



Women's Education And Empowerment

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EMPowerment is a cultural and personal concept; the informant, the researcher may frequently have differing notions of what empowerment means and how it is expressed.

Women's education: key ingredient of empowerment

* Education is light; it broadens the mind. A degree is a weapon in a girl's hand with which she can work and make some money if she wishes.

* A woman with education is better in everything. She can make a good match and marry someone educated who would make a lady out of her. With her degree she can help her husband with the family's livelihood and can teach her children.

* Because ignorance is ugly... (Raana Haider, 1995).

Increasing women's education is a key ingredient for women's empowerment. While many studies worldwide have documented the importance of women's education for its impact on child schooling and nutrition. Education is also important for women themselves. Basic education is the foundation for developing the flexible skills needed to participate in knowledge intensive economic activity. Those who lack access to basic education are likely to be excluded from new opportunities, where long-standing gender gaps in education persist. In Bangladesh, girls' tuition was eliminated nationwide in 1992 and the stipend program was expanded to all rural girls. Enrollment climbed nationally to 48 percent. More girls appeared for exams and enrolled in intermediate colleges.

Both school system design and community involvement can improve girls' educational outcomes. In some settings parents are more willing to send their daughters to a single-sex school. In some, it is very important that teachers are female. In Bangladesh, coeducation schools, the availability of separate toilet facilities helped to raise girls' school enrolment and attainment. In Bangladesh and Kenya, studies based on house-

hold focus should be on lobbying and knowledge about educating rural people.

Mary Pigozzi, Director of UNESCO's Division for the Promotion of Quality Education comments. "Previously focus was

of school, far from learning effectively.

Parents with limited resources say that the quality of education matters in their decisions of whether to put or keep their daughters in school at all. If girls

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on environmental education but today, education is considered an essential tool in tackling such development challenges as poverty and inequality. We need a library in every primary school to enhance children's reading.

Quality education for girls

Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi-A. Annan stated in his foreword in The State of the World's Children, 1999 of UNICEF, "education is a human

are not learning at school, if what they learn is not useful or if the school environment is not safe for them, parents withdraw them from school. If quality is so important for getting girls in school, keeping them there, then improving quality must be high on our agenda.

Girls are more likely to be discriminated against from the beginning. They may receive less care, both in terms of nurturing and in terms of food. Their schooling is often sacrificed for

The quality of education is also a significant issue, closely linked to the state of girls' education. World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (in 2000)-164 countries agreed to work for elimination of the gender gap in enrolment (gender parity) by the year 2005 and gender equality by 2015.

right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development. 130 million children in the world denied the right-almost two thirds of them girls. Nearly one billion people, or a sixth of the world's population, are illiterate-the majority of them women. This is a violation of rights and a loss of potential and productivity that the world can no longer tolerate".

According to UNICEF, Discrimination against girls is the

their labor at home and beyond; girls are a large proportion of 'invisible' child workers. Often, parents simply do not think it is important to send girls to school. Adults frequently expect less of girls and girls learn to expect less of themselves. While no single environmental factor will exclude or include all girls, safety and security in the learning environment are essential. Sanitation is also important. There is evidence that having separated and safe girls' latrines contribute to girls' attendance in school.

Administrators should monitor what goes on in classrooms to make sure that teachers are not acting in discriminatory ways, however subtle and unintended. Good management generates higher quality education just as predictably as good teaching.

One outcome of girls' quality education is that more women will have skills, confidence and will participate, contribute to society in new ways. Giving girls' education increased support and recognition also has an intergenerational impact. Educated mothers educate their daughters and sons. This is an invaluable outcome of basic education and key to achieving Education For All. Ensuring quality for all learners, especially those who have been excluded in the past, is labor-intensive, time-consuming and costly. But for the good ness of humanity, we can and must achieve it.

When quality basic education is available, more girls and boys will participate enthusiastically; parents will see returns on their investments in children's education.

Increased enrolment, retention and completion rate of girls at primary level could be attributed to some affirmative actions taken by the government as well as successful non-formal education-programs run by BRAC and other NGOs. A total of 89 percent of children with disabilities within the school-going age had not gained access to education in the country. 73 percent of the disabled learners faced problems while enrolling in educational institutions. Appropriate policy at the national level should be formulated for the inclusion of disabled children in the mainstream education. UNESCO-BAFED Researchers Forum conference (held on November 16, 2002; in Dhaka) recommended.

Employment opportunities for women are critical for empowerment and food security. Education is one of the most important factors accounting for increased female labor force participation in the region. A recent report of International Labor Or-

of Amalia, upazila Sarishamun, Chandkhali, of Betagi, Kamna, Bhandkhali, Khoipata of Baman, Charoan, Rahampur, Patmarga upazila. The gangs collect this counterfeit currency notes from Indian boarder area which have flooded the rural hats and bazars. As a result, the innocent farmers day labourers, rice traders and cow buyers and sellers are being cheated greatly. The rice traders, cow buyers and sellers are the worst sufferers. According to the source, every day a number of forged currency notes of Tk 500 and Tk 100 denominations are detected other districts.

It's a UNICEF-funded project under the programme titled Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL). Primary Education Officer said that under this programme, 2,175 teachers of 310 government and 276 non-government primary schools of the district are being trained on this system. The target of project is to raise enrolment rate to 95 per cent and reduce the dropout rate to 50 per cent as well as remove discrimination in education system. The project was launched with the financial assistance from UNICEF in 1998 in Panchagarh and 23



oda Upazila of the district.

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