

A new strategic vision for girls and women: stopping poverty before it starts

Across the developing world, girls and women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of poverty. Yet we know it is possible to take effective practical action that enables girls and women to fulfill their potential. And we know that the benefits of investing in girls and women are transformational – for their own lives and for their families, communities, societies and economies. Empowering girls and women has multiplier effects for economic growth and achieving all of the MDGs.



Picture: A young girl in northern Nigeria © DFID

If we reach girls, in particular, early enough in their lives, we can transform their life chances. Giving girls greater choice and control over decisions that affect them helps break the cycle of poverty between one generation and the next. It enables us to stop poverty before it starts.

Delivering results for girls and women

The UK has committed to putting girls and women at the heart of our development assistance. Our new vision for girls and women builds on the commitments set out in DFID's Business Plan¹. It sets out four pillars for greater and more effective action, with the aim that girls' and women's lives are significantly improved and sustainably transformed. We will work to:

- Delay first pregnancy and support safe childbirth;
- Get economic assets directly to girls and women;
- Get girls through secondary school;
- Prevent violence against girls and women.

We know that these changes require both direct action and a positive enabling environment, that seek to improve a girl's or woman's relations with the men and boys around her and her status within her family and wider society. These factors determine the importance placed on her attending school or a health clinic, her ability to make decisions that affect her life, to control household resources, and to take an active role in her community and beyond.

Increasing the power of girls and women includes enabling their active participation in political processes, and this will continue to be an important area of our work. Support for women's political empowerment will include elections management and observation, electoral system

¹ Improving maternal health and access to family planning; increasing the number of girls completing primary and secondary education; promoting the economic empowerment of girls and women through jobs and access to financial services; and piloting new approaches to eliminating violence.

reform and campaigns, women's movements and leadership, and work with the media. For example, supporting women who want to get into politics, giving them the skills to write manifestos and plan effective campaigns, and to help more women candidates run for election. We are helping women obtain identity cards to allow them to vote and help reduce the risk of electoral fraud.

Our goals are ambitious but the reward is great – transforming the lives of a generation and for generations to come.

The vision is intended to be an enabling framework which supports a wide range of interventions under each 'pillar'. These will include, but are not limited to, the programming examples given below. Decisions on how to strengthen results under each pillar will be taken across the organisation, reflecting the specific context. We want to encourage innovative approaches to tackling these issues, working with partners in new and different ways to deliver transformational outcomes for girls and women.

We know that:

- Girls aged 10-14 are five times more likely than women aged 20-24 to die in pregnancy or childbirth²;
- Agricultural outputs in many Sub Saharan Africa countries could increase by up to 20% if women's access to agricultural inputs was equal to men's³;
- Providing girls with an extra year of schooling increases their wages by 10-20%⁴ and women with more years of schooling have better maternal health, fewer and healthier children and greater economic opportunities⁵;
- Violence against women occurs least in egalitarian relationships. A lack of power is a predictor of violence⁶.

The four pillars for action

1. Delay first pregnancy and support safe childbirth

Action that directly helps girls and women delay their first pregnancy and support safe childbirth includes: increasing access to better quality family planning, safe abortion and maternal health services, making sure that girls and women who need services most are not excluded (due to cost or discrimination). More than 17 DFID country offices are scaling up programming in this area, with a growing number focusing on girls, and on early marriage and pregnancy. For example, in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, where nearly 50% of girls are married by the time they are 15, we will take to scale a successful approach that empowers girls, and supports communities and families to eliminate child marriage. As a result of these measures, **we will help to save the lives of at least 50,000 women during pregnancy and childbirth, enable 10 million more women to access family planning (of which 1 million will be girls aged 15-19) and support 2 million births with skilled attendants.**

² Neal S et al. 'White Ribbon Alliance Atlas of Birth' White Ribbon Alliance, GHP3 (University of Southampton) and Impact (University of Aberdeen). London, 2010.

³ World Bank. 'Agricultural Growth for the Poor: An Agenda for Development' 2005. Saito, K. et al. 'Raising the productivity of women farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa' (World Bank), 2005. Udry, C. et al 'Gender differentials in farm productivity: implications for household efficiency and agricultural policy' 1995.

⁴ Psacharopoulos, G. and Patrinos, H.A. Returns to investment in education: a further update World Bank Policy Research working Paper Series 2882, 2002

⁵ World Bank. Framework for Action, 2009

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20298916~menuPK:617572~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386.00.html#why>

⁶ Naved, R., and Person, L. 'Dowry and Spousal Physical Violence Against Women in Bangladesh' Journal of Family Issues XX(X) 1–27:2010

2. Economic assets direct to girls and women

Work to ensure that girls and women gain direct access to, and control over, economic assets could include: support for increased access to financial services and financial literacy training; increased incomes through more jobs and better working conditions for women; and programmes supporting land reform and inheritance rights to secure women's rights to own and use property. We will ensure our cash transfer programmes reach girls and women. We will support initiatives to give women and girls the skills, confidence and networks that will help them to keep hold of their economic assets and make productive use of them. We plan to work with the private sector to develop innovative approaches to promote assets for girls. **We are planning initiatives to improve access to financial services for over 18 million women, to help 2.3 million women access jobs, and to secure access to land for 4.5 million women (including in Rwanda and India).**

3. Getting girls through secondary school

We will increase the numbers of girls in primary and secondary school in all 23 country programmes where we give support to education, and will assist girls to stay in school beyond primary level to ensure they get the full benefits from education which will transform their lives and opportunities. Draft country plans identify measures which include: stipends, vouchers, cash transfers and transport for girls; increasing numbers of female teachers; improving facilities for girls (e.g. toilets); and programmes to reduce violence against girls. **DFID will be supporting over 9 million children in primary school by 2014, of which at least half will be girls.** Our focus will be on girls completing primary education, with good learning achievement, so they have an opportunity to progress to secondary level. **By 2014, we will be supporting 700,000 girls in secondary education.** We are looking at what more we can do to support girls to get into school and improve their learning.

4. Preventing violence

DFID will support interventions to reform and strengthen security services, police, and policy and decision making bodies to improve women's access to security and justice services. **We will help 10 million women to access justice through the courts, police, and legal assistance.** This will include supporting survivors of violence to seek legal redress, alongside resolving disputes over issues such as land and inheritance.

We aim to work in at least 15 countries to address physical and sexual violence against girls and women – increasing the numbers of survivors who have access to treatment and advice, and whose cases are satisfactorily investigated. Innovative approaches to creating safe spaces for girls and women will be explored, along with work to support behaviour change, by challenging social attitudes and perceptions. We recognise that there are significant knowledge gaps on the extent and nature of violence against girls and women and of effective interventions to address it – we will work with partners to build the evidence base. We will closely monitor our country pilots to identify interventions that can be taken to scale.

To be most effective, we need to link up actions across the pillars. We know that keeping girls in school is a crucial way to enable them to delay first pregnancy. Women with more years of schooling have better maternal health, fewer and healthier children and greater economic opportunities. Adolescent girls who are in school are less likely to have premarital sex and more likely, if they do have sex, to use contraception. Linking interventions across sectors will therefore accelerate our results and have greater impact. We need to, for example, focus on education retention, linked to cash transfers, with support for further training opportunities and jobs.

We also recognise that achieving results across the 4 pillars depends upon continued improvements in the enabling environment. This requires action to understand and address attitudes, behaviours and social norms which constrain adolescent girls' and women's lives and which perpetuate exclusion and poverty. It requires increasing support for interventions that empower girls and women to make informed choices and to control decisions that affect them. DFID's actions will include support for:

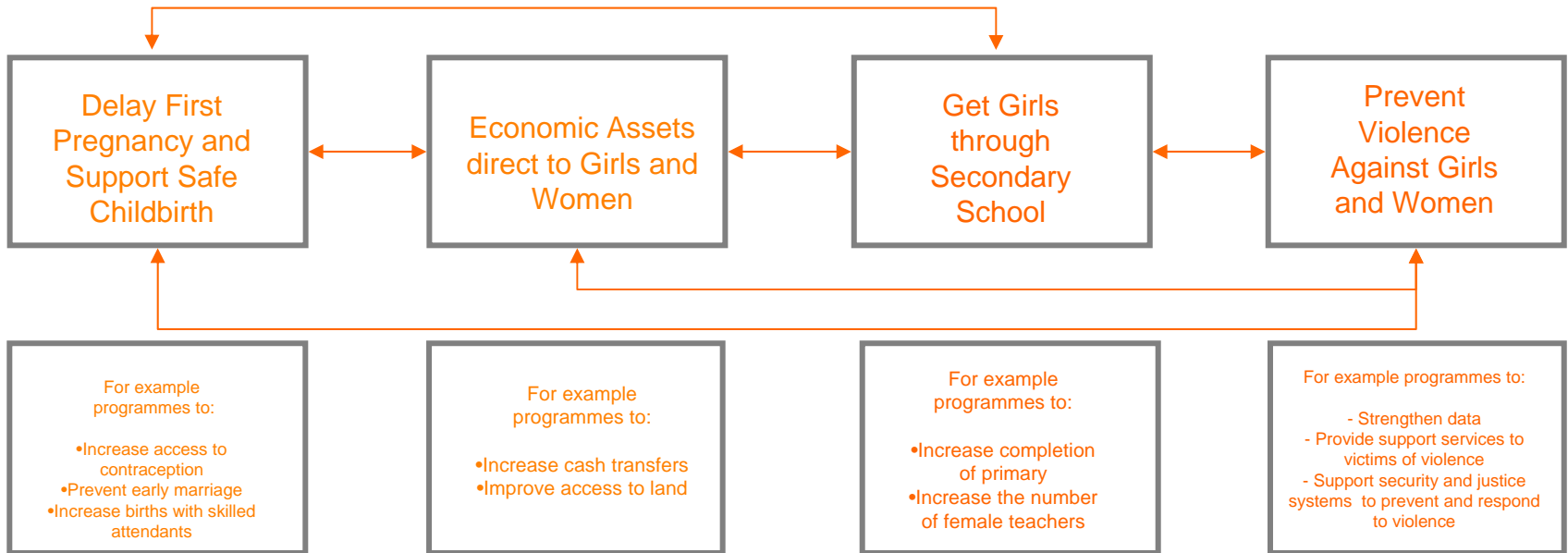
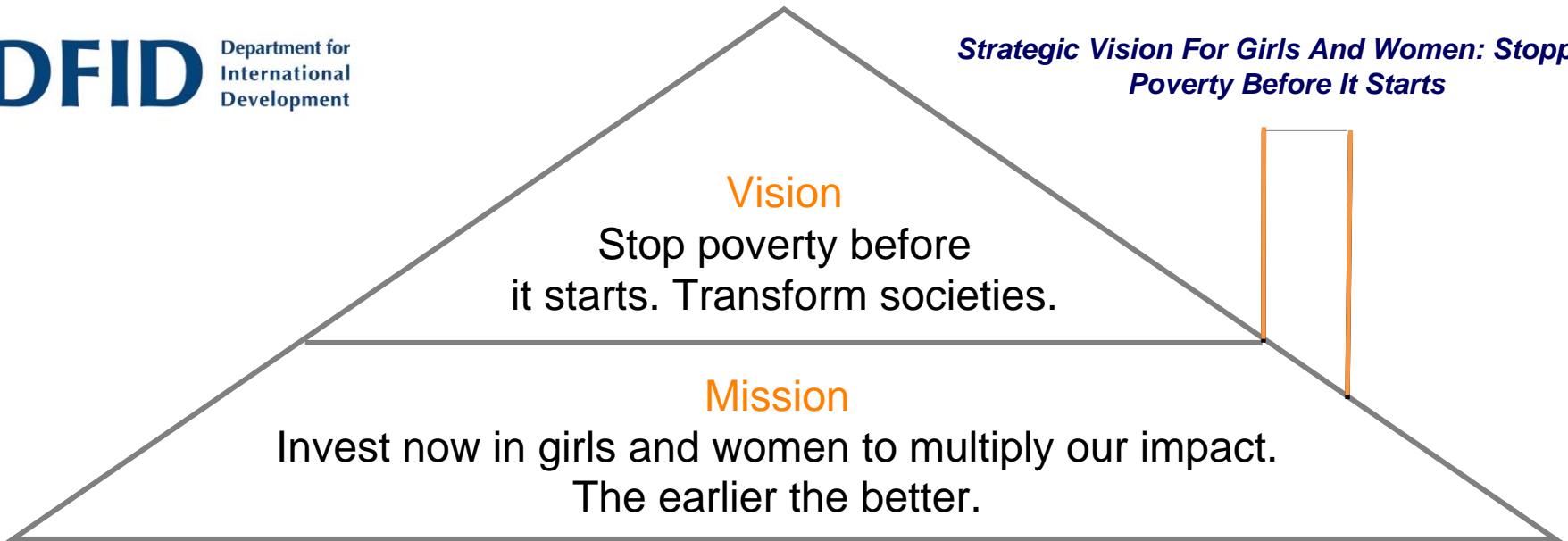
- locally-led action for social change, including women's movements, that challenges discrimination against girls and women; and work with boys and men to re-dress unequal gender relationships;
- support to women and girls' participation in national and local decision making processes as politicians, leaders and stakeholders, including reform of electoral systems and supporting campaigns for equal representation of women and men; promoting women's leadership through capacity development and removal of structural barriers to women's political participation from community to national levels;
- improved legal frameworks that protect women's and girls' rights and the implementation of laws that enable women and girls to own, inherit and control productive assets, realise reproductive rights, and provide protection from violence, FGM, early marriage and other harmful traditional practices;
- strengthen national and local policies, planning and budgeting processes to ensure growth and poverty reduction benefit girls and women, and that services and opportunities for them are prioritised.

Making sure we achieve our vision for girls and women

DFID's country offices will report results against a range of indicators in individual operational plans and associated results frameworks (selected to reflect country level priorities). Operational planning and reporting arrangements incorporate an optional set of indicators specific to the strategic vision for girls and women, which cover: completion of primary education and support in secondary education; the use of modern family planning methods; births attended; access to financial services; and access to security and justice services. Country offices are encouraged to fully utilise this set of indicators. DFID's support to girls and women will also be reported through the use of sex disaggregated data wherever possible, including capturing support beyond the four pillars. Innovative approaches will be encouraged that directly involve girls and women in designing interventions, monitoring and evaluating progress.

We will continue to **mainstream** gender across all other areas of our programme – including climate change, governance, peace and security, HIV – and to monitor and evaluate the impact of this work. A gender team in Policy Division will provide a central coordination role, working closely with research and evaluation colleagues to establish and maintain a strong evidence base to inform future policy and programming.

We will work with bilateral and **multilateral partners**, including UN Women, and increasingly with the private sector, to improve the international response to supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. The Multilateral Aid Review concluded that most multilateral organisations need to do more to deliver for girls and women, and this is one of seven priority reform issues on which we will be engaging with partners. We will consistently promote a strong focus on results for girls and women.



challenge discrimination against girls and women + build **Enabling Environment** effective legal frameworks to protect girls' and women's rights

+ increase the value given to girls and women by society and men and boys + increase the power of girls and women to make informed choices and control

decisions that affect them + enable women's participation in politics + sustain political commitment to services and opportunities for girls and women

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Published by the Department for International Development, 2011.