflect and embody deeply held social or religious beliefs, or are they based on convenience? Are these values rigid, or are they undergoing change?

Once researchers and policymakers have diagnosed the actual disparities and their causes, the options for removing access barriers become clear, and an effective policy package for that context can be devised.

BARRIER 1: ***Lack of Classroom Space***

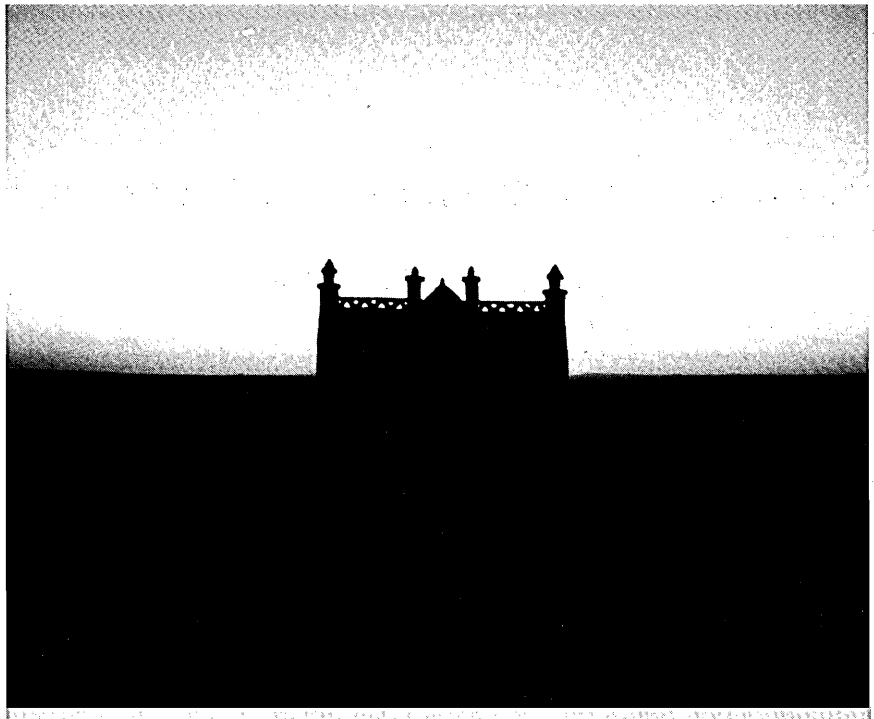
When the number of schools is limited, the process of allocating school spaces is usually discriminatory. Schools are built for

Educational Access: Barriers, Policy Options, and Solutions

Once a diagnosis has been made of the disparities and their causes, the options for removing access barriers become clear, and an effective policy package can be devised.

Barriers	Policy Options	Examples
1 Space	• Provide more space	• Build schools; designate for certain groups
	• Use existing space efficiently or equitably	• Double shifts; designate for certain groups
	• Use alternative spaces as schools	• Community buildings; Mosque schools
	• Provide education at home	• Distance education
2 Distance	• Reduce distance between homes and schools	• More schools; use existing spaces; education at home; boarding facilities
	• Provide safety en route to and from school	• Transportation; chaperons; community protection
3 Cost	• Make Financial/in-kind adjustments	• Free education; free textbooks, uniforms; scholarships; incentive pay to parents for child's participation in school
	• Make Adjustments of time or labor	• Change school timing so as not to conflict with labor; substitute for children's labor during school hours
	• Improve expectations of returns to education	• Ensure access to higher education; relevance of training for employment or increases in productivity
4 Insufficient & Overburdened Teachers	• Recruit/place more teachers	• Lower entry requirements; improve incentives; provide training locally; place teachers near home
	• Teach more students with same number or fewer teachers	• Double shifts; self-taught, programmed curricula; peer instruction; distance education
	• Provide incentives to teachers to encourage enrollments of disadvantaged groups to come to and stay in school	• Direct rewards for teachers who succeed in enrolling children from disadvantaged groups
5 Inappropriate or Undesirable Education	• Adapt the educational system to fit parents' sense of appropriateness	• Adjust curriculum; build new facilities; recruit different teachers
	• Overcome or change parents' understanding	• Legal sanctions; substitute acceptable alternatives; community involvement; parental education

Jorge Valdez



urban children but not for rural children; for boys but not for girls; for politically dominant groups but not for minority groups. Even when there is no overt discrimination, the necessity to sequence the building of schools means that some children will be served before others.

When space is limited, even where a school is ostensibly open to all children, certain predictable enrollment patterns emerge. Parents usually value education for sons more than for daughters. Hence, if a school is very crowded, it is likely that the spaces will be given to boys through informal family and community decision-making processes. Attitudes of teachers and other educational administrators can also influence which children receive limited spaces and which are overtly or inadvertently discouraged from attending.

Policy Options

- provide more classrooms
- use existing space more efficiently or equitably through double or triple shifts
- use alternative spaces for schools
- provide education at home.

Each of these options expands the number of children who can be in school. However, to overcome disparities, policymakers usually have to adopt policies of "positive discrimination," i.e., policies that explicitly designate space for the unreached groups (such as "girls only").

BARRIER 2: *Distance*

The farther children must travel from home, the less likely they are to enroll in school. Distance works against all children who live far from the centers of decision making or power. This includes rural children, poor children, and children who are less privileged in other ways. Distance impedes girls' access to schooling more than it does for boys because parents fear for their daughters' safety when they are away from home. Research in Egypt and Pakistan shows that female enrollments rose sharply when schools were located within one kilometer of the family home.

POLICY OPTIONS *continued on page 5*

Multi-faceted policy packages address interrelated access issues

To overcome access barriers, policymakers need to be aware of all the barriers to a particular group of children. In Kenya, an attempt to reach children of nomads by building boarding schools near grazing areas attracted an entirely different group of children. These were children from better-off urban families (a group who already enjoyed superior access to education) who had not been successful in competing for the limited school spaces in their towns. They were able to by-pass registration restrictions and to afford the costs of boarding school. Nomads, on the other hand, could not afford to buy the bedding, cooking pots, etc. which were required in the boarding school setting.

The policy adopted in Kenya was based on an accurate diagnosis of one barrier the nomadic children faced—namely, that there was no school within a reachable distance from their living space because they moved about with their families. However, the policy was not as successful as intended because it did not also take account of the cost barriers that these families faced. In this situation, *space, distance, and cost* were all barriers to access. (One might also speculate as to whether the nomadic parents doubted the appropriateness of education for their children's futures and were reluctant to enroll them.)

In Pakistan a multi-faceted Mosque Schools Policy took account of space, distance, cost, teacher, and appropriateness barriers. By using buildings already located in every small village, within easy reach of neighboring homes, the policy met the space and distance needs. By using an institution that is respected and safe, and by employing the Imam in each Mosque as one of the two teachers, the policy addressed the parents' fears about the appropriateness of the facilities and teachers. The policy also opened the possibility for girls and boys to attend school together, and expanded the available teaching staff by using local, educated personnel in the classrooms. At the same time that the Mosque schools opened, the basic primary curriculum in Pakistan was revised so that children could achieve literacy and numeracy with three years of schooling; the Mosque schools were intended to provide three years. Mosque schools were also made equivalent to other government schools so that children could freely transfer among schools. These two provisions helped parents feel that this education was, initself, worthwhile for their children and that it could lead to further education.

EPICS: A New Way to Think About Access to Education

by Christina Rawley

"We have higher participation rates, except among low income groups, and their participation has decreased."

"Investments in new technology have not improved the education system as we expected."

"When we invested in special programs we did not see gains in economic productivity. Why?"

These words can be heard in discussions about education in many places around the world, but actually the dialogue is taken from a run of EPICS, the Education PolICy Simulation. EPICS is an interactive computer-supported simulation game that is used in training programs for policymakers. The purpose of EPICS is to provide a starting place for discussions about how to increase access to education. EPICS was developed using a synthesis of cross-country research produced by Project BRIDGES.

The EPICS Scenario

EPICS presents the player-participants with a country scenario that simulates conditions in many low-income countries: Per capita income is very low — $350 a year. Fifty-one percent of the children enrolled in Grade 1 do not complete primary school. Literacy rates are 35% for males and 16% for females. Only 2.2% of GNP is spent on education. The primary education expenditure is 40% of the total education expenditure.Through minimal investments in primary education, players can dramatically improve the education system and the quality of life in their country. The challenge is to find the hidden patterns and relationships between many possible policy options.

Players put chips representing the currency of the country of Farziland—farzi means fictitious in Urdu—on a gameboard choosing specific policy investments. At the end of each round, players count the chips on the board and enter the amounts into a computer. The computer generates an education report giving the new figures for the number of children in school as well as qualitative information about changing cultural norms and environmental conditions. Five rounds are played in the game and each round represents five years. At the end of the game the players see the results of their decisions over a 25-year period, or on one generation of children in the development of their country.

Martha Siewa

Policymakers negotiate investment decisions during a simulation exercise run in a public enterprise workshop at Harvard University.

The dynamics of the simulation are very lively as players take on the roles of officials within a ministry of education and negotiate for agreement on investments in policy options.

Multiple Strategies

EPICS shows how policymaking at the national level plays out across four population groups in very different ways. Cultural and socio-economic diversity are simply represented in the EPICS model by four population groups that are analogous to several groups in a society—boys, girls, urban and rural. The urban boys, for example, represent those who have greatest access to education (and are highest on the socio-economic scale) and the rural girls represent those who have the least access to education (and are lowest on the socio-economic scale). Urban girls and rural boys represent the children who fall somewhere in the middle.

Players are often surprised that the outcomes of the game show a broad range of responses. Policies favoring the status quo and boys' education show increases in industrial and agricultural development but little or no improvement in food production. With such policies, the overall health of the population will remain poor until girls' access increases. On the other hand, policy decisions favoring the underrepresented groups increase education for girls, improving the overall health and welfare of the country. Food production will increase and the birthrate will fall.

The simulation, which has been run in many countries, challenges policymakers to rethink their strategies for improving education systems. ❖

EPICS was developed by Claire Brown, Haroona Jatoi, and Christina Rawley and is available for $50 through Project BRIDGES, One Eliot Street, Cambridge, MA 01238 USA

POLICY OPTIONS *continued from page 4*

Policy Options

- reduce the distance between where children live and where they go to school
- ensure children's safety as they travel whatever distance to school.

BARRIER 3: ***Direct and Indirect Costs***

Among many families any direct schooling costs pose a barrier. In addition, the indirect costs associated with the loss of a child's labor restrict access for children from poor families. Children whose families depend upon their labor for survival will have limited access. In many countries, girls are required to perform regular, daily household tasks such as childcare, cooking, and fetching water and firewood. Because family survival depends on this work so parents are reluctant or unable to let their daughters attend school.

In addition, parents make decisions based on the probable returns to each child's education. When girls join the families into which they marry, or when their prospects for earning income are low because of limited opportunities for females in the formal labor market, some parents are reluctant to take on the costs of educating their daughters.

The SHAPE of Zambia: Education with Production

by F.C. Mbulwe and F. Chelu

UNESCO/ H. Greenough

SHAPE is a decentralized and participatory program that is planned, managed, and implemented by teachers. The Self-Help Action Plan for Primary Education (SHAPE) is improving access to primary schools nationwide in Zambia by building schools and teaching vocational skills. Each school is considered a production unit, and curriculum is focused on agriculture, industrial arts, and home economics to reflect the needs of the people and communities that the schools serve.

One of the major aims of SHAPE is to give priority to activities that can improve the quality and relevance of education for pupils. The program uses donor funds to benefit pupils in Basic Schools by promoting changes that affect the lives of the majority of the pupils.

The program seeks to improve access to primary education through initial enrollment, improved attendance, and reduced dropout and repetition.

Zambia is facing the reduction of government resources for education because of the country's poor economic situation. Much of the cost difference has to be borne by parents. Self-reliance has again become a key word when it comes to such things as building classrooms, workshops, teachers' housing.

Teachers and parents have responded well to the financial crises and have taken pride in mobilizing local resources to support their children's education. This challenge has made teachers and communities take more direct responsibility for the quantitative and qualitative development of schools, which has broadened students' education and led to greater interaction between schools and communities.

SHAPE as a program is a new partnership between parents and schools. The program is not only consolidating the concept of building self-reliance but spreading it to all schools, teachers, parents, and communities. Participating in self-help projects has given pupils, parents, and teachers a new sense of responsibility.

The following strategies are used to

SHAPE *continued on page 8*

Policy Options

- financial or in-kind adjustments
- adjust school schedule
- improve expectations of returns to education

BARRIER 4: ***Insufficient and Overburdened Teachers***

When there are not enough teachers and classrooms are overcrowded, all children's access to quality education is affected. If a school is overcrowded, parents who favor education for sons over daughters will keep daughters out of school in order to ensure that their sons get a better education. Teachers who are pressed by too many students will, intentionally or unintentionally, discourage some pupils in an attempt to reduce classes to a manageable size. Because of the greater comfort teachers feel with students from their own class or group, teachers more often discourage poor or minority group children (or girls where teachers are male) than children from better-off families.

Often, too, there is a limited pool of teaching candidates, and it may be difficult to get qualified, trained teachers to teach among disadvantaged groups. For example, many countries have trouble placing female teachers in remote areas. If parents insist that their daughters be taught by women, the cycle of the gender gap is extremely difficult to break. In all cases where groups have suffered differential access to education, the pool of qualified people from those groups who may be trained to teach is limited.

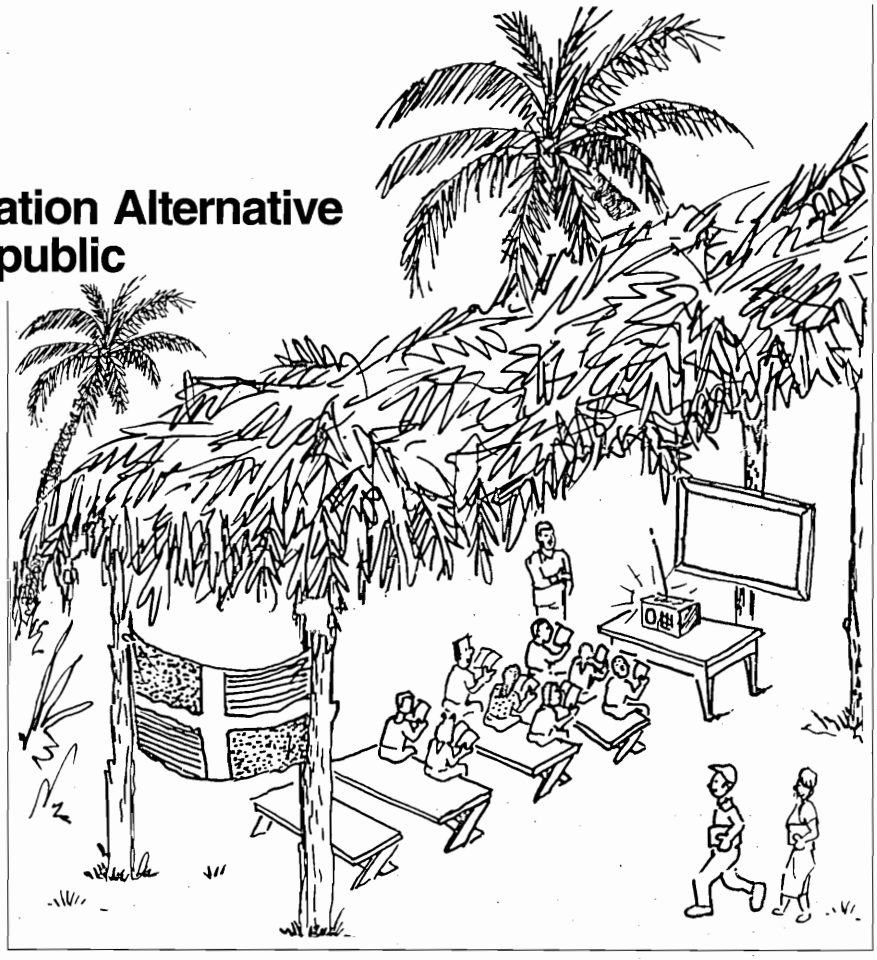
Policy Options

- recruit and place more teachers in the schools
- devise methods for teaching more students with the same number of teachers or reducing the necessary teacher/student ratio
- provide incentives to the teachers to include previously excluded children

POLICY OPTIONS *continued on page 11*

RADECO: An Education Alternative in the Dominican Republic

by Margarita Hernandez de Rosario



With RADECO the radio is the teacher. A member of the community, who is required to have a fourth grade education, acts as the facilitator who supervises the children, passes out worksheets and tunes in the radio programs.

RADECO (Radio Assisted Community Basic Education) is a unique model of education that uses interactive radio to teach literacy skills to children (Grades 1 through 4) who live in remote areas of the Dominican Republic where formal education is not yet available.

There are several reasons for the lack of formal schools:

- Terrain that is impassable by car or truck. Some places are inaccessible except by muleback or on foot;
- Families dependent on migratory farming. Their subsistence and livelihoods depend on what is produced in a particular region, so they often move;
- Sparsely populated areas. Accordingly, very few school-aged children — often only between 10 and 30— will live in these communities.

Because of these conditions, it is difficult for the State to build and maintain school buildings.

This is where RADECO offers a solution to the national education problem. With its system of interactive education by way of the radio, RADECO programs can be delivered to all children, no matter where they live even if they have no fixed abode.

Since its inception in 1982, RADECO has expanded the Dominican Education System. By 1986, the program had progressed from a pilot project to an official program, becoming a part of the Secretary of State of Education, Arts and Culture. RADECO operates in the Southwest region of the Dominican Republic, in the provinces of Barahona, Independencia, Bahoruco, Pedernales, San Juan de la Maguana, and Azua. There are 74 RADECO centers or schools, distributed among 20 communities. Some 2,000 school-aged children are reaping the benefits of education by means of the program.

With RADECO, the radio is the teacher. A local facilitator, who supervises the children, passes out worksheets, and tunes in the radio station is, in the majority of cases, someone from the community. The community also provides a volunteer who will act as a guide during the radio lessons. This volunteer should have been educated beyond the fourth grade.

The curriculum content in the RADECO program corresponds to the official primary education curriculum. Radio transmissions include programs to teach the alphabet, reading (grammar, social studies, nature, urban studies, music, recreation, and exercise), and mathematics. Children carry out written and workbook assignments from the exercise manuals designed for that purpose.

Theoretical explanations are minimal; oral segments continue for a few minutes and use children's current knowledge as the basis for instruction. The content of the program is given gradually in 170 didactic lessons adapted to the radio. Each lesson lasts about an hour: 30 minutes for mathematics and 30 minutes for letters and related subjects.

The results have been very positive. Three groups have graduated from the first basic cycle of the primary level, representing a total of 1,071 children who can read and write well enough to enter formal schools.

RADECO supplies all of the necessary materials needed to teach and learn. It offers other advantages as well:

- It unites children within their own vicinity by using an existing facility, community center, or school within the same area;
- Classes last only one hour, permitting students to attend school and work;
- It provides a low cost education.

RADECO supplies the regions in which it operates with the needs of formal schools. By helping to overcome barriers to education access such as the shortage of school buildings and classroom space, costs, and distance, RADECO provides a key to the Dominican Republic's Education System. ❖

Margarita Hernandez de Rosario is Executive Director of RADECO, Department of Radio Education of the Dominican Republic Secretariat of Education, Fine Arts and Religions.

SHAPE *continued from page 6*

improve access and reduce drop-outs and repetition:

1. Consolidating the vocationalization of the present curriculum provides school leavers with the survival skills they so badly need. This would gradually lead to improvement of equity and relevance in education and reduce the drop-out rate.

2. Transfer of certain responsibilities to communities, teachers, and pupils has given people a feeling of belonging to particular schools. Also, parents want to send their children to schools that they helped to build.

Parents have encouraged their children to attend classes regularly, thereby improving attendance and reducing drop-out and repetition.

3. Teaching methodologies that emphasize developing pupils' individual talents and automatic promotion have some positive effects.

4. Provision of free material resources to pupils through the Zambia Education Materials Program (ZEMP) has made education more accessible to those who cannot afford it.

The current debate on women and minorities in development has now become a SHAPE issue. SHAPE as a program is strengthening and implementing policies that will improve education for girls and remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in the present curriculum is being eliminated to make it possible for boys and girls to participate in all subjects of the curriculum. And through the social action program, less privileged social groups are being assisted in order to improve their access to primary education.

In 1990 SHAPE was given the responsibility of integrating special education into its activities in order to improve facilities in schools and colleges for the disabled. Good work has already been noted by the coordinators responsible for this aspect of education.

Achievements on improved access and equity

Through self-help efforts, communities, donors, administrators, teachers, and pupils have entered into a new partnership in improving access and equity. The provision of physical facilities like classrooms, teachers' houses, and other material resources has led to improvements in access and equity.

A number of successes have been noted in the following areas:

1. An increased number of available school places has improved progression from one grade to another. For example, in the past a good number of pupils could not advance from grade four to grade five due to a limited number of available places in grade five.

2. Through provision of furniture and the furniture repair and maintenance program, SHAPE is assisting in improving school facilities.

3. Provision of free text books, and exercise books to deprived pupils has contributed towards removing educational disparities.

4. Improvisation and adaptation efforts have also contributed positively towards equity.

5. Government policy on access to education for both boys and girls is non-discriminating in that roughly 50% of the places in grade one are for girls while 50% are for boys.

6. More and more parents are becoming aware of the importance of education for women. They have seen a few women in advanced positions who are living examples of what a woman can achieve if properly educated.

7. More and more girls are accepting the fact that they can advance equally with boys. Children in schools located in the urban areas are no longer shy about competing publicly.

8. Parents have become aware that their daughters are as valuable in the educational system as their sons. This is particularly so in urban areas where ideas spread more quickly than they do in the rural areas.

However, a number of problems have been encountered:

1. There are not enough material resources.

2. Resources are unevenly distributed.

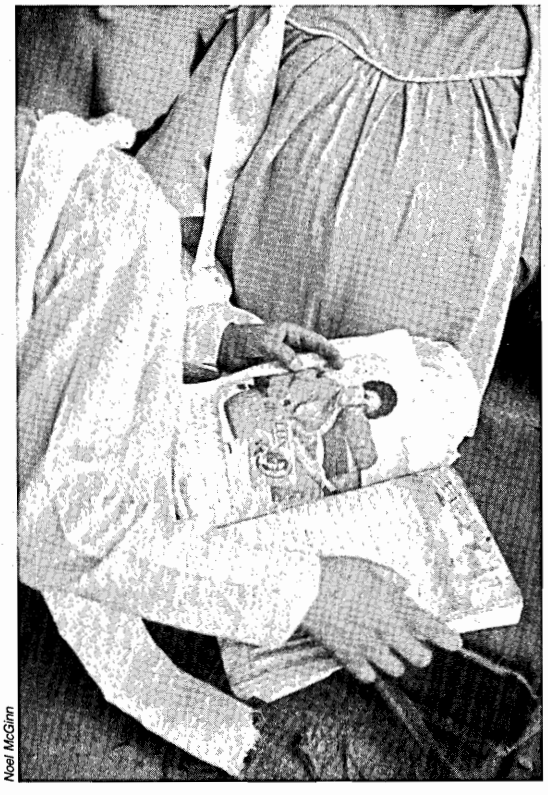
3. Current expansion efforts for school places do not meet demand.

4. In rural areas parents tend to discourage their daughters from continuing their education after puberty.

5. Female students tend to laugh at male students who take female dominated subjects like cookery and needlework.

6. Age-old tradition tends to discourage female students from taking male subjects; however, a number are braving the storm and going ahead. ❖

F. C. Mbulwe and F. Chelu are with the Zambia Ministry of General Education, Youth and Sport. Mr. Mbulwe is Executive Secretary of the SHAPE Secretariat and Mr. Chelu is Chief Inspector of Schools.



Noel McGinn

Children's access to schooling is often disrupted in places where political unrest prevails. The following articles are about the West Bank and Gaza Strip where, as in so many other places in the world, schools have been closed for political reasons.

Basic Education in the Occupied Territories

by Martha Abu-Amr

While all children technically have access to basic education in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, in reality there are serious impediments both to educational access and educational quality. The most serious impediment is the occupation itself. The Uprising, which began in December 1987, has exacerbated the state of emergency in Palestinian education. With the exception of kindergartens, all schools in the Occupied Territories were shut for the entire academic year of 1988-89. During this time, the community attempted to provide education out of neighborhood "schools," classes conducted in private homes, but the authorities outlawed these efforts.

Although schools were reopened after international pressure was brought to bear, they are still closed frequently for political reasons. Education is completely disrupted, often for extended periods of time. This is not to say, and I emphasize this point, that if the occupation were to lift today, we would wake tomorrow to a good, responsive, education system. The Palestinian community will still need to form a clear, coherent educational strategy and agenda.

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Traditional basic education in the Occupied Territories is provided by government schools, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA), and private schools. Preschool education and kindergarten are entirely private, the province of voluntary, charitable, and religious groups.

Government School System

The government school system in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was inherited by the Israelis from Jordan and Egypt, respectively, in the 1967 War. The entire educational structure has been left intact. Students in the West Bank study a Jordanian-designed curriculum using Jordanian texts that have been slightly modified in subjects such as history and geography, to address the sensitivities of the authorities. Students pass or fail grade levels through examinations designed,

WEST BANK *continued on page 11*

Sara Roy

Even under the most difficult conditions, there are approaches to learning that work. This classroom in the YMCA program of early education directed by Abu Issa provides a safe environment for creative learning.

An Oasis of Hope: Early Education at Gaza's YMCA

by Sara Roy

The combination of military occupation and the Palestinian uprising has imposed severe hardships on the Gaza Strip. The insecurity that characterizes daily life has had a pronounced psychological impact on all members of Palestinian society, especially children.

Under conditions of great instability, the classroom has become a refuge and, as one young mother put it, "our only anchor to the future." Yet the classroom is violated as well. Children have been beaten at their desks and made to watch the beatings of their teachers. This writer witnessed the army teargassing a third grade classroom while it was in session and then shot above the heads of the children as they came running out for air.

In the midst of all this there exists a unique program of early education run by Gaza City's YMCA. The program is unique because it is able to provide children with an environment that is relatively secure and free of fear, well supplied and clean, aesthetically pleasing, playful and fun, and supportive of learning. Five classrooms serve about 100 five and six-year-olds from all socioeconomic classes and religious groups. The program is the product of the Y's director, a gentle, soft-spoken man known as Abu Issa, who has become somewhat of a legend inside the territory. The school has a waiting list longer than its active list, and after an afternoon inside its walls, it becomes clear why.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the YMCA school is the quality of its students. The children, all of whom wear the same grey and white uniform, express an enthusiasm and pride not often seen among children in Gaza. Inside the classroom, boys and girls paint pictures, read books, write on blackboards, and respond to teacher's questions. They participate in as many activities as they can, and in one classroom willingly delayed recess to describe their day's achievements! All classrooms are decorated with the children's artwork, and each room is fully carpeted, which not only reduces the noise level and facilitates teaching, but gives the room a special feeling of warmth and calm.

Abu Issa knows every child by name and makes a point of speaking with each one of them as often as he can. Both on an individual and school-wide level, he tries to compensate for the personal and social deprivation most of his students face once they leave their classrooms. For Abu Issa, the most important part of his job is to provide his students with the security they need in order to learn. For many children, it is the only security they know.❖

Sara Roy is a visiting scholar at the Center for International Studies at MIT, where she is completing a book on the problems of economic development in the Gaza Strip.

Two people show how the work of individuals can create important changes affecting children's access to education.

Innovators in Education

Initiating change in the education system at the community level

Agatha Thapa, recognizing that the poor were not in her classes, left her school to begin a preschool for untouchable children. In Nepal she created model preschool and pre-preschool programs for the poor that are now spreading across the country. She has created an independent approach run by the mothers that is now being used in over 50 villages.

The typical Nepali mother must work 11 hours a day collecting firewood, hauling water, and working in the fields, forcing her to leave her young children in the care of only slightly older siblings. Sometimes, such as when her house is near a cliff, she has to leave a child restrained with a cord.

Such children get far less stimulation than more privileged age mates, and this deprivation is a major cause of their extremely high first grade failure rate. (Forty percent of even those able to start school, a relatively prosperous group, fail.)

Agatha starts with one to three-year-olds. She helps the mothers organize into small teaching teams. Each group of two or three mothers gets a box of simple exercises and games, which they can easily reproduce locally, and takes responsibility for teaching all the children for several weeks. Only the teachers' children can attend, and Agatha is trying to assure them other benefits such as priority admissions to subsequent preschools and priority access to other resources such as seedlings at government nurseries.

Agatha is also chipping away at some of the unnecessary barriers poor children face in first grade by preparing new readers that use information and vocabulary they know.

William Drayton

William Drayton

Ibrahim Sobhan. In Bangladesh, 70 percent of the children either don't go to school or fail and/or drop out in the first year or so. When Ibrahim started wondering why the schools fail so many children, he found a system that depends on parents or outside tutoring (a key source of income for teachers) for a very large part of instruction. This system may work, albeit poorly, for children of literate, motivated, and prosperous parents. However, it cuts out the poor majority. Illiterate, poor parents can't help their children with school work or hire tutors. Moreover, they need their children to help earn the family's subsistence, not off doing homework exercises. Even the kerosene needed to read at night is too expensive for many.

Thirty-minute classes begin with almost ten minutes lost to teachers shifting classes and calling the roll of, on average, 54 students. The teachers then grade the students' homework from the evening before, leaving only five to ten minutes for instruction and defining the next night's exercises.

Ibrahim's alternative gets education done fully in school. Within the same school day, he doubles individual class time to 60 minutes, allowing 25 minutes first for instruction and a further 25 minutes for doing exercises. He breaks the class down into small groups of nine or ten, each led by its strongest student. The teacher works through these monitors, thus making it possible to engage all the students. There is regular grading and feedback and other teaching improvements. Not only does this approach give the poor a chance, but the parents appreciate having the children free to work when they are home.

He has also launched several complementary school-based economic programs both to motivate and educate the children and to help them financially. A school co-op store buys school materials wholesale, sells them at a bargain price, and distributes dividends to children still enrolled at the end of the year. A tree nursery and planting program serves similar ends and helps environmentally.

Ibrahim's strategy clearly works. In rural Mirzapur, where he began applying his ideas, enrollment jumped 44.8 percent compared to a national gain over the same period of5.6 percent. In his first year he cut the dropout rate in half — from 13.7 to 7.3 percent. He has since started in another area and in less time increased enrollments 24 percent.

These successes have, however, led to new problems — notably, mushrooming class sizes. He's now turning a part of his ingenuity to creating new conditions that will encourage local communities to build up their own schools.

Agatha Thapa and Ibrahim Sobhan are Ashoka Fellows. For more information, write Ashoka Foundation, 1200 North Ash Street, Arlington, VA 22209

POLICY OPTIONS

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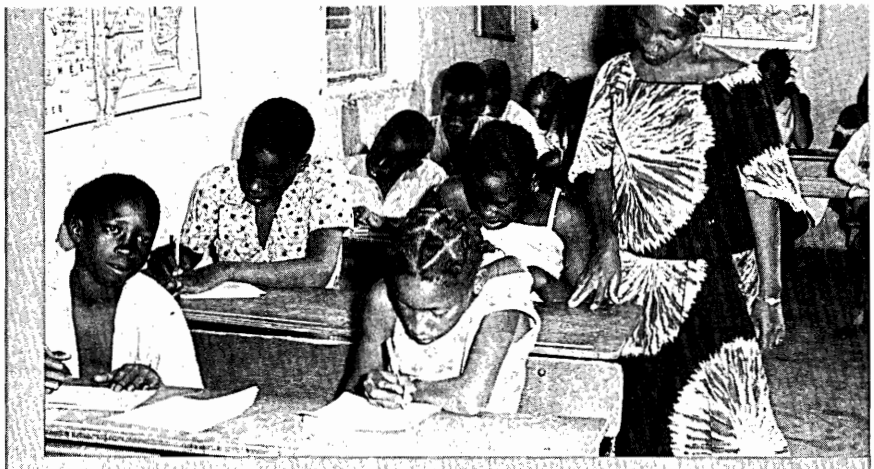
BARRIER 5: ***Inappropriate or Undesirable Education***

Parents often sense that the education offered in the schools is "inappropriate" or undesirable for their children. In some cases, this is related to parents' judgments about the usefulness of education in the labor market; in others it is due to parental fears that school will "change" their children. Parents are often afraid that schooling will make their daughters "modern," unwilling to obey parents, husband, or custom and that education will work to their disadvantage when they are ready to marry.

Other parental judgments about the inappropriateness of school buildings or of teachers may limit certain children's access. Studies show that when schools do not seem safe for girls (with separate, enclosed latrines or boundary walls), parents will not permit their daughters to attend school even if there is space available. Or, when parents want their children to be taught by members of their own ethnic, religious or otherwise culturally important group, and the only teachers available are of another group, the same exclusion can occur.



UNESCO/ J.C. Bo

Finding Disparities

Determining whether there is an educational gender gap is easy. Simply visit a sample of schools and count boys and girls in each class on any given day. Because populations are roughly fifty percent male and fifty percent female, any deviations from this 50/50 split would immediately reveal a gender disparity problem. Note that if schooling is provided in sex-segregated schools, one still needs to count the numbers of girls and boys in schools, by grade level, in any village/town or region to see if they are approximately even in number. If not, a gender disparity problem exists. If there are many more girls in the first grades than boys, but more boys in the higher grades, a gender disparity problem of retention or promotion exists.

Policy Options

- change the educational system to meet parents' sense of appropriateness
- overcome parents' sense of the inappropriateness of the educational system ❖

Mary B. Anderson is an economist and President of the Collaborative for Development Action. This article was condensed from "Policy Options for Improving Educational Access" and is available from the Harvard Institute for International Development, One Eliot Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA.

WEST BANK *continued from page 9*

overseen, and graded in Jordan. A similar relationship exists between the Gaza Strip and Egypt.

Curriculum includes basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, with emphasis on memorization. Government schools are overcrowded, with 40 students and more to a class. The teaching staff is undertrained, underpaid, and demoralized by poor working conditions. Physical facilities are primitive—usually cement block buildings in poor repair. There are no libraries, science laboratories, or gymnasiums.

Schools for Refugees

UNWRA, charged by the United Nations since 1949 with meeting the basic housing, health, and educational needs of the refugee population in the West Bank and Gaza, operates schools in the refugee camps through eighth grade. These schools are reputed to be better than the government schools, although curriculum, texts, and physical conditions are identical. What might account for the better reputation of the UNWRA school system is the community's perception that the UN schools are more sympathetic and responsive to them than the Civil Administration-run schools are. Also, UNWRA jobs pay relatively well and offer benefits and security, so one would guess that teacher morale is higher.

Private Schools

The majority of private schools are church-run and clustered in the Bethlehem-Jerusalem-Ramallah corridor. In Gaza there are only three private schools. The curriculum and texts adhere closely to those from Amman and Cairo and are focused on the all-important matriculation examinations. Despite this and despite the small numbers of children served, the private schools are the flagships of Palestinian education. Although watched carefully by the authorities, they do have greater freedom in selecting teachers, setting educational goals, and experimenting with curriculum. Because they charge tuition and receive donations from abroad, they are usually better equipped and better maintained than either the government or UNWRA schools. Private schools also undoubtedly benefit from the higher staff morale which accompanies a somewhat participatory decision-making process and better working conditions. However, these institutions have very limited budgets: they cannot offer their students much in terms of hands-on science education, enrichment programs, or extracurricular activities.

The lack of money is clearly a problem in the delivery of quality education. No scenario for the future administration of the Occupied Territories, no matter what the political changes—a Palestinian state, a federation with neighboring states, or a continuation of the status quo—implies a flood of wealth. Educators are going to have to be creative with limited resources. The greatest assets of Palestinian education in the Occupied Territories are the experienced, trained, creative people who are doing remarkable work in the face of extraordinary adversity. ❖

Martha Abu-Amr works in education and development in the Occupied Territories. She lives in the West Bank.

What's Happening

June 24-July 12

"Institute for Operations Management in Education"
East Carolina University
Greenvile, N.C.
Contact: Phyllis Flemming
102 Speight Hall
East Carolina University
Greenville, N.C. 27858
Tel: 919-757-6862

July 1- August 9

A Workshop on Computer-based Techniques for Educational Policy Analysis and Planning
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Contact: Dr. Thomas Cassidy
BRIDGES Project/HIID
One Eliot Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
Tel: 617-495-9720
Fax: 617-495-0527
Cable: HIID

July 2-7

Annual Convention of the National Education Association
in Miami
Contact: NEA
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: 202-822-7750

July 3-6

5th Congress: "A Time for Action"
International Association
for Adolescent Health
Contact: P.A. Michaud
Chair, Organizing Committee
IAAH, Office du Tourisme
Case Postale 97
CH-1820 Montreux, Switzerland
Tel: 021-963-1212
Fax: 021-963-7895
Telex: 453222

July 7-15

"Ecuador: A microcosm of Latin America"
Contact: College Consortium
for International Studies
Quito, Ecuador
Tel: 215-493-4224 (USA)

September 6

Literacy Symposium
Washington, D.C.
Contact: Amalia Cuervo
U.S. Coalition for Education for All
1616 N. Fort Myer Drive
11th Floor
Arlington, VA 22209
Tel: 703-528-7474
Fax: 703-528-7480

October 30-November 1

Learning for All: Bridging Domestic and International Education
Washington, D.C.
U.S. Coalition for Education for All
Contact: Amalia Cuervo
U.S. Coalition for Education for All
1616 N. Fort Myer Drive
11th Floor
Arlington, VA 22209
Tel: 703-528-7474
Fax: 703-528-7480

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