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EQUALS

From Checklists to Transformation: Gender Mainstreaming Since Beijing

Amy North

Gender mainstreaming requires women as well as men to be considered at all stages of project planning and implementation. These women in Liberia are ensuring that their opinions are taken on board in the design of a new project

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy for women's empowerment is controversial, difficult, but as important now as it was for its supporters more than a decade ago. In September 1995, representatives from 189 governments & more than 5000 participants from over 2000 non-governmental organisations at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, convened by the United Nation ratified the Platform for Action as a transformatory global agenda for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender mainstreaming was identified as the key strategy. But in the years that followed neither the ideals nor the strategy have been easy to fulfil.

In the decade that followed Beijing, although some international and national organisations and government departments took steps to implement gender mainstreaming this often did not go beyond formally adopting a gender mainstreaming policy. In most cases their definitions of what mainstreaming means conform closely to that set out in 1997 by the UN Economic and Social Council.

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

United Nations. Report of the Economic and Social Council A/52/3, 18 September 1997. http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/docs/1997/e1997-66.htm

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Mainstreaming in practice

Implementing a gender mainstreaming strategy requires organisations to think about gender in all aspects of their work. This tends to involve a number of different processes, which are difficult to always keep in play. They include carrying out gender analysis, conducting gender training and capacity building for staff and partners, and developing and using gender sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Ensuring organisational budgets and resources are gender responsive and that they make adequate provision for gender mainstreaming work is also essential. So too is a consideration of how gender hierarchies play out within the organisation's own internal structure and processes. This can entail revising recruitment policies and processes and ensuring that women are given opportunities to take on leadership roles within the organisation.

In practice, the ways in which different organisations have incorporated gender mainstreaming into their work has varied. In some cases organisations have focused on ensuring that gender is considered more comprehensively in their programmatic activities but have paid less attention to the ways in which the internal organisational structures and practices may be gendered in ways that maintain and reproduce inequality. In others the reverse may be true with more attention given to gender within the internal workings of the organisations and less to the gendered impact of programme activities. Where the responsibility for gender mainstreaming lies also differs between organisations. In some organisations gender experts or units are responsible for ensuring that gender is mainstreamed effectively across the organisation. In other cases it is considered that the responsibility for mainstreaming should lie with all staff members and not with particular individuals or teams.

Gender training is often an important component of mainstreaming. These women are participating in a workshop about domestic violence in Sri Lanka

Gender mainstreaming in the Department for International Development, UK

In 2007 the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK government developed a Gender Equality Action Plan to ensure that they are able to make faster progress on gender equality. The plan builds on previous efforts to mainstream gender within DFID and the results of an evaluation of their work on gender equality that was carried out in 2006. This evaluation revealed that DFID has shown strong commitment to gender equality at policy and strategy level but that there had been a failure to consistently translate this commitment into actions that made a difference on the ground.

The action plan sets out how DFID plans to use resources, partnerships with others, staff management and planning processes to improve the impact that it has on gender equality and women's empowerment. It establishes clear lines of responsibility for ensuring the plan is adhered to, including gender equality champions working within each division.

For more information see http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/gender-equality-plan-2007.pdf

The last decade has brought a wealth of experiences of gender mainstreaming, along with many lessons regarding its successes – and failures – in ensuring real progress is made towards gender equality. The picture that emerges is a complex and often contradictory one. There is wide acknowledgement of the progress that has been made in terms of ensuring that development organisations adopt gender as an integral part of their terminology and discourse. However some analysts are concerned that this has not always been translated into real changes in the lives of women on the ground. There are a number of reasons often given for this.

Mainstreaming or streaming away?

One concern that is often voiced about gender mainstreaming is that as gender is – in theory – mainstreamed throughout all work, any specific focus on gender as an issue to be addressed in its own right can get lost. The result can often be that a tokenistic approach to mainstreaming gender in different activities may actually lead to a weak focus on gender or women's issues overall. This may particularly be the case where there are no clear lines of responsibility for mainstreaming gender or

where gender experts lack the necessary resources and authority within the organisation to ensure that gender is taken seriously.

Gender mainstreaming has often been most successful when "gender champions" in leadership positions within organisations have been able to make sure that gender work is adequately resourced and supported. This can entail actively valuing and making visible the work of gender experts or women's rights activists within the organisation. In addition, in many cases organisations have identified a need to take a dual-strategy approach, complementing gender mainstreaming with specific programmes of work focused specifically on gender and women's rights.

From the political to the technical

A second concern relates to the way that gender mainstreaming has often been accompanied by the "technisisation" of gender. Critics argue that concern with challenging unequal power relations and understanding the way in which gender inequalities are maintained and reproduced has often been replaced by more limited focus on numbers and disaggregating data whilst gender tools and checklists have taken the place of processes of critique and debate. The result is often the reduction of spaces for engagement with more transformative agendas and with the feminist activism that was essential to getting gender on the agenda in the first place.

Moving beyond this entails recognising that transforming gender relations is a political as well as technical process. It requires gender mainstreaming efforts within organisations to be based upon serious gender analysis that examines the inequalities and power relations within men and women and the ways in which these intersect and interact with other forms of inequality. Building links with and learning from women's organisations and activists can be essential to doing this and supporting a transformatory mainstreaming agenda.

Top down or bottom up?

A third criticism sometimes levelled at gender mainstreaming that it is often a top-down process. Gender mainstreaming is frequently seen as something that is imposed by international organisations or donor agencies on their partners in developing countries, or by agencies at national level on those working in local communities. This can have a number of consequences. It can

> **Critics argue that concern with challenging unequal power relations and understanding the way in which gender inequalities are maintained and reproduced has often been replaced by more limited focus on numbers**

limit the extent to which mainstreaming approaches are responsive to the specificities of often diverse local contexts. And it can make building ownership of mainstreaming approaches at the local level difficult, which is essential for ensuring that they have a real and sustained impact on changing gender relations in the long term.

However, there are numerous examples of organisations working successfully on gender equality and women's rights issues at local levels. It is essential that development organisations engage and work with these initiatives and that mainstreaming efforts connect with, learn from, and support women on the ground, and ensure that their concerns are fully considered within mainstreaming processes.

Mainstreaming gender in education

Education was specifically identified at Beijing as a sector in which gender mainstreaming should occur. Since Beijing, efforts have been made in a number of national and international agencies working on education, as well as in national education ministries and departments to mainstream a gender perspective through their education work.

The Beijing Platform for Action states the following regarding gender mainstreaming in education:

"In addressing unequal access to and inadequate educational opportunities, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively."

Successfully mainstreaming gender in education policies, plans, programmes and projects has the potential to contribute to ensuring that all girls and boys are able to receive a gender equitable education and to transforming gender relations in and beyond schools. In order to ensure that this potential is realised, it is essential that education policy makers and practioners learn from the broader experiences of gender mainstreaming that have occurred in the last decade, and the debates that arisen from them.

These experiences suggest that as well as ensuring that a gender perspective is mainstreamed through all aspects of education policy and practice, maintaining a specific focus on gender, women and girls is also important. It is essential that interventions at all levels of education, as well as education budgets and plans,

A Kenyan school girl raises her hand. Gender mainstreaming in education should enable all girls and boys to participate fully in school

consider the impact that they will have on girls and boys, women and men. However particular inventions specifically focused on girls and women remain necessary. Crucially, both types of work must be adequately resourced and supported.

They also suggest the need to look beyond numbers. Disaggregating data and counting the numbers of boys and girls that are in school or that will be affected by particular interventions is a vital step towards reducing the gender gap in education. However achieving gender equality in education also requires paying attention to the way in which unequal gender power relations play out and are reproduced in and beyond educational settings. It involves challenging the inequalities that prevent girls and boys, and women and men from having the opportunities they need to be able to flourish in and after school.

Finally, they point to the need to combine strong leadership around gender equality in education with close engagement with women working at the grassroots level. Enabling women and girls to participate in education decision making processes, and ensuring that their voices are listened to is crucial. So too is reaching out to and building stronger links with women's organisations and working together with them to challenge gender inequalities and transform gender relations in different spaces and at different levels.

Continuing to take forward work on gender mainstreaming is essential for making progress towards gender equality. As we move past midway point for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including Millennium Development Goal three – gender equality and the empowerment of women – there is a need to continue to work, ensuring gender is truly at the heart of efforts to achieve them. Doing this requires reflecting on and learning from experiences so far and embracing a transformatory mainstreaming agenda.

Letter from the Editors

There has been a gap in the publication of Equals but we are delighted to have secured funds to publish a further four issues in 2008 – a crucial year for assessing progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This issue looks at gender mainstreaming as a strategy to support the ideas contained in the MDGs.

From 25th February to 7th March 2008, the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held at the United Nations headquarters in New York focused on "financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women". The commission called for the scaling up of investment in gender equality and women's empowerment. Mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout resource allocation, and resourcing targeted activities for gender equality was stressed.

Articles in this issue of Equals reflect on the work of the Gender Equality in Education Project (GEEP) of the Commonwealth Education Fund, which has been using a mentoring approach to help partners mainstream gender throughout their education work. Ensuring gender is mainstreamed into education budgets has been one aspect of the GEEP project's work and is critical to ensuring the achievement of gender equitable education. So too is building the capacity of civil society organisations and education coalitions so that they are able to consider gender in their own work and hold governments to account for their commitments on gender equality and education.

On the 23rd of April thousands of people around the world will participate in the Global Campaign for Education's World's Biggest Lesson (see page 11) and call on governments and politicians to invest in quality education to end exclusion. It is essential that resources are invested in ensuring that education is gender equitable and that all women and girls as well as boys and men are able to benefit from a quality education that promotes gender equality.

Amy North, Helen Longlands, and Oley Dibba-Wadda

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Avoiding Fade Away: Gender and budgets in Malawi

Esnath Kalyati

When I started work as a gender mentor for the Commonwealth Education Fund's (CEF) Gender Equality in Education Project (GEEP) in Malawi, few coalition members or partners had been exposed to gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting or any kind of gender analysis. I have been working with the Civil Society Coalition and other partner organisations to help build and strengthen their capacity for advocacy work, with the aim of ensuring an adequate allocation of government resources for the delivery of quality and gender equitable education in Malawi.

Through my work with the GEEP project, I could see that often the partners assumed that because they were concerned with women, girls and/or teachers, this meant they were engaging with gender. In other cases, there was a lack of awareness of gender issues even when they were being addressed. For example, Youth Net Counselling (YONECO), a programme

Widely used gender concepts and terminologies do not translate well in the field. As a result, gradual gender fade away is experienced

helping teen mothers return to school or attend non-formal education and training, was pressured by teen fathers who also wanted the benefits that the teen mothers were receiving. However the organisation could not identify what was the gender issue at stake.

There were thus frequent misconceptions about gender strategies. Moreover, there were indications of gender 'fade away' in partners' workplans. That is, gender issues were dropping off the agenda in the detail of inputs and outputs and outcomes.

I was left with the impression that for gender mainstreaming to be understood, it needed to be unwrapped. Therefore, in order to make some headway, I organised a crash five-day training workshop on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. The challenge now is to ensure that knowledge and skills developed during the workshop are put into practice.
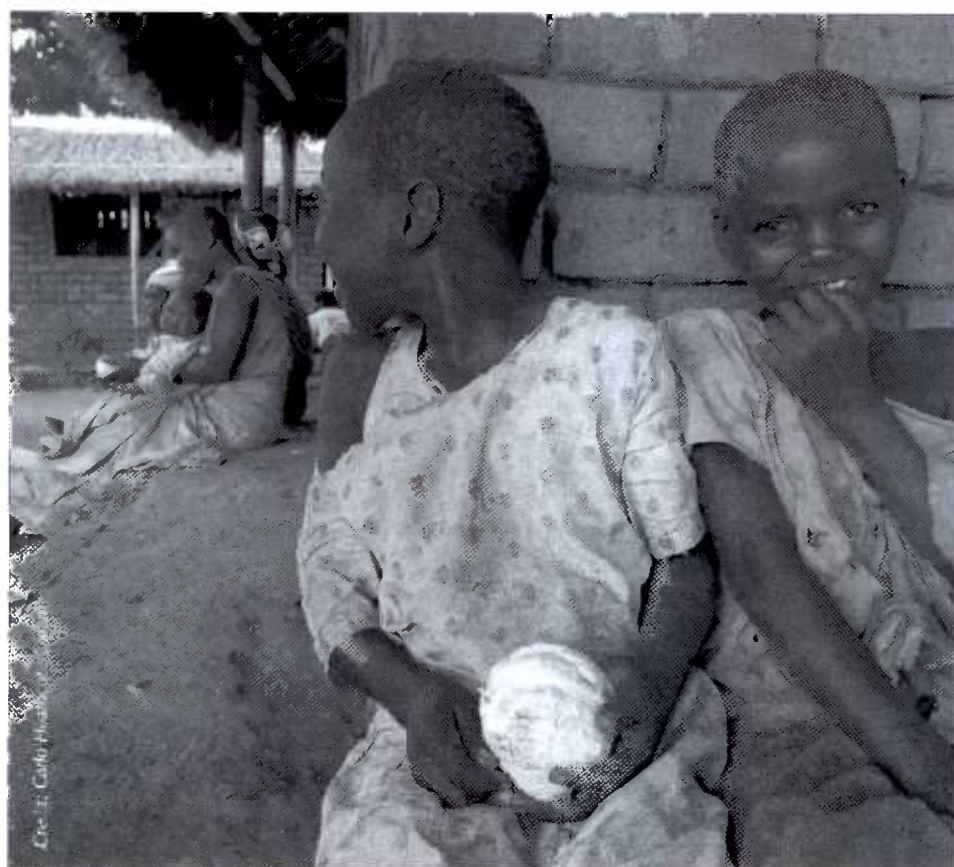
From theory to implementation

My experience in gender work shows that it is very difficult to mainstream gender indicators at policy, administrative or programme levels. This is particularly the case at the implementation level as widely used gender concepts and terminologies do not translate well in the field. As a result, gradual gender fade away is experienced. Furthermore, gender appears not to be recognised as a crucial element of many business or organisations' organisational policies, administrative structures or operations. Gender initiatives are usually small, isolated and piecemeal.

Nonetheless they can be significant. The Civil Society Coalition in Malawi has been designing and disseminating budget monitoring tools to its partners, District Education Networks and District Education Managers. I have helped the administrators to decide on ways to incorporate gender issues in education into budget monitoring questionnaires sent to key government ministries – Finance, Education, and Women and Child Development. This has resulted in a forum for discussing the government guidelines for the preparation of the draft budget estimates for 2008/9 which aims to mainstream gender into the entire budget preparation process. The forum brings together representatives from government ministries and members of the Civil Society Coalition on Quality Basic Education. These are seeds from which future work can grow: it is hoped that this event will pave the way for mainstreaming gender into all future policy documents.

Work towards gender mainstreaming in education in Malawi is an ongoing process. We continue to face a number of challenges that must be overcome in order to avoid gender 'fade away'. These include:

- Inadequate gender disaggregation of data that would help to expose gender disparities;
- The omission of gender analysis from the situation analysis of projects;
- Inadequate resources to build the capacity of field staff and networks in education to mainstream gender in their programmes and institutional operations;
- Inadequate technical support for the supervision, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming;
- Inadequate documentation on the positive impact of gender mainstreaming.

Esnath Kalyati is a social scientist and gender specialist based in Malawi. She is currently working as the Malawian Gender Mentor for the Commonwealth Education Fund.

Girls in Malawi: Mainstreaming gender through the national budget is essential to ensure that all girls and boys enjoy a gender equitable education

A Contested Concept: Gender mainstreaming in Bangladesh

Rabeya Rowshan

Gender mainstreaming is a contested idea in Bangladesh. In national gender and education policies many meanings of gender mainstreaming are evident.

Before 1975, the Bangladeshi state situated women within the framework of the international perspective of welfare in order to rehabilitate women who were victimised during the Liberation War. The ideas of Women In Development (WID) made their entry into Bangladesh during the UN Women's Decade from 1975 to 1985. Under WID, separate ministries and specific programmes for women were established.

'Mainstreaming' as a new stream of thought emerged in response to various criticisms of the ways in which governments handled the question of integrating women in the development process. It was reflected in the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1990-95) of Bangladesh, which for the first time adopted the strategy of incorporating women in development planning and emphasised terms like 'mainstreaming', 'gender' and 'poverty'. However, the discrepancy between the state's official position regarding the importance of integrating gender in the development process and the actual importance that is given to it becomes apparent when macro policies are considered.

In the Primary Education Development Program II, developed during the sixth five year plan (2003-2008), the Government has created wide scope for mainstreaming gender at all levels, but in the project implementation plan gender has been treated as a separate issue. There is also confusion about the term 'parity' and the meaning of Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3. At primary level boys' dropout rate is higher then girls', so from the current year the government has approved a policy of making secondary education free for boys and also will introduce a secondary education stipend program for boys. However, they failed to assess the actual need of girls as well as boys in order to ensure that all children are enjoying their rights and that existing gender ideologies are not reinforced and reproduced through the educational sectors.

Activism and education

Historically in Bangladesh girls' education was one of the major focuses of liberal thinkers and feminist activists in the years leading up to liberation in 1947. After liberation the government's initial focus was on education with a greater emphasis on girls' education. As a result, education became a less important issue for activists and development organisations. The education sector became the only sector to have a specific gender budget allocation. And since 1990 Bangladesh has made significant progress in bringing about gender parity in education. Bangladesh is actually doing better than its bigger neighbours on several fronts including gender parity at the primary level. Bangladesh is also ahead in terms of female: male ratios at the secondary level. Indeed in 2001-03 women outnumbered men by 9-11% in secondary schools.

The picture at the tertiary level is starkly different with only 53 women participating for every 100 men. Too often Bangladeshi women are discouraged from pursuing higher education. "Secondary is enough for a woman" should not be allowed to become the new slogan against a woman's right to education.

Complementarity or equality?

Gender mainstreaming is now at a critical turning point. Many early supporters are disheartened with the way it has worked and are beginning to feel that it has failed. The official interpretation of 'mainstreaming' remains contested. While the government emphasises "the complementary relationship between men and women", feminist groups in Bangladesh argue that the official position does not challenge the status quo. They argue that it is the problem of gender inequality, rather than 'complimentarily' that needs to highlighted and point to the need to address issues such as the legal rights of women and their

> **"Secondary is enough for a woman" should not be allowed to become the new slogan against a woman's right to education**

economic exploitation. The ideological bases and mechanisms that legitimise, maintain, and perpetuate sexism are deeply embedded in male domination and women's subordination as basic tenets of social relations in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, for the development sector in Bangladesh, the most critical task is to transform gender mainstreaming in operations at the grass root level. Implementation has mainly focused at institutional or organisational aspects such as recruitment, policies, developing indicators, and staff training, which are only one stage of the process of mainstreaming. Mainstreaming gender in program implementation requires some of those organizational elements but it does not have to wait for all those changes to be implemented.

Though gender mainstreaming was a commitment of the Bangladeshi government and donors and also the main agenda of feminist politics in reality it is still far from being fully implemented. Moving forward requires building consensus between different groups and agreeing strategic ways of achieving success in small measures in order to gain credibility at local and national levels.

Rabeya Rowshan is a freelance researcher working on gender and development. She was the gender mentor in Bangladesh for the Commonwealth Education Fund.

Bangladeshi school girls with their books

Beyond the "Male-Stream": Experiences with Civil Society partners in Kenya

Nyokabi Kamau

My work as a gender mentor in the Commonwealth Education Fund's Gender Equality in Education Project (GEEP) in Kenya has made me realise that even though the term gender has been in the country for well over 10 years, it is still not well understood. All three partners I have been working with (Girl Child Network (GCN), Kenya National Association of Parents (KNAP) and Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC)) were unclear of what gender mainstreaming is about.

If gender mainstreaming is taken to mean incorporating gender in all policies, planning, processes and budgets, then none of the three partners had mainstreamed gender in their work before their involvement with GEEP. Applied to issues of gender equality in education, the aim of mainstreaming gender is to ensure that both women and men are involved in the development, design, planning, implementation and follow up of projects and that these projects promote equality between men and women, boys and girls.

The Girl Child Network's focus has been on the plight of girls and the challenges they face in pursuing an education. GCN was started on the premise that girls and women are more disadvantaged than boys and men. There is considerable evidence in Kenya showing this to be the case with glaring gender gaps in all aspects of life from education to politics,

economic development and access to health. Even though they were working with girls, gender was not a concept included in GCN's analysis at the early stages of their work. The girls' rights approach used meant that initially they hardly did any work with boys. However, through their many years of intervention in schools and communities they realised that including boys and men in their work was essential to improve the sustainability of the efforts they were making to help girls get into school and reach the highest levels possible. Even though GCN had started to recognise male and female identities and the importance of establishing a balanced distribution of responsibilities between women and men, mainstreaming had not been achieved.

> In one training, a participant wondered why we would require gender specific policies and interventions when the goal is to mainstream gender

For the Elimu Yetu Coalition and the Kenya National Association of Parents, the main focus of their work was to advocate for better utilisation of government resources allocated to schools. Neither had a focus on gender or used gender as a tool of analysis.

Girls or gender?

When I started working as a gender mentor and introduced the issue of mainstreaming, we had several discussions on what this would mean for the core activities of these organisations. For the Girl Child Network, there was a feeling that mainstreaming gender implied that the focus must be on both boys and girls rather than specifically

on girls. This was seen as conflicting with their core value of empowering girls.

In general, gender mainstreaming was understood to mean that the focus moved away from women and girls. Indeed, in one training, a participant wondered why we would require gender specific policies and interventions when the goal is to mainstream gender. Wouldn't it be better to incorporate men's and women's issues in general policies without any specific programs for women? This was the same dilemma facing GCN: that if gender is mainstreamed then addressing girls' issues specifically could be seen to be against the principle of mainstreaming.

In the cases of the Elimu Yetu Coalition and the Kenya National Association of Parents, they saw the gender work as something completely separate from the previous work they had been doing where they focused on children in general. They both felt that extra resources would be required for gender mainstreaming and this was seen as an excuse not to attempt it. I had to explain that rather than treating gender as a separate issue they needed to engender all their current processes and programs.

Through ongoing training, this has been achieved. GCN have in particular taken on board gender reporting, an area that had previously been neglected. KNAP have now mainstreamed gender in their school monitoring work, reporting and media advocacy. Similarly, we are working with EYC on mainstreaming gender in their work on gender analysis and tracking and hope to eventually achieve gender sensitive budgeting in all sectors.

The concept of mainstreaming has often been misused and so it is no wonder that organisations may be wary of it. In some cases, when programs are hesitant to challenge some of the deep rooted inequalities that affect women and girls, they say that those issues have been mainstreamed. Therefore although the concept is good, if not well understood, it can be abused and the result can be to leave out women's issues altogether - after all the mainstream tends to also be the 'male-stream'. Therefore, even as we advocate for gender mainstreaming, it is still crucial to go beyond it and have specific programmes that empower women and girls.

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Girls walking home after school. CEF partners are working to ensure that receiving a quality education becomes a reality for all girls and boys in Kenya

The Kenya Education Sector Support Programme: More progress possible with mainstreaming

Janet Raynor

In January 2004, Nyokabi Kamau wrote in Equals (issue 4) about the gender dimensions of Kenya's recent introduction of free primary education. She welcomed the move, but noted that to make progress in gender, more was needed than just opening the school doors to girls.

Free primary education brought about an impressive increase in enrolment of both girls and boys. In 2002, the total primary enrolment was about 6.06 million (2.99m girls / 3.07m boys); by 2006 it was 7.63 million (3.74m girls / 3.90m boys). Nationally, there has been near-parity of enrolment for some time (although in some districts there are gender gaps of over 15%).

In 2005, the government introduced the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP), together with a number of development partners, including the Fast Track Initiative, DFID, the World Bank, UNICEF and USAID. Within KESSP, there were 23 separate programmes, including one for gender. The Gender Unit's first task was to develop a Gender and Education Policy, finally launched in August 2007.

Meanwhile, because the number of girls enrolled was increasing, and because there was a unit within KESSP that 'dealt with' gender, there was perhaps a loss of focus on gender in other parts of the programme. However, since the introduction of free

Learning subordinate status? Fathers and brothers are shown to have dominant positions at home in a pre-school class

primary education in 2003, gender gaps have actually increased – gaps in enrolment, completion, transition and academic achievement at all levels – all obscured by increased numbers. The gaps are not large at primary level, but are growing, and are more obvious at higher levels. They will translate into larger disparities in outcomes.

As an example of disparities other than access, a 2007 study of classroom interactions found that boys were still nearly twice more likely than girls to be asked questions in class, and were twice as likely to be asked to demonstrate to the class – especially in maths. This latter point is particularly important in terms of girls' leadership aspirations and subject choice. Out-of-school influences, such as poverty, parental priorities, and cultural pressures also contribute to the gaps.

The government plans to make secondary education free in 2008, but unless gender is effectively mainstreamed throughout KESSP and the education system, and cultural customs affecting adolescent girls are addressed, free education alone will not help reduce gender inequalities.

There has been too much focus on access, the different disparities not addressed, and not enough attention has been paid to participation and outcomes. This is precisely what Kamau flagged in 2004.

Coinciding with the launch of the Gender Policy was the realisation that gender had been somewhat overlooked within KESSP as a whole, and in November 2007 there was a workshop in which a wide range of stakeholders was involved in turning the policy into a Gender Implementation Plan, with gender to be effectively mainstreamed across and beyond KESSP. This is no easy task. The Gender Policy is wide-ranging and ambitious, and the actions necessary to implement it have not been separately budgeted for within KESSP.

However, it is hoped that the complex draft plan developed at the workshop can be turned into action in 2008. If gender is accepted as the responsibility of all (not just the Gender Unit), then it becomes part of the routine work of all aspects of KESSP, is included in all activities, and does not necessarily need special budgetary allocations. However, for this to happen, there has to be widespread advocacy and awareness work across and beyond KESSP, which means a substantial injection of funds into the Gender Unit's budget in 2008.

Janet Raynor works in the field of gender, education and development, and is a doctoral student at the Institute of Education.

New Research on Gender, Education and Global Poverty Reduction Initiatives

October 2007 saw the launch of an exciting new research study Gender, Education and Global Poverty Reduction Initiatives, which aims to examine initiatives which engage with global aspirations to advance gender equality in and through schooling in contexts of poverty.

The three year project, which is directed by Dr Elaine Unterhalter, is a joint collaboration between the Institute of Education, University of London; the Catholic University of East Africa, Kenya; the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South

Africa. It builds on the work since 2003 of the Beyond Access project. The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ERSC) through the ERSC and the Department for International Development (DFID) joint funding scheme.

The research will look at how global initiatives relating to gender equality and education are understood, who participates in implementation, what meanings of gender, schooling and global relations are negotiated, what constraints are experienced, and what concerns about global obligations emerge. A key focus is

what conditions how global policy goals are interpreted and acted on in different sites.

Case study research will be conducted in Kenya and South Africa, two countries where governments have sought to address questions of poverty and gender in the expansion of education provision. In each country, data will be collected in five sites: the national Department of Education, a provincial education department, a rural primary school, the offices of a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) engaging with global education and poverty policy, and an education NGO operating at a local level. Research will also be undertaken in international institutions including international NGOs, donors and UN agencies.

Viewpoint:
Training for transformation?
The struggles of gender training
in development

Louise Wetheridge

Gender mainstreaming, embraced by international organisations that are integrating a gendered dimension into their policy and practice at different levels, has facilitated the rise of gender training as a key tool in the process of achieving gender equality. However, gender training provides no quick fix and comes with its own significant set of challenges.

The proliferation of manuals, workshops and conferences in the last decade highlights the growing importance of gender training in development. At the same time, debates about the content, method and effect of training practices have increased. More and more questions are rightly being asked about how to do gender training well. What should be included in training? Who should be involved? How far should training challenge cultural norms? It is important not to ignore such questions if gender training is to facilitate progress towards equality.

An approach to gender in development
In Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), gender training initiatives for staff have begun to take off. As an international development charity, VSO works towards fighting global poverty and disadvantage through promoting volunteering. Gender is mainstreamed through its programmes, meaning that recognition of gender issues is intended to be inherent in all its activities. Localised staff workshops on gender were developed within this commitment, but also as a result of demand from national programmes and, most significantly, individual passion and capacity.

In the VSO Vanuatu programme, having a champion for gender training was fundamental to the development of a training programme and to the efficient mainstreaming of gender in the poverty reduction programme. Many gender training workshops draw on well-known international resources. These tend to divide contents into two key parts: a sensitisation section to raise participants' awareness on gender, and a practical skills-development section that provides gender analysis tools and techniques. VSO Vanuatu's training draws on the same formula. But in practice there is a trade-off between the two elements - in favour of tools training. So what is the tension between these two components?

Gender sensitisation versus skills development
Basic terms, stereotypes and attributes for men and women are discussed at the outset of the workshop. Differences between women and men are recognised and stressed in terms of roles and responsibilities in the household, with children and in the labour market.

Participants, both Ni-Vanuatu and foreign, are very aware of debates about cultural imperialism and don't want to interfere in traditional customs

This approach attempts to positively re-value women's roles. Instead, participants responded with arguments about why gender difference prevents them from taking action. This contention centres on culture. Participants, both Ni-Vanuatu and foreign, are very aware of debates about cultural imperialism and don't want to interfere in traditional customs.

This can lead trainers down the simpler alley of tools training. More neutral, objective and de-personalised frameworks, like a Gender Analysis Matrix favoured in Vanuatu's workshop, arguably allow participants to focus on the practicalities of analysing and implementing gender-sensitive projects, with less concern about the implementers' commitment to and understanding of equality. The challenges of awareness-raising can be whitewashed by the apparent ease of tool-based activities.

Practical techniques are, of course, important in the process of implementing projects and judging achievements. However, a vigorous sensitivity to gender inequality should, I believe, be a pre-condition to using tools. Where the two components of the training formula should sit hand-in-hand, they can struggle side-by-side. The individuals who most affected this struggle were the trainers.

Who trains?
Local trainers are hard to find in Vanuatu, as in many countries, as expertise in gender is only recently evolving. But a national's involvement in workshops can generate relevant and invaluable discussion, which foreign trainers lacking significant local cultural understanding may fail to provoke. Instead, feelings amongst participants of intrusion and discomfort develop which are not conducive to learning. At the very least, all trainers should be involved in training national staff and others so that they can deliver locally appropriate workshops. Gender champions must be the right people to ensure local ownership. This helps increase the credibility of gender issues as local and not internationally imported issues, and sustain a programme of training in the longer-term.

Going beyond the formula?
VSO Vanuatu's training initiatives are successful but fragile because they rely on single workshops to deliver and sustain gender equality messages. Gender training cannot be a stand-alone intervention in the process of achieving gender equality. Every training course has the potential to be a catalyst for change by both raising awareness of gender inequality and providing tools to redress the imbalance. But sustained success demands re-personalising training, always remembering that every participant and trainer is living through his or her own gendered experiences, and engaging better with the actual local context. In this way, credibility and sustainability are achievable, and change possible. The steps are small but the potential for transformation is significant.

Louise Wetheridge works as a Training Advisor for Voluntary Service Overseas, an international development charity. She is completing an MA in Education, Gender and International Development this year at the Institute of Education, London.

Conference Comments

Education For All By 2015 – Will We Make It?
A critical reflection on the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008

Anna Azaryeva

Education for All by 2015
Will we make it?

On January 17, 2008 stakeholders from academia, international and national NGOs and donor agencies convened at the Institute of Education, University of London to critically reflect on the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008. The discussion was structured around six components: early childhood care and education, access to primary education, life skills, adult literacy, gender equality, and quality of education and excellence for all.

The colloquium highlighted that today, mid way between the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000 and the target date of 2015, it is important to maintain the recent positive primary school enrolment and completion trends while achieving faster progress towards the goals for early childhood, youth and adults, quality education for all and gender equality. Special emphasis was given by the participants to the need for an increased and sustained financial commitment from both domestic governments and international donors in order to reach the Dakar targets.

While the issue of gender equality emerged as an overarching theme across forums, one of the six thematic groups was entirely devoted to gender equality in education. The group applauded the EFA GMR 2008 for recognizing it as more than a parity issue but also an important aspect in quality of education, attainment levels and employment outcomes. However, the group identified several important gaps in the report's analysis of gender and provided recommendations for further action.

The group recommended that an overreaching role of gender should be better understood. The report treats gender as a separate category of disadvantage while the complex ways it interacts with other inequalities remain overlooked. It was concluded that the discussion on women teachers has to draw out the significance of gender issues concerning teacher's employment including pay, work conditions, and promotion opportunities.

Participants also emphasised the need to further support locally produced research on gender issues, nuanced gender budgeting and engendering of governance processes. Finally, the group members reaffirmed the need to foster a closer partnership between women's groups and education advocates which they saw crucial to addressing gender equality concerns of EFA and the MDGs.

The 2008 Global Monitoring Report is available at www.efareport.unesco.org.

The Global Campaign for Education World Assembly

Akanksha Marphartia

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) third World Assembly took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil from the 22nd - 24th of January 2008. In total, 180 people representing civil society organisations (CSOs) from 85 countries and 31 international organisations gathered to reflect on the success and challenges of the global campaign, to elect a new board and determine future areas of work. Gender was addressed by the World Assembly in three ways: (1) during general and side discussions on the progress and challenges to meeting Education For All - this was primarily done by organisations already sensitive to, and participating in, the struggle for gender equality; (2) through the motions which established the areas of priority for the GCE - gender was captured both as an issue on its own and also as part of other areas of

work; and (3) through the representation of the Board, which comprises 13 people, four of whom are women. Though more women have risen to leadership positions since the last World Assembly in 2004 - the GCE chair, vice chair and vice President are women (3 out of the 4 formal positions on the Board) - members recognise the need to strive for equality of representation within the GCE's own board in time for the next World Assembly in 2011.

In addition to these efforts, at pivotal moments, the GCE, as the one united voice of CSOs worldwide on education has successfully profiled inequality through campaigns and actions prior to and during the review of the missed 2005 Millennium Development Goal on 'gender equality and women's empowerment' and as the main action week theme in 2003. Other action week themes have included gender, though this has primarily depended on the focus of individual country campaigns. These efforts have pressured governments and international organisations to recognise the need to dedicate more resources and greater effort at a much quicker pace than before.

Although gender is not the face of GCE, challenges to attain gender equality worldwide have been profiled and captured through various efforts of the campaign. As progress on gender equality (and equity) continues to be slow, the GCE may need to expand and reinvigorate its work. Gender is no doubt on the agenda, but what else, the GCE must ask, can it do and do better than before?

For more information on the GCE, see www.campaignforeducation.org.

Book Review

Gender in Primary and Secondary Education: A handbook for policy-makers and other stakeholders

Review by Gabriela Elroy

This timely book is written to provide guidance on how to mainstream gender into education in order to make the necessary leap from gender parity concerns towards substantial gender equality. Recognising the last decades' achievements of bringing an unprecedented number of girls into schools, Subrahmanian warns that these gains in numbers won't be sustained nor translated into real equality unless boosted by additional strategies and policy interventions.

Taking off with an overview of the key rationales that have underpinned policy thinking on girls' education and development, Subrahmanian cautions against the simple correlations between education and other development benefits and stresses the need to carefully locate education within the complex (power) constructions of the wider social context. This is of fundamental importance as it captures the duality of education as an institution that is both

influenced by, and has the potential to influence, processes that give rise to inequalities. Accordingly, it prompts necessary questions of what education is provided.

The book succinctly frames gender equality in education within an agenda of rights, capabilities and female empowerment before moving on to analyse how prevalent gender ideologies and roles affect the demand for girls' education on the one hand, while gender insensitivity on the supply side impact negatively on girls' schooling on the other. In showing how quality education for girls is dependent on a wide range of gender equality issues both within and beyond the educational system, Subrahmanian manages to establish the otherwise elusive links between equality and quality education. This in itself is a major contribution.

Backed up with a span of concrete examples covering both gaps and proposed strategies,

the reasoning develops into a groundbreaking policy approach to gender equality in education that calls for simultaneous action across a range of sectors, targeting various institutional sites (households, communities, schools, labour markets and the state) in parallel. In this setting, the book points out that gender mainstreaming cannot be confined to state action, but needs to be unpacked as a bureaucratic tool and re-institutionalised within a wider social debate about gender equality within and beyond education.

A major role of public policy is thus to create spaces in which gender equality in education can be negotiated by differently situated people, linked up with wider aspects of inequality and where governments and other stakeholders can be held accountable for their commitments. This is no doubt challenging, but absolutely necessary if gender mainstreaming in education is to regain its initiative for real change.

New Reports on Gender and Education

Hit or Miss? Women's Rights and the Millennium Development Goals
ActionAid

ActionAid's 'Hit or Miss' report, launched on the International Women's Day 2008, emphasises that systematic and persistent discrimination against women and girls is the key reason for the limited progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The report argues that to accelerate progress, the targets tackling gender equality should be expanded to include critical issues such as women's access to land and violence against

women. At the same time, women's rights should be addressed as a central component of all of the goals.

The report addresses each of the MDGs and shows that women and girls are most likely to be poor, hungry, illiterate or sick. It summarises current progress, identifies the ways in which the violations of women's rights are holding back further advances and

provides recommendations for action. The report concludes that promoting the rights of women and girls is not only the most effective way of achieving the 2015 goals, but also a moral necessity. ActionAid calls on the UK government to place the women's rights agenda at the heart of the MDG call for action at the United Nations in September 2008.

Available at www.actionaid.org.uk.

No Excuses! A Global Report Card Ranking Government's Efforts to Achieve Education for All
Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

Halfway to the deadline for the Education For All (EFA) goals, the GCE's 'School Report' shows how far we are from reaching these targets and reveals some of the reasons why. Using data from international sources and civil society, the GCE applies an innovative method to evaluate the performance of the developed nations in providing the promised aid and to monitor the progress of 156 developing countries in

ensuring universally accessible basic education of good quality. This approach enables the reader to analyse the willingness of governments to take bold actions to address the EFA goals, giving them a fresh, political take on the available research.

The report reveals that the transformative policies and promised generous investments have not yet materialised. The GCE therefore

calls on governments to back their rhetoric with budgetary commitments, abolishing user fees, and challenging the IMF economic policy dogma to ensure fiscal space to employ more teachers. It also calls on donors to meet their 'fair-share' and increase aid, making it predictable to finance education.

Available at www.campaignforeducation.org/ schoolreport/2008_reports/index.php.

Weblinks

A toolkit for mainstreaming gender in higher education in Africa
Working Group on Higher Education - Association of African Universities
This toolkit provides practical guidelines on how to initiate a gender-mainstreaming program and establish helpful processes to bridge persistent gender gaps in higher education in Africa.
Available at http://www.adeanet.org/publications/en_pubs_wghe.html

Gender Mentoring:
A Guide for Strengthening Equality in Communities
Pact Tanzania
This manual provides guidance for project developers and implementers on gender mentoring and how it can strengthen equality in communities.
Available at http://www.pacttz.org/html/publications.html

The European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming
A European Community of Practice
This communication platform is a hub for those involved in mainstreaming gender equality within European Social Fund, designed to share experiences and knowledge.
Available at http://www.gendermainstreaming-cop.eu/home

Mainstreaming gender for better girls' education:
Policy and institutional issues
UNICEF ROSA/UNGEI
This document is one of a series of papers aimed at promoting better education in South Asia. It raises important points in moving the gender agenda forward in education.
Available at http://www.ungei.org/resources/1612_1242.html

UNDP/BRIDGE panel discussion on gender sensitive indicators and measurements of change, 51st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
UNDP/BRIDGE
This report summarizes the presentations of the expert panel discussion on gender sensitive indicators and measurements of change at the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
Available at http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports_gend_cep.html

News

Global Campaign for Education - World's Biggest Lesson

On the 23rd April millions of people in over 100 countries are taking exactly the same lesson. The lesson is about everyone's right to a good quality education, especially for those most excluded on a daily basis. It is the highlight event of the Global Campaign for Education's Action Week in 2008.

Right now 774 million adults and 72 million girls and boys are without an education. Those living in conflict areas, with HIV, with disabilities, in rural areas or in living in poverty are most likely to miss out.

It's for this reason that campaigners are asking politicians and journalists to go 'Back to School' and take part. Anyone can take part in the lesson. In fact the more people who take part the greater the potential for world politicians to listen up and make progress in helping the world's most marginalised people access the education that is rightfully theirs.

You can register, download the lesson, and find out what's happening in your country, by visiting www.campaignforeducation.org/biggestlesson.

Letters

I am happy to hear that the publication of Equals is being resumed. Equals is very important for my students, congratulations!

Mónica Cejas
Autonomous Metropolitan University, Mexico

I am pleased that you are producing further issues of Equals. The newsletter is welcome and I will be giving feed back where possible. Thanks.

Dr. Samson MacJessie-Mbewe
Educational Foundations Department
University of Malawi

WRITE NOW!

Do you have a particular view that you want to raise in Equals or a comment to make about the newsletter in general?

Contact the Editors:
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Forthcoming events

7 – 18 April	Course on International Labour Standards and Equality in Employment: Focus on Gender Issues International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin, Italy http://unifem.org/news_events
21-25 April	First Track Initiative Donors Technical meeting Tokyo, Japan
21-27 April	Global Campaign for Education Action Week: Back to School (Quality Education for all to End Exclusion) www.campaignforeducation.org
23 April	The World's Biggest Lesson: Global Campaign For Education http://www.campaignforeducation.org/biggestlesson/
1-3 May	Women's Funding Network Annual Conference: Leadership for a Changing World USA, Washington, D.C. http://www.wfnet.org/events/conference/2008/wfn.html
13-14 May	UNESCO meeting on literacy in Latin America and Caribbean San Jose, Costa Rica
5 –9 May	Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Biennial Maputo, Mozambique http://www.adeanet.org/Biennale%202008/en_index.htm
16 June	Day of African Child
20 June	World Refugee Day
3 - 9 July	10th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women Mundos de Mujeres/Women's Worlds 2008 Madrid, Spain http://www.mmww08.org/index.cfm?idioma=eng
7 - 9 July	G8 Summit Toyako, Japan
3 - 8 August	The XVII International Aids Conference Mexico City http://www.aids2008.org/
8 September	International Literacy Day
10-13 September	Human Development & Capability Association Annual Conference New Delhi http://www.capabilityapproach.com

Contact Details

Beyond Access was set up in January 2003.
Its main aims are:
- To contribute to achieving MDG 3 – promoting gender equality and empowering women – by generating and critically examining knowledge and practice regarding gender equality and education
- To provide appropriate resources to share and disseminate for the purpose of influencing the policies of government departments, national and international NGOs and international institutions including UN agencies

Please contact us with any comments:

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education/genderequality_education

The KIC Project

KIC is an Oxfam International project which is based on the existing needs of counterparts to improve learning from one another. It seeks to promote the systematic exchange of knowledge and learning from relevant experiences and networking around 5 key themes, including education.

KIC offers the infrastructure to do this: a virtual KIC Portal, where counterparts and others can meet each other, locate other partners working in the same field, browse through thematic web sites, document their practices and research, find knowledge sources and participate in "virtual discussion rooms", known as "Communities of Practice".

This issue of Equals has been supported by the KIC project, which is collaborating with Beyond Access to reinforce learning on gender and education. It is hoped that this collaboration will encourage counterparts and Equals readers to use Equals to actively share their own knowledge around gender equality in education, by publishing practices, taking up guest editorship roles, reacting to Equals articles and participating in on-line discussions in Communities of Practice or forums on the KIC website.

For more information on the KIC project go to www.oxfamkic.org.