



International Network for School Social Work

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Electronic Newsletter October 2012

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School Social Work and Educational Equity for Girls

The mission of school social work is to achieve quality education for all. Both girls and boys have their troubles in school, and school social workers must focus on the obstacles faced by all children and youth. Today we focus on the special needs of girls, looking at **UNESCO's Education for All, Goal 5 - Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.** This suggests a key role for school social workers in countries where girls have many barriers to schooling including poverty, unsafe conditions, cultural bias, gender stereotypes, low status of females, lack of female role models, lack of toilets, lack of feminine hygiene products, early marriage, pregnancy and many more issues related to being a girl. Eliminating gender disparity and ensuring girls' success from pre-school to college requires all the skills in the social worker's toolbox.

Watch a documentary on one girl's odyssey as she seeks to continue her education.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/10/201210262060660910.html>

Highlights on Gender Equity from UNESCO's

Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>

- The share of girls out of school has declined from 58% to 54%, and the gender gap in primary education is narrowing in many countries. P. 1.
- The number of children not in school has been falling, gender gaps are narrowing and more children are completing a basic education. P. 19.
- Gender barriers remain intact. There has been progress towards greater gender parity in school enrolment. Even so, being born a girl carries with it a significant education disadvantage in many countries. That disadvantage is reflected in the fact that girls still account for 54% of the out-of-school population. Moreover, out-of-school girls are far more likely than boys never to go to school. In twenty-eight countries, there are fewer than nine girls in primary school for every ten boys. Poverty further reinforces gender disparity. P. 54.
- Gender parity would cut the number of girls out of school by over 6 million. Gender

disadvantage is most pronounced in the Arab States, Central Asia, and South and West Asia. In Pakistan, girls accounted for 60% of out-of-school children in 2006. P. 58.

- There are currently some 759 million illiterate youths and adults in the world. Reflecting the legacy of gender disparities in education, two-thirds of this number are women. P. 7.
- Gender, poverty, language and culture often combine to produce an extremely heightened risk of being left far behind. In Turkey, 43% of Kurdish-speaking girls from the poorest households have fewer than two years of education, while the national average is 6%; in Nigeria, some 97% of poor Hausa-speaking girls have fewer than 2 years of education. P. 9.
- With some of the world's largest gender gaps, several countries in West Africa have adopted policies aimed at strengthening parity as part of the wider strategy for achieving universal primary education. Some of these policies focus on removing one of the greatest obstacles to gender equity: attitudes on girls' and women's place in society. Working through village heads and religious leaders, governments have mounted campaigns to communicate to parents the importance of educating daughters. Other strategies include paying financial incentives, providing water and sanitation in schools (including separate latrines for boys and girls), recruiting female teachers and providing incentives for their deployment to rural areas, and giving teachers gender sensitization training (UNESCO-IIEP, 2009). In remote rural areas, distance to school is often a major security concern for parents of young girls. Governments have responded by attempting to bring classrooms closer to communities, often by building satellite schools. P. 66.

UNESCO Announces eAtlas of Gender Equality in Education

(This eAtlas document is too large to download easily. However, it is easy to build your own statistical tables for education indicators in more than 200 countries from the UNESCO Data Center at http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=143&IF_Language=eng)

UNESCO and the UIS have jointly released the *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education*, which includes over 120 maps, charts and tables featuring a wide range of sex-disaggregated indicators.

Girls and women remain deprived of full and equal opportunities for education. There has been progress towards parity at the primary level, but this tapers off at the secondary level in developing regions. The global economic crisis is deepening inequalities, made worse by cuts in education budgets and stagnating development support. Gender equality is one of the six goals of the global Education for All campaign that UNESCO leads. This was launched in 2000, when the countries of the world agreed to “eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality”. Gender equality is essential for protecting universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is also a powerful development accelerator. The education of girls and women can lead to a wide range of benefits – from improved maternal health, reduced infant mortality and fertility rates to increased prevention against HIV and AIDS. For this to happen, we need to target the gender gap at every level.

