

access to education

research findings for development policymakers and practitioners

Boys' lower participation in schools in Lesotho

In Lesotho, girls are more likely to participate in schooling and have higher literacy rates than boys. Boys' enrolment is lower than girls' in primary and secondary school, but the gap is greater at secondary level. A state-run open and distance learning (ODL) programme is reaching out to them.

Differences in performance at school between boys and girls are insignificant. However, there are two concerns: their repetition rates are higher and boys' participation is worse than girls', especially in secondary schooling.

Boys' poor participation is a result of the tradition of herding. They look after livestock from a young age in rural areas, particularly among poor people living in the highlands, who make up one-third of the population. These villages tend to be isolated, making school attendance difficult.

Teaching at rural schools that lack facilities is not an attractive prospect for teachers.

A book produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning attempts to understand the nature and causes of boys' underachievement and suggests possible ways to deal with this. This case study looks at the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre's Learning Post programme, which aims to reach illiterate and semi-literate learners, most of whom are herding in remote rural areas.

The study found that:

- A significant feature of the programme is its flexibility, allowing learners who help their parents by herding to complete the course at their own pace and in their own time.
- Most learners enrolled on the programme come from a poor and uneducated background. Their mothers are mostly housewives and their fathers are farmers. On the whole, their parents have never been to school and are still illiterate.
- The programme teaches basic literacy and numeracy skills and some vocational skills.
- As it does not offer a complete cycle of primary or basic education, it is not equivalent to primary school. It

has therefore been criticised as a poor substitute for poor children.

In remote locations and among dispersed populations, ODL is a potential solution. However, the researchers note that:

- ODL must be planned and implemented with care if its aims are to provide basic or higher levels of education.
- If a complete cycle of basic education is to be offered, this requires a different treatment to that of literacy, and will need children to participate for longer hours on an ongoing basis.
- For models of ODL to be successful, they will need well-designed curricula using various technological tools as well as face to face contact.

Jyotsna Jha

Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, UK
T +44 207 7476342 F +44 207 8399081
j.jha@commonwealth.int

See also

Boys' Underachievement in Education: an Exploration in Selected Commonwealth Countries, Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning: London, by Jyotsna Jha and Fatimah Kelleher, 2006 (PDF)

www.col.org/colweb/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/docs/BoysUnderachievement_web.pdf

Getting disabled children into schools

A third of the 72 million children out of school in the world are disabled and only ten percent of disabled children in Africa attend school. Yet the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is not yet responsive enough to the challenge of getting disabled children into school.

Research from World Vision UK shows that getting disabled children into education is critical to achieving the goal of universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. Access to good quality basic education is a fundamental human right and so is inclusive education for disabled children.

The FTI is the global partnership for increasing progress towards UPE. How have FTI partner countries tried to provide good quality education for disabled children and how much have they been supported by the FTI Partnership to do this?

There are three different approaches to providing education for disabled children: segregation or special needs, integration

and inclusion. Some countries in the FTI Partnership have already made plans that address the inclusion of disabled children. Most focus on making regular schools more inclusive by improving teacher training and providing additional learning materials and support. A few countries are also setting targets for enrolment and giving incentives to encourage schools to become more inclusive. Some countries link disability with other initiatives to reach excluded children. However, a number of countries have not yet made any provision for disabled children.

The main gaps in education for disabled children at national levels include:

- a lack of information on the total number of disabled children, the proportion enrolled in school, the proportion out of school and the range of provision
- insufficient planning to respond to the diversity of learning needs and to increase enrolment places for disabled children
- a lack of financial projections of costs and funding mechanisms and incentives to encourage inclusion
- limited attempts to form partnerships with parents, communities and non-governmental organisations
- a lack of coordination between different ministry sectors and services.

The report concluded that the FTI Partnership cannot take the credit for current developments in disability strategies. However, it can help to influence effective education policies. The report recommends that the FTI Partnership:

- promotes discussion of policy and good practice within the Partnership and with partner countries and donors
- promotes inclusive education, advocating the importance of the participation of disabled children to the achievement of UPE
- supports national and international studies on the number of disabled children enrolled in schools and out of school
- supports studies to monitor the progress of disabled children
- advocates and contributes to the additional funding required for inclusion.

Philippa Lei

World Vision, Opal Drive, Fox Milne, Milton Keynes, MK15 0ZR, UK
T +44 1908 841000 F +44 1908 841001
philippa.lei@worldvision.org.uk
www.worldvision.org.uk

See also

Education's Missing Millions, World Vision, UK, by Philippa Lei, 2007 (PDF)

www.campaignforeducation.org/resources/Sep2007/Educations%20missing%20millions.pdf

Marriage and childbirth as factors in school-leaving

Marriage and pregnancy are often mentioned in sub-Saharan Africa as reasons for girls leaving school before completion. In most countries in this region, girls are required to leave school when their pregnancy is detected and the number returning to school after giving birth is low. The cost of becoming pregnant while in school is therefore high.

Child marriage (marriage before the age of 18) is receiving increasing attention as a reproductive health and children's rights issue, with development experts arguing that it has a negative effect on education levels. However, countries with very early marriages tend to have low levels of educational achievement, so there is usually a gap between the age of leaving school and the age of marriage. Yet in sub-Saharan Africa, it is common for children to start school late and still be in primary school in their late teens, so early marriage can cause girls to leave school.

A study by the Population Council analyses Demographic and Health Survey data from 20 sub-Saharan African countries, with a particular focus on Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Togo. It considers some of the common underlying factors associated with early school-exit and early marriage and childbirth, such as household poverty, sexual initiation and progress in school:

- Teenage girls in francophone Africa who are still in school at age 12 are far more likely to leave school early for reasons other than childbirth and marriage.
- The risk of teenage girls leaving school early has declined over time, in keeping with overall trends of increasing school enrolment and decreasing early marriage and childbirth.
- No firm conclusions can be drawn about the causes of girls' early departure from schooling, but results suggest that starting school late – and being behind in a grade for their age – makes them more vulnerable to an early departure from school, early marriage and childbearing.

These findings have a number of important implications for policy:

The results suggest that early marriage is more likely to limit girls' educational opportunities than early childbirth

- The results suggest that early marriage is more likely to limit girls' educational opportunities than early childbirth, therefore early marriage should be a central concern for adolescent reproductive health.
- Schoolgirl pregnancy rarely accounts for more than a small percentage of girls who leave school early, even in countries such as Cameroon where the issue has received much attention.
- Policies that inform parents of the benefits of starting their children in school on time are likely to have positive effects for reaching higher grade levels and for adolescent reproductive health, no matter what the quality of the school.

Cynthia B Lloyd

Policy Research Division, Population Council, One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York 10017, USA
T +1 212 339 0500 F +1 212 755 6052

clloyd@popcouncil.org

See also

Marriage and Childbirth as Factors in School Exit: An Analysis of DHS Data from sub-Saharan Africa, Population Council 219, by Cynthia B. Lloyd and Barbara S. Mensch, 2006 (PDF)
www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/wp/219.pdf

Access to good education for pastoral groups in Sudan

The target of Education for All by 2015 will not be met unless efforts are made to improve access for marginalised, hard-to-reach children, including nomadic and pastoralist groups. What are the challenges of providing access to good quality education for these young people in North Sudan?

Worldwide, an estimated 15 to 25 million nomadic and pastoralist children may be out of school. Sudan has about two million pastoralists and their seasonal movement differs, ranging from nomads with no fixed base to people moving around permanent settlements. Pastoralists in North Sudan have the lowest school enrolment and completion rates. In the Darfur region, only 24 to 25 percent are enrolled, with girls' enrolment much lower than boys'.

In 1999 the government launched a strategy for nomadic education and set up 265 mobile multigrade schools offering four years of basic education. The state pays the salary of one teacher per school on a four-year contract. The nomadic communities then top up their salaries as an added incentive. These teachers receive three months' training in the formal curriculum, primary health care and animal health.

This study by Oxfam GB looks at the challenges of providing good quality basic

education for pastoralist groups in Western Sudan, using two schools as case studies. The research and writing was done before the conflict escalated in Darfur. The schools mentioned are now sadly not operating.

- The multigrade mobile schooling model has much to offer, but because it has been applied in a 'one-size-fits-all' form in Darfur, it cannot cater for the diversity of pastoralist lifestyles.
 - Many of the 265 schools had closed due to a lack of funding and support. In North Darfur, only 15 schools were operating in 2003 and only 10 percent of 24,000 children had access.
 - The rigid national curriculum failed to reflect the environment and knowledge of pastoralist children.
 - High drop-out rates reflect the lack of a clear policy framework and an inflexible method of schooling.
 - Low government funding places a burden on parents to augment teachers' salaries and fund learning materials.
 - Teachers receive no pedagogical support and are not encouraged to teach in ways suited to a multigrade situation.
- The study recommends that:
- Policymakers in governments and partner non-governmental organisations will need to establish the best possible conditions for effective mobile schooling and good quality multigrade teaching and learning.
 - A more flexible model

for mobile schools is needed to cater for a large school population with changing patterns of mobility and settlement.

- The government will need to tackle various problems experienced by these schools, such as rising demand for enrolment places, a lack of adequate teaching materials, large classes and a lack of schooling opportunities beyond the fourth grade.

Sheila Aikman

sheila.aikman@gmail.com

See also

'EFA for Pastoralists in North Sudan: A Mobile Multigrade Model of Schooling', by Sheila Aikman and Hanan El Haj, in *Education for All and Multigrade Teaching: Challenges and Opportunities*, pages 193-211, Springer: Dordrecht, edited by Angela Little, 2006
www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade/

Send us your comments and feedback via SMS

+44 7504 882535

id21
Institute of Development Studies
University of Sussex
Brighton, BN1 9RE UK
T +44 (0) 1273 678787
F +44 (0) 1273 877335
E id21@ids.ac.uk



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