Global justice:
The challenge of gender equity in education

Elaine Unterhalter
Institute of Education
University of London
c.2000 over a billion people had little or no education

Total (000) 1,067,969
Boys/men (000) 408,413
Girls/women (000) 656,514
Comprising

Boys/men

- Children without primary schooling
- Youth and adults (over 15) with no schooling
- Children not completing primary school

Girls/women

- Children without primary schooling
- Youth and adults (over 15) with no schooling
- Children not completing primary school
In 2007 girls & women are still the largest group with little or no education.
Numbers out of school c.2007

- Total:
  - Out of school: 70,000,000
  - Will never enrol: 40,000,000

- Girls:
  - Out of school: 35,000,000
  - Will never enrol: 20,000,000

- Boys:
  - Out of school: 35,000,000
  - Will never enrol: 10,000,000
Figure 3.4: The education inequality tree

Average number of years of education of the population aged 17 to 22 by wealth, gender, location, and other selected drivers of marginalization, latest available year

Egypt, 2005

India, 2005

Blame

‘..parents, who do not support the school in its running, in that they do not positively guide their children, given that the school is in a slum...The parents keep shifting and at times they don’t have money. They don’t want to pay’ (Head teacher, Kenya)

‘No one motivates such children to attend school so they go and start working then the parents become dependent on them for food and income ‘ (Head teacher South Africa)

‘ Parents have enough income to support schooling but they do not give priority to education...girls have no material support for uniforms, textbooks or transport’ (Head teacher Tanzania)

‘The other parent, who is illiterate, can trade off his daughter for a few cows which will die even after a few days because of drought... if they are ignorant and illiterate, they marry off their daughters at a very young age’ (Government official Kenya)
'We have taken the EFA goal and what we do is in our reporting, we continually monitor the issue of whether there’s, there are any particular problems. And all our data we have at the moment shows that we don’t have any problem in terms of gender parity. We may have a slight problem, in fact, in terms of boys rather than girls.’ (Government official, South Africa)

‘At the TSC we have policies to ensure that we bring gender on board. For example in a mixed school, if the head teacher is male, if the female is head, then the male is deputy’

‘So as we implement activities we always ensure there is gender equality. Like you can see this report I am making now. We always have male and female.’ (Government officials Kenya)
Shame

‘Torn clothes make girls feel more embarrassed than boys [at school]’
(Mothers’ focus group, Tanzania)

... the burden of school expenses is a key factor ... Poor families, unable to sponsor all children to school may have to come to a decision to withdraw female children for either marriage or hawking. The male child is seen as a strong member who can struggle on his own to continue schooling ....
(Report of mothers’ focus group, Nigeria)

.. A schoolgirl, living with her grandmother got pregnant and her grandmother kicked her away... She returned with a one week old baby. Her grandmother agreed to receive her on condition she sends the baby to the parents of the father. She did it but was kicked away. The village government intervened and commanded the father’s parents to take care of them. They took her but mistreated her. She was working too much and sometimes they would frame her for stealing. Finally she left the village and I think she went to Dar es Salaam. The whole community abandoned her
(Head teacher, Tanzania)
Some material solutions

- Free schooling
- Improve distribution of learning materials
- Employ more teachers
- Improve teacher conditions
Some non-material solutions to address blame and shame

- Include concerns with equality and poverty in teacher training
- Support cross sectoral work in eg. Education, health, nutrition
- Work on in depth community mobilisations
- Promote gender equality as a matter of global obligation
The Dakar Declaration on accelerating girls’ education and gender equality concludes...

‘We envision a world in which a special initiative for girls’ education is no longer needed – a world in which all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realize their full potential and contribute to transforming their societies, so that gender equality becomes a reality.’