

A Study on the Need of Girls Education in India

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Abstract – One of the pernicious features of gender inequality is that it feeds on itself; parents may have lower aspirations for their daughters than for their sons, and so their daughters too have lower aspirations for themselves. Yet, if given the chance, girls and women can have the confidence and skills to be change-makers. A recent review of the literature on women's leadership found that most women leaders started early, engaging in education and leadership activities as adolescents. A number of cases—from India to Rwanda—have shown that having women leading in their communities can make a difference, driving policies and programs that improve family and community well-being.

Empirical research finds that more gender equality in education is correlated with higher economic growth. In addition, research concludes that years of schooling is not an adequate measure of educational progress. Instead, it is the quality of schooling that matters.

Keywords: Education, Promotion, Program

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INTRODUCTION

Educating a girl is one of the best investments her family, community, and country can make. We know that a good quality education can be life-changing for girls, boys, young women, and men, helping them develop to their full potential and putting them on a path for success in their life. We also know that educating a girl in particular can kick-start a virtuous circle of development. More educated girls, for example, marry later, have healthier children, earn more money that they invest back into their families and communities, and play more active roles in leading their communities and countries.

Education opens doors of opportunities for young women, especially when they cannot count on family wealth, property, or business connections. Women with more years of schooling are more likely to find employment, own and operate productive farms or firms, and earn higher wages. In Kenya, for example, more education (and more inputs) for female farmers relative to male farmers increases farm yields by as much as 22 percent.

A child whose mother can read is 50 percent more likely to live past age five. Indeed, the global decline in child mortality has been traced to increases in mothers' schooling, even after controlling for household income.

More educated mothers are able to protect their children's welfare during economic or environmental crises through a higher quality of care and their greater

ability to mitigate adverse shocks, such as food price changes, that might reduce food intake.

Globally, there are more girls getting educated than ever before and the gender gap in education has narrowed considerably. This progress reflects another type of progress that is worthy of celebration and one we can build on—the emergence and consolidation of political and programmatic support for gender equality in education by civil society, national governments, the media, private sector and international development organizations. Any work today in accelerating progress in girls' education can build on very strong foundations.

Girls themselves, their parents teachers and communities have for decades worked to advance their education. Researchers have long studied girls' and boys' schooling and their different experiences of education. However, in the last quarter century, grassroots-level action has been promoted and amplified into national policy debates, donor strategies, media campaigns, multilateral action, and initiatives of increasingly high-profile global advocates.

Over the last 25 years, there have been large gains in girls' education, and we as a global community can congratulate ourselves for the real progress that has been made. This demonstrates that with shared goals and collective action—among governments, international organizations, civil society, media, and the private sector—we can change the educational prospects for girls around the world.

Despite this progress, our research shows that there are hotspots in the world where girls are not getting a quality education. While there certainly are places where boys are behind, we have focused on understanding how and where across the world girls are behind. The message is that many countries have work to do to improve girls' education, whether related to the gender gap in primary or secondary enrollment or learning.

In highly indebted poor countries, the average net enrollment rate at the primary level is 75.6 percent for girls compared with 80.9 percent for boys.

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The average girls' net enrollment rate in these countries is more than 5 percentage points lower than the average for low income countries, more than 16 percentage points lower than for middle-income countries, and more than 20 percentage points lower than for in high-income countries.

While gender accounts for observed disparities in education, poverty persists as the most important and pervasive factor for education inequality.

Data from 24 low-income countries show that poverty alone accounts for 38 percentage points of the gender difference between, but gender exacerbates that educational disadvantage, accounting for about 10 percentage points of the difference. Education lags most significantly among people who face multiple sources of disadvantage, not only income poverty, but also place of residence, disability and/or ethno-linguistic background.

The gender distribution by competency levels in international and regional assessments reveals that in general boys do better than girls in math and girls perform better in reading. Yet there is considerable variation in the size of these gender differences across countries.

There is a growing body of evidence from multiple disciplines (psychology, behavioral economics, and neuroscience) that identifies certain sets of competencies, often referred to as soft skills or non-cognitive skills, as important predictors of academic performance and later success in life. Cultivating these types of competencies or skills plays an important role in girls and women's empowerment and leadership. A common definition of female empowerment looks both at cultivating the "power within" (belief in self-work, self-respect and self-acceptance), the "power to" (ability to make choices and influence others), as well as the "power over".

To examine why girls are behind in hotspots, we begin with the girl and her family at the center, but also trace gender differences to the norms, resources, and constraints in the broader community and economy that influence choices and outcomes. This framework

is well known and it ultimately allows us to see that gender gaps in education reflect, in large part, gender inequality in other aspects of society and the economy, and are also often instruments for perpetuating that gender inequality.

The direct costs (e.g. school fees where they exist, uniforms, transportation) and opportunity costs (e.g. time could have spent working or helping family) of school often impact boys and girls differently. Many non-experimental studies using household survey data find that girls' schooling is more sensitive to cost, however defined, than is boys' schooling.

Social norms define the roles that women and men have in the family and the community, the expectations they have about their futures, their individual preferences and the kind of relationships they form. For example, in West Bengal, Beaman et al. (2011) find that, in places where no woman had ever been the local leader, 86 percent of parents wanted their daughters to be either a housewife or whatever their in-laws would decide for her, compared with less than 1 percent for their sons. Also, twice as many parents reported that they wanted their teenage sons to graduate from secondary school or college as those who wished the same for their daughters. In all, the degree of autonomy and empowerment that girls and women possess affects how much they can expect to gain from schooling.

The relationship of school-related violence to educational participation and academic performance is typically not examined in research on the determinants of schooling, perhaps because of the absence of systematic information on its prevalence. However, what data exist paints a picture of extensive school-related violence inflicted on girls. This violence ranges from extreme acts such as kidnapping, bombing, maiming, and killing—acts which often occur in contexts of armed conflict, militancy, and political violence.

Textbook provision is almost universally accepted as an important tool for teaching and learning when the textbooks are used. But thumbing through textbooks used in primary schools in many countries around the world, one gets an immediate sense of the traditional and accepted gender roles in those countries.

DISCUSSION

Over the past three decades, an increasing number of studies have been undertaken to examine the gender content of textbooks: females tend to be greatly underrepresented; males and females are associated with certain personal traits; they are depicted in stereotyped ways in both occupational and domestic spheres.

The content of textbooks has been slow to change, so they do not reflect actual progress in women's empowerment and changing roles in society and the economy. Ensuring gender equality is reflected in teaching and learning materials and across the education system "may represent the strongest source of counter messages to traditional norms learned in the family, community, and national media".

A focus on the role of teachers in addressing gender disparities is well-deserved. There is strong evidence of the positive relationship between teachers' education, experience, and cognitive skills and their students' academic performance. Six recent reviews of hundreds of impact evaluations of education interventions find that programs that train, support, and motivate teachers are among the most effective. For example, in the United States, having a good teacher is equivalent to the average gain in learning of one school year; having a great teacher means advancing 1.5 grade levels or more. Great teachers are important for girls and boys equally. While there are some arguments for the importance of female teachers, this is most salient in contexts where social norms preclude girls learning in classrooms with male teachers. Generally, what appears most important is for male or female teachers to use gender-sensitive pedagogy.

Demand side interventions, which reduce the costs of schooling, tend to have the clearest gender-differentiated results on enrollment.

Conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs) that offset a family's opportunity cost of sending girls and boys to school have been shown to increase enrollment, although only half of available studies of the educational impacts of CCTs actually report results by gender. Who receives the transfer for the family, not just the size of the transfer, also appears to make a difference in CCT programs. One study of a CCT program in Nicaragua shows that impacts of CCTs are higher when the woman holds more power in the household.

Providing girls a safe means for getting to school can also increase enrollment. For example, an innovative program state of Bihar (and neighboring states) in India aimed to reduce the gender gap in secondary school enrollment by providing girls who continued to secondary school with a bicycle.

First, girls and women need diverse skills to be leaders and cultivating the soft skills is important for their long-term leadership capabilities. Mentorships, networks, experiential learning opportunities, smart deployment of technology, and support from boys and men are all ways that can be helpful in building girls' and women's leadership skills and capabilities.

CONCLUSION

Girl-generated data has the potential to radically change the power dynamics, with girls themselves generating regular information about their circumstances, needs, and achievements that is translated into digestible and timely insight for policymakers, civil society actors, community leaders, and educators. Transparency and accountability take on whole new meanings in this light and ultimately puts the girls at the center of the process.

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