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The greatest treasure that exists in life is to read and understand what one is reading. This is the most beautiful gift there is. All my life I have wished to learn to read and write, because, to me, knowing how to do so meant freedom (woman from Canary Islands, quoted by Valdivielso 1997, 33).

This collection of articles focuses on the role of education and training in promoting equality between women and men in all areas of development. It discusses a broad spectrum of opportunities for learning; placing women's demands for information, skills, and confidence-building at the centre of development policy and practice means that a narrower sectoral focus is inappropriate. Within this broad scope, most attention is paid by writers here to formal and informal education, including popular education, and skills-training. There are relatively few published resources for gender and development practitioners and policy-makers which examine these topics, while, in comparison, one area of training has received a good deal of attention: training for attitudinal change to gender relations ('gender training'). Gender training is not, therefore, the main focus of this collection, although key resources are cited in the Resources section.

Articles included here come from writers with varied professional backgrounds: not only feminist educators, but gender and development workers and researchers, and media professionals. All share the aim of transforming gender relations through developing female-friendly methods of learning, to which both women and men have free and equal access. Many of the articles focus on the ways in which gender power relations specifically affect women's and girls' access to education and training. In turn, lack of access to appropriate educational and training opportunities perpetuates women's continuing marginalisation from social, economic, and political power.

Functional literacy and numeracy is crucial to enable women to participate fully in many economic activities, such as formal-sector employment; and in political decision-making at all levels. In 1997 — seven years after International Literacy Year, when the World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand — United Nations figures estimated more than 840 million illiterate adults in so-called developing countries, 538 million of whom are women. The female illiteracy rate is still 40 per cent in these countries (United Nations 1997, 30).

However, while promoting female access to existing formal education is clearly necessary, it is not in itself sufficient to transform gender power relations in our societies: 'the almost total identification of “education” with “schooling” has served women badly' (Shawcross 1991, 7). Women’s poverty and marginalisation worldwide show that participating in male-
biased institutions, including education systems, benefits only the tiny percentage of women who are able to succeed with the odds stacked against them.

Setting education in its social context

Schools, training establishments, and education systems reflect the social context from which they come; as in the societies that surround them, certain participants will be favoured and others disadvantaged. The barriers faced by women and girls in gaining access to education arise from a mixture of economic, social, and cultural factors, which define norms of women’s capabilities, their existing activities within society, and views on how these should or should not be challenged.

Education systems are transmitters of cultures, and can be used to reinforce the status quo, or promote change. Sources of education outside the immediate family circle include not only the formal school system, which has been a feature in most countries around the world at least since the start of the twentieth century, but also religious bodies, and the cultural teaching which precedes ‘traditional’ rites of passage in different communities. The broad purpose of this informal and formal education is to prepare individuals to participate in the economic, political, and social activities of the adult community, and accept its values.

European colonisation involved the ‘export’ of Western-style education which would prepare a small proportion of people — normally men — in each colonial territory for menial service in the administrative system. For example, in New Zealand, at the start of colonisation, indigenous peoples were promised that Maori models of education would be preserved, in a treaty signed in 1840; later, policies of assimilation meant that this agreement was broken and education became English-medium, while use of Maori names was banned in school (Tarawa 1997). The school system [in colonised countries] ‘was alienated from its ... environment and geared to meeting administrative needs’ (Jayaweera 1993, 9, in the context of Sri Lanka).

Norms in educational establishments throughout the world continue to reflect the male biases characteristic of organisations based on Western bureaucratic models. A characteristic of such organisations is to ignore women’s reproductive roles (Goetz 1997). For example, as Fiona Leach discusses in her article, it is common for pregnancy to curtail a girl’s education, and for rules to prevent young mothers from continuing education after birth, rationalised by the perceived practical constraints faced by mothers of young children. In societies where girls typically marry in their early or mid-teens, marriage itself may be sufficient reason for schools to prevent or discourage attendance.

Female education, culture and ‘modernisation’

Currently, pressure on countries undergoing structural adjustment programmes is increasing the practical barriers to children of both sexes receiving an education. In countries like Zambia, limits on public spending and the introduction of fees for users of services, including education, have reduced the chances of children, particularly girls, enrolling in school and completing their primary education. Pressure on families to find money to educate children results in hard choices, often between girls’ and boys’ education.

From a pragmatic perspective, it makes undeniable sense to educate the child who is most likely to make use of the investment, first in terms of finding a paid occupation in adulthood, and second in ensuring the security of other family members, including ageing parents. In predominantly
rural societies, where there are relatively few opportunities to earn regular income, the economic benefits of education will be lower than in urban, industrialised settings. In addition, if the primary role of a woman is seen as marriage and childbearing, learning to perform household tasks may be seen as a better 'education' than attending school. Reproductive responsibilities have increased for women living in poverty in many countries, during the era of cuts in state provision of health and other social services. Ironically, adult women's participation in many development activities is dependent on the domestic workload being taken over — often by school-age daughters.

As Fiona Leach states in her article, in societies where men — and women — believe that women's sole or primary role is to be wives and mothers, in North as well as South, female education has been historically seen as deeply subversive and threatening. The basis for such fears may lie in the fact that, not only does education potentially open doors to alternative occupations for women, but the influence of formal or informal education potentially interferes with a woman's ability — and wish — to pass on traditional beliefs uncritically to her children. Mothers are, after all, the first teachers of children; their socialising role is critical to child development, even in communities where men's role as 'social fathers' (Engle 1997) is a strong one. Hostility to women receiving education has resulted in well-founded fears over physical safety, deterring women and girls in many communities from participating freely in educational activities.

In societies throughout the world, education is seen as not only offering a path to formal employment in the cash economy, but is popularly associated with ideas about 'modern' — i.e. Westernised — life. In parallel, the education of girls has been seen by donors as having a valuable impact on 'modernisation' at family level, as an instrument for promoting development; linkages between level of education and family welfare, which are now 'so-well established as to be beyond serious dispute' (Watkins 1995, 25).

Research in the 1970s and early 1980s established a link between increased female literacy and 'changes in attitudes and behaviour which in turn result in social and economic change' (Bown 1990, 38). The succession of world conferences throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including those on environment (Rio de Janeiro 1992), human rights (Vienna 1993), and population and development (Cairo 1994) have all stressed the key role of education, particularly for women, in meeting their particular concerns. 'Literacy, like education in general, is not the driving force of historical change. It is not the only means of liberation, but it is an essential instrument for all social change' (1977 Declaration of Persepolis, quoted in Bown 1990, 8). While the impact of girls' schooling — and indeed, adult literacy — is hard to track, since it takes effect over the decades it takes for one generation to pass through school and bring up families, such evidence of impact as exists has been used to promote female education as a major determinant of family welfare. For example, 20 years ago research suggested that each extra year of maternal education (girls' schooling) was associated with a 9 per cent decrease in under-five mortality (Caldwell 1979).

However, gender power relations in society are not challenged if girls and women are only offered the opportunity to learn in order to improve their future efficacy as family managers or even as the primary providers for children. As Fiona Leach emphasises in her article, 'the record of schooling as a force for change in gender relations — in Northern as well as Southern countries — is generally poor' (Leach, this issue). For example, research into the link between women's educational attainments and their economic participation has emphasised that, while lack of
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literacy and numeracy are indeed barriers to women's participation in these arenas, skills not only need to be matched by other types of knowledge necessary for these occupations, but by changes in structural factors which constrain the nature of women's participation in economic activities (Bown 1990).

Despite the widespread use of the language of empowerment by international bodies, governments, and development NGOs alike, this concept has not generally been taken on in practice (Rowlands 1997). Promoting education for women with the rationale only of enabling women to take decisions in a situation of continuing cultural and economic inequality means justice for women cannot be attained. Ironically, the outcomes that development planners and policy-makers would like to see may also be impossible to achieve: the current shift in emphasis in population control policies to convincing men to accept the need for contraception reflects women's lack of power to negotiate the use of contraceptives in their relationships, even when they have knowledge of them and access to the technology (Gender and Development 5:2, July 1997). A startling example is given in research in Punjab, India, which found that educating women did not appear to have an effect on high rates of infant mortality among girl children. In fact, high-birth-order daughters born to educated mothers had the same risk of dying in childhood as those of uneducated mothers; greater control over fertility and child mortality did not affect the problems of economic poverty and cultural bias towards boy children (Dasgupta 1987).

Education, literacy and empowerment

The agenda of donors who stress the need to educate women to promote development along Western lines is questioned by Southern feminists, including Sara Longwe in her article in this collection. Questioning the kinds of education offered to both children and adults in the name of 'progress' has been a part of the process of casting off domination by colonial powers; in his influential work in adult education for liberation in Central America, Paulo Freire distinguished between learning skills including literacy and numeracy, and education as 'the practice of freedom' (Freire 1973). Training and education 'for transformation' stress the importance of methods of iterative learning. The delivery of 'knowledge' from teacher to pupil should be replaced by education which respects the existing knowledge of the learners, and acknowledges that all involved are 'co-learners' (Pritchard-Hughes 1996, in the context of adult education in Australia).

Rosemary Gordon's article focuses on research into stereotyping of gender roles in the context of the formal education system in Zimbabwe, through teaching methods and materials which come from a male-dominated educational establishment. Curricula and methods which are supposedly gender-neutral will continue to replicate stereotyped and restrictive views of the role of women in society in both child and adult education. However, not only conventional school-based systems of learning, but also 'transformatory' methods of education have come under fire from feminist educators, who assert that all methods of learning which are regarded as neutral on gender issues actually reinforce male domination of society in general, and the education system in particular.

In her article, Carolyn Medel-Anoneuvo confirms that the success of participatory education methods in taking on learners' own community-based concerns has not, in general, been matched by successes in questioning oppressive gender stereotypes. In their article on the REFLECT method of literacy training, Sara Cottingham, Kate Metcalf, and Bimal Phuyal of the British-based NGO, ACTIONAID, discuss ways in
which participatory approaches to poverty alleviation and community-based learning have been enriched by feminist perspectives. In contrast to the lesser involvement of NGOs in the provision of formal education of children, NGOs like ACTIONAID are an important part of what Carolyn Medel-Anuevo calls the ‘broader adult education community’, in her article. The approach taken by REFLECT is to teach skills alongside community development initiatives which stress the importance of solving problems associated with poverty and marginalisation. Without these practical improvements to the quality of life, attaining literacy can only be of very limited use; women may simply become ‘better managers of poverty’ (Kandiyoti, quoted by Graham-Brown, seminar 1991, Oxfam). Moreover, as Cottingham et al observe, this focus on practical issues must be linked to the strategic aim of challenging gender stereotypes: literacy programmes which do not expressly address gender issues result all too often in women learners studying ‘home economics, sewing and didactic materials with a sexist orientation’ (Ballera 1995, 5, in the context of Latin America).

Education and training for transformation

Education with a feminist core ‘... is a participatory, democratic, non-hierarchical pedagogy which encourages creative thinking that breaks through embedded formats of producing knowledge’ (Walters and Manicom 1996, 7). In her article, Sara Longwe builds on this perspective, in the context of both formal education and training of adult women offered by development programmes. In both contexts, Longwe distinguishes between ‘schooling for subordination’ and ‘education for empowerment’.

The radical agenda of Longwe’s education for empowerment presents a huge contrast to conventional conceptions of adult education and training. Such a vision of education for empowerment is deeply threatening for the mainstream, male-dominated organisations at national and international level who define world development (Gender and Development 5:1 on Organisational Culture). Many development workers have perceived ‘gender issues’ as a technical concern of promoting women’s involvement in development activities, which can be taken enacted without any change in the values and aims of the development organisation. ‘Gender training’ has been seen as the technical fix which could achieve this, as Fenella Porter and Ines Smyth discuss in their article. Such a view of training is in line with conventional models of bureaucratic training associated with mainstream business designed to meet the requirements of employers; a characterisation of it might include a narrow task-related focus, a short, finite duration, and a one-way delivery of knowledge and expertise from expert to novice. This kind of training reflects an assumption that trainees should be enabled to meet the existing agenda of the institution; there is a focus on delivering skills and information whose purpose is not in question.

In reality, gender training and other forms of training for transformation have a radical agenda, stressing the need to question existing power structures, and linking personal beliefs and behaviour to women’s lack of participation in the workplace, the market and the state. In her article on gender training as a component of a major education project in Nepal to increase girls’ access to schools, Mo Sibbons describes a complex process of training and awareness-raising of education professionals and community representatives, and the barriers which were encountered along the way.

Learning opportunities are also afforded by popular education, involving media and communications strategies which break
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down the false distinction between activities which entertain and those which inform. Many of the innovative techniques of participatory education, used with adults and with children, emphasise the need to make learning enjoyable as well as relevant to the learner. In her article on the joint work of Ethiopian and Italian NGOs to promote awareness of the harmful effects of traditional practices, including female genital mutilation (FGM), Beatrice Spadacini discusses training and other methods of informal adult education, in the context of an innovative popular-education strategy aimed at decision-makers in communities. An integral part of this vision is valuing women’s own knowledge and perspectives on their lives, and promoting discussion of aspects which are considered beneficial or harmful: ‘part of the task of a worldwide movement for women’s education must be to gain recognition for this knowledge and women’s role in preserving and disseminating it’ (Goldsmith and Wright 1991, 1).

Promoting learning in a time of crisis

Empowerment through education is ideally seen as a continuous process with cognitive, psychological, economic and political dimensions in order to achieve emancipation. Given the complexity of political, societal and international inter-relations, one has to systematically think about strategies and concrete proposals for future action if one hopes to achieve such a goal (Medel-Anonuevo and Bochynek 1995, 10).

It is clear that in the eight years since the Jomtien Conference on formal education in 1990, progress has been slow on increasing access to formal education opportunities for children of both sexes, but for girls in particular. At the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995, commitments made at Jomtien were echoed in promises to ensure universal education of primary-age children by 2000, and to closing the ‘gender-gap’ in primary and secondary education by 2005 (Platform of Action paragraph 80). However, this is a remote possibility; since the start of the decade the situation has actually worsened in some regions. Since 1992, the number of children of primary-school age not enrolled in sub-Saharan African schools has risen by two million to 39.3 million; two-thirds of these are girls, and the gender disparity is widening, despite international commitments to closing this ‘gender gap’ within the first three years of the next century (Oxfam submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 1998, 5).

In her article focusing on the outcome for women of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo stresses that words must be matched by action. While it is too early to see the impact of the CONFINTEA V conference on adult education, feminist educators are increasingly influential in shaping international agendas on education, asserting the need for women not only to gain access to learning, but to participate fully in determining the content of the learning opportunities on offer. Education which is friendly to girls and women must be, first, relevant to their lives; second, it must challenge stereotypes of gender roles. All learners — both female and male, regardless of race, economic status or ability — deserve to find inspiration through education to enable them to design more equitable societies. While international donors and states hope that increased education will result in women taking on various development messages, and being able to put these into practice at household and community level, if women are to fulfil these expectations, genuine shifts in power must accompany the acquisition of knowledge, and development professionals must take the risk that ‘empowered’ women may disagree with their agendas and demand to shape their own.
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Notes

1 While in post-industrial societies attention is currently shifting to issues facing males in education, on a worldwide scale these issues must be seen to be of comparatively minor importance.

2 High-birth-order — younger daughters in a large family
Gender, education and training:
an international perspective

Fiona Leach

Women’s participation in formal education continues to be lower than that of men. This article examines a range of reasons for the persistence of this gender gap, and also why the education provided in schools has generally had little impact on women’s status in society.

‘More than 100 million women are “missing” worldwide’.

This shocking statistic was cited by Lawrence Summers, a former Vice-President of the World Bank, in a 1994 seminar paper entitled Investing in All the People: Educating Women in Developing Countries. In a dramatic way, it reveals to us the low value placed on women’s lives in many countries. Evidence of this low value is to be found in the global figures of women dying in childbirth, greater infant mortality rates among girls than boys, high levels of female malnutrition and ill-health, and the practice in some countries of girl infanticide. Together, these result in the huge disparity in global population figures referred to above. The low value placed on women’s lives is also reflected in the unequal access by women and men to services provided by the state, of which health care is one, and education — the focus of this article — another. According to UNESCO sources (1996), there are an estimated 556 million illiterate women in the countries of the South, compared to 315 million illiterate men. There are also 73 million out-of-school girls, compared to 37 million out-of-school boys. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, 27 million girls are not in school (Odaja and Heneveld 1995).

In this paper I shall briefly examine this imbalance in educational participation among women and men in developing countries around the world, and reflect on its causes and consequences. At the same time, I shall question the extent to which the type of education that young people are exposed to contributes to greater gender equity in society, or whether it merely serves to reinforce the status quo in gender relations. Obtaining parity between boys and girls in school, in access and achievement, is important, not least because education is a universally acknowledged human right. However, achieving parity is not enough. We need to ask ‘What kind of education?’ and ‘Whom does it benefit?’ To what extent does formal education help women to improve their lives in a society where they are economically, socially, and politically subservient to men? Does it enable them to obtain skilled work, exercise control over their bodies and their lives, take on leadership and representational
roles, and to be equal partners in decision-making at the household, community, and national level?

Most of the discussion that follows focuses on formal education in developing countries. By formal education I refer to learning that takes place in schools, colleges, and universities. However, I shall also briefly consider non-formal adult education and training, which consists of all kinds of organised learning taking place outside formal education, for example, literacy programmes for adults, vocational training for out-of-school youth, business training, leadership training, gender sensitisation, and training in community development.

‘Education’ and ‘schooling’ are not, however, synonymous, and many critics would suggest that ‘schooling’ (in its worst manifestation of mindless rote-learning) is not ‘education’ at all. It is of course possible for schools to act simultaneously both as a force for change, by providing young people with knowledge and skills for their own and the nation’s prosperity, and as a vehicle for reinforcing existing social norms and values. However, the record of schooling as a force for change in gender relations — in Northern as well as Southern countries — is generally poor. While a minority of women acquire skills which equip them for paid employment, schooling has not fundamentally changed their subordinate position or challenged deep-rooted views of women’s primary role as unpaid wife and mother. Does the kind of education offered to girls merely serve to reinforce the status quo of patriarchal relations, by preparing young girls to accept a predetermined future under the control of men, and teaching boys that they should expect to exercise this control as their ‘natural right’? Indeed, if we accept that society is structured along gender lines (as well as along class and racial lines), it would not be unreasonable to assume that the school, as one of society’s fundamental institutions, reflects this structuring. So, just as the control of resources has allowed economic elites to buy better quality education for their children, who can thus expect to earn higher incomes, schooling has allowed men to retain control over women.

**Growing awareness of gender disparities in education**

It has only been in the past decade or so that deliberate strategies have been developed by governments in the South to encourage girls into formal education. For a long time, enrolment statistics and exam pass rates were not sex-disaggregated, and it was assumed that education (and training) at all levels was accessible to, and benefited, males and females in equal measure. In other words, girls and boys entered the competition for school places as if from a ‘level playing field’, and once in school were treated alike. This was always far from reality; the scale of gender inequality in access to education began to be recognised by governments and donor agencies once the initial post-independence rush of the 1950s and 1960s to expand educational systems worldwide began to slow down. By the 1970s, it was apparent that girls were falling behind boys on all three indicators of educational participation: access (numbers enrolling), retention (length of time spent in school), and achievement (exam passes, especially in maths and science) (Fagerlind and Saha 1989).

Even when this imbalance became obvious, it was not seen as very serious by governments intent on rapid economic development, based on the creation of a modern sector economy, with a skilled and well-disciplined workforce which was almost exclusively male. With female roles seen as reproductive and domestic in support of the male breadwinners of the family, getting more girls into school was
clearly not a priority. The fact that women, though largely absent from the formal workplace and hence from official labour statistics, were nevertheless heavily engaged in subsistence agriculture and in the informal sector of the economy did not shift the perception that women were reproducers, not producers. It was ironic but not surprising that from the earliest days of colonial education, any educational opportunities targeted specifically at women were in the area of home economics (as an extension of their reproductive role), not agriculture (which was where many women spent most of their time). (Hansen 1992; Rogers 1980).

However, the 1970s witnessed the growth of campaigning for women’s rights in the South as an extension to the feminist movement which had swept through many countries of the North a decade earlier. In the development arena this became known as the Women In Development (WID) approach (later to be overtaken by Gender And Development or GAD). WID’s focus on integrating women into existing development models brought new attention to girls’ unequal access to education, which was linked to widespread poverty throughout the developing world. Despite massive government investments in social and economic development supported by donors and international banks, an estimated two-thirds of the world’s poor (Chinery-Hesse 1990) and two-thirds of the world’s adult illiterates (UNESCO 1996) were female. It was not difficult to conclude that those women who were poor were also those who were illiterate. There appeared to be a clear link between poverty, illiteracy, and gender.

While the exact nature of this link is not easy to establish (the acquisition of literacy does not automatically lift people out of poverty), there is no doubt that reading is the key to the accumulated knowledge of the human race. Those who do not learn to read may be able to survive economically, for example, in small-scale self-employment; but in the long term they will be at a disadvantage. Strategies to alleviate poverty would therefore have to address the issue of the under-enrolment of girls in education, for out-of-school girls would become the adult poor of the future.

The consequences of gender inequality in education

The consequences of women and girls’ limited access to education are to be found in their low participation in the modern, formal labour market, less than 10 per cent in some countries (ILO 1995). In most countries men occupy overwhelmingly the well-paid and secure skilled jobs available, including most management and supervisory positions. While men also face poverty and economic exploitation, women’s lower levels of education and literacy, combined with prevailing discrimination against women’s employment (except in the electronics and garment industries where women are preferred as assembly-line workers) means that they cannot compete for the few jobs available. This leaves women in casual, poorly paid, and insecure jobs, usually in the informal sector, where they have to work long hours, often in hazardous conditions, just to guarantee economic survival. Women working as street traders, domestic workers, unskilled labourers on plantations, mechanised farms, and construction sites, and in unregulated small enterprises are easy victims of persecution, harassment, and sexual abuse. Often women are obliged to engage in illicit economic activity such as unauthorised street trading, brewing of alcohol, and prostitution.

Lack of education makes access to information and services difficult for women, and limits their mobility, share in decision-making, and life opportunities. It also makes it less likely that they will take on
prominent roles in community affairs, since leaders are invariably expected to be educated, both for practical reasons and because education bestows status, and in that sense is empowering. Lack of education disadvantages women in their participation in both productive and community spheres: the two spheres of activity which conventionally confer status on individuals.

The international agenda on education

It is a feature of initiatives to promote both formal education for girls and non-formal education for adult women that they are largely donor-driven. The concern over unequal participation in education gained impetus from the United Nations Third World Conference on Women, in Nairobi in 1985, which produced 29 Forward Looking Strategies relating to formal, vocational, and non-formal education. But it was not until the World Conference on Education For All (EFA) which was held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, that the issue was squarely addressed. The Jomtien Conference brought together 155 governments and all the major donors and development banks, to pledge involvement in a decade-long initiative to achieve the goal of universal primary education by the year 2000, aimed at halving the current estimated figure of 885 million adult illiterates. To the delegates, it was clear that if universal primary education was to be achieved, getting more girls into school was of paramount importance, as two-thirds of the 110 million out-of-school children were girls (UNESCO, 1996).

Initiatives at Jomtien and subsequently were launched against a background of world economic recession and structural adjustment policies imposed on developing countries. These policies had already affected educational provision in some of the poorest countries, and the gap between male and female enrolments in primary education and between male and female illiteracy rates was actually widening. This was particularly the case in sub-Saharan Africa, where most new illiterates are female, but also in parts of East and South Asia (UNESCO 1996).

The benefits of educating women

The 'family welfare' perspective

Although, since the mid-1980s, government interest in education in the South has shifted to girls, this was not from concern with the benefits of education for women themselves in terms of their empowerment. Rather it stems from a realisation of the impact of women's education on socio-economic development (its 'rate of return'). The benefits of educating girls and women have tended to be seen not primarily as employment-related, as has been the case with boys, but as a means to improve family health and welfare. In particular, women's education has been shown to be linked to reduced infant and maternal mortality, greater access to education for children (especially daughters), and, of crucial significance for donors and governments preoccupied with the global population explosion, to reduced fertility rates.

Typical sentiments are:

A better-educated mother has fewer and better-educated children. She is more productive at home and in the workplace. And she raises a healthier family, since she can better apply improved hygiene and nutritional practices. Education can even substitute for community health programs by informing women about health care and personal hygiene, and it can complement such programs by raising income and promoting greater recognition of the value of these services [...]. So important is the influence of mothers' education on children's health and nutritional status that it reduces mortality rates (King and Hill, 1993, 12-13).
From the family-welfare perspective, even the importance of a woman’s education for her productive, as opposed to her reproductive, role is significant not because it increases her ability to earn an independent income, but because it enhances her contribution to family welfare: ‘... women’s education also indirectly improves infant survival rates by leading to higher market productivity for women, and thus to better living standards for the family.’ (King and Hill, 1993, p 18)

Acknowledging women’s full socio-economic role
The realisation that increasing numbers of women fulfil important productive roles, and that increasing numbers of households are now headed by women who may be the sole providers for the family, has come slowly. Usually driven by poverty and deprivation, but also for the more fortunate minority, by the desire for a career and economic independence, women are heavily engaged in economic activity in all countries of the world. The failure of societies and governments to acknowledge this has meant that schools continue to prepare girls only for domestic roles rather than for careers. This has done women a great disservice and increased their economic vulnerability.

Working towards gender equity in education
Despite the evidence of the benefits of educating women, progress towards gender equity in education has been slow. The governments of the poorest nations face many urgent economic problems, and the men who fill most civil service posts continue to maintain age-old traditional attitudes regarding appropriate male and female roles in society. So it has been the donors, especially bilateral donors in Northern Europe and the USA, prodded by vocal women’s groups keen to place centre stage the worldwide oppression of women, who have made girls’ education a priority. Donors have persuaded, often bullied, governments in the South to introduce a whole host of policies and strategies to increase the enrolment of girls, but these have had little impact. Most attention has been given to primary education, despite the broader concept of basic education formulated at the Jomtien Conference, which encompasses non-formal as well as formal modes.

Barriers to increasing gender equity in education
The lowest enrolments of girls — and the largest gender gaps — are inevitably in the poorest and least economically developed areas, especially in rural communities where educational provision is poor, among children of the poorest families, and among children of ethnic minorities (Brock and Cammish, 1991). The gender gap also increases as young people move up the educational ladder, so that even in countries where there is little or no gap at primary level (as is the case in many parts of East Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean), the gap starts to appear in secondary schooling and is generally very marked at university level; in some countries only 20 per cent of students in tertiary education are female (UNDP 1997).

Given this severe gender imbalance in education, many studies have sought to identify the barriers to girls’ participation in education (for example, Brock and Cammish 1991; Tietjen 1991). Barriers arising from social and economic circumstances have been well researched; poverty is clearly the most serious barrier, combined with social and cultural conventions that dictate that a woman’s place is in the home, as mother and housewife. Where parents cannot afford to send all their children to school, boys are inevitably given priority, as future
breadwinners. Girls are kept at home to look after younger children, cook and clean, and sometimes help the mother in farming or market trading.

As girls reach puberty and marriageable age, parents are reluctant to let them travel long distances to school, especially in insecure rural areas. Fear of the shame of pregnancy outside marriage is a strong reason for parents to keep daughters at home. Girls' traditional initiation into adulthood in some African countries, strict segregation in some Asian and North African/Middle Eastern countries, and early marriage are also major barriers. Male fears that educated girls will be 'uncontrollable', 'disobedient' and 'unmarriageable' may not be voiced but nevertheless exist.

These barriers are most entrenched in countries in Africa, South Asia, and some parts of the Middle East. Even where there are exceptions in these regions for particular economic or cultural reasons (for example, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland all have more girls than boys enrolled in both primary and secondary education) (UNESCO 1995), girls' level of achievement still remains low, especially at the secondary level. It is in the relatively more prosperous countries of South East and East Asia and the Caribbean, as well as in the industrialised countries of the North, that girls are significantly outstripping boys in terms of both enrolment and achievement (which is leading to much government concern over 'under-achieving boys'). This trend is probably related to the high quality of schooling and the considerably greater employment opportunities for women.

In addition to barriers to girls' education which stem from economic and socio-cultural factors, there are significant barriers within the school system itself. In parts of Africa and Latin America, schools have become violent places where girls are at risk of verbal and sexual harassment, physical violence, and rape. Punishment of the perpetrators of such crimes, whether teachers or students (usually male), is rare, whereas social condemnation of the victims (usually female) is depressingly frequent. Many countries, including Nigeria, Zambia, and China, operate a policy of expelling pregnant schoolgirls.

Other barriers to girls' achievement which have tended to be ignored derive from gender stereotyping in the curriculum, especially in textbooks, where girls tend to be portrayed as passive, modest, and shy, while boys are seen as assertive, brave and ambitious. In addition, different subject choices may be made available to girls and boys (maths and science for boys, home economics and languages for girls). Teachers may show differentiated attitudes towards male and female students (a boy needs a career whereas a girl needs a husband). They tend to be dismissive and discouraging towards girls and to give more classroom time to boys, who are usually more demanding. Even when girls are encouraged to pursue a career, they are expected to opt for the 'caring' professions, in other words teaching and nursing. Moreover, the 'hidden curriculum' of school practice reinforces messages about girls' inferior status on a daily basis and provides them with a negative learning experience, thus creating a culture of low self-esteem and low aspirations (e.g. Gordon 1995 on Zimbabwe; Davison and Kanyuka 1992 on Malawi).

Non-formal education and training: a way around?

Despite the fact that participants at the 1990 Jomtien Conference made firm commitments to non-formal education, this has continued to receive minimal funding. Much non-formal education for women has taken the form of literacy training, often combined with information on health and family planning, or with income-generating
activities. These programmes have usually been run by NGOs; on the whole, the evidence is that they have had a very low level of success for both men and women, all too often continuing to reflect the same gender biases that prevail in formal education by reinforcing women’s traditional domestic, reproductive, and community helper role. For example, Rogers (1994) found that even when literacy is part of a broad programme of support which includes income generation, the two sets of activities were kept separate, so opportunities to use the one to enhance the other were missed. For example, women were not encouraged to use their new literacy and numeracy skills for basic bookkeeping. Often, literacy classes for women are held in a different language than those for men (a national or regional language for men, local language for women). Yet, literacy and numeracy are crucial to women’s economic, social, and political autonomy.

The same biases exist in vocational training. Females have always been in the minority in vocational training institutes. Where they are present they are usually clustered in non-technical areas such as secretarial studies, dressmaking and tailoring, and cookery. In some countries, quota systems have been introduced to persuade girls to take up technical subjects, for example in the Caribbean in the 1980s (Ellis, 1990); but peer pressure, ridicule, harassment, and abuse from male students and teachers have largely deterred girls from entering non-traditional skill areas.

The fact that women do not take up vocational training opportunities has serious implications for their chances of acquiring skilled jobs. They enter a highly competitive and discriminatory labour market with fewer marketable skills and qualifications than men. Even if they do get jobs, they are likely to be jobs that men do not want or for which men are considered unsuitable, for example, on assembly lines for electronic goods.

Fortunately, some NGOs have initiated education and training programmes which have sought to genuinely empower women, such as popular education, gender awareness training, and leadership training. Not surprisingly, the most empowering projects have probably been those which women themselves have initiated, having decided on their own training needs, without outside help.

**Initiatives to close the gender gap**

Two factors outlined above have influenced both the type of initiatives undertaken to close the ‘gender gap’ that exists in education, and their level of success. Firstly, policies on gender and education in the poorest countries have been largely donor-driven; and, secondly, initiatives have been largely confined to strategies to increase girls’ access to education and have not sought to address the causes of the gender gap itself.

Regarding the first factor, governments of poor countries which are heavily dependent on aid to supplement their meagre budgets have little choice but to place girls’ education at the top of their list of concerns, regardless of whether they are committed to it or not. It is not surprising, then, if the commitment remains on paper as rhetoric, and that there has been little attempt to introduce and implement gender policy in education, which would require the institutionalisation of gender analysis and affirmative action. Officials may well express verbally their irritation or resentment over the high priority attached to girls’ education by agencies reflecting their own Western values; and WID sections of ministries or Ministries of Women’s Affairs have had limited powers and resources, and hence limited impact.

Regarding the second factor, donors and governments, not surprisingly, have chosen
a somewhat timid and superficial approach to the problem. They have neither sought to introduce radical changes to the educational system itself or to change social attitudes towards the education of girls. In fact they have failed to grasp, or do not wish to grasp, the link between the low enrolment of girls and women’s subordinate status in society — perhaps out of fear of unleashing uncontrollable forces which would overturn the existing system of patriarchy.

It is possibly true that the more effective initiatives have come from outside government offices and donor agencies (although they may well receive substantial donor funding). For example, the Forum for African Educationalists (FAWE) which brings together a number of African women in high-ranking government or university positions to act in a lobbying and advocacy role in support of women’s education has had a significant impact in a short period of time. Among NGOs, the internationally renowned Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) now runs over 30,000 schools, in which most students are girls.

In contrast, government and donor initiatives have tended to be content to ‘tinker with’ the system, rather than change it. They have preferred to give most attention to formal education rather than look for non-formal and possibly more effective alternatives. And their support has mainly focused on creating more school places and providing incentives to get girls into school, for example, free uniforms, school feeding programmes, scholarships, siting schools closer to communities, providing boarding-school places and scholarships for girls at the secondary level, recruiting more female teachers, especially in societies where co-education is frowned upon and parents are reluctant to have older girls taught by male teachers.

One example of a large-scale conventional project on girls’ education would be the Girls’ Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project supported by USAID in Malawi. More common have been large-scale basic or primary education projects which contain a strong gender component. Examples include the multi-donor General Education Project (GEP) in Bangladesh, USAID’s multi-country Advancing Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL) programme, and Colombia’s Escuela Nueva programme. The impact of this integrated approach in significantly changing attitudes towards girls’ education is doubtful. Other innovations that have been tried out are flexible school schedules so that girls can complete household tasks before attending school; school-based child care so that girls looking after younger siblings can attend; alternative fast-track forms of schooling; and secularising the curriculum of Koranic or Mosque schools. There have also been limited attempts at media campaigns to get more girls into school (Odaja and Heneveld 1995; King and Hill, 1993).

On the whole, however, donors and governments have opted for easy, and visible, strategies; building more schools and employing more teachers is somewhat easier than changing deeply entrenched social and cultural practices. As Stromquist (1994, 4) has pointed out, two critical educational elements, the curriculum and teacher training, have been largely ignored: ‘critical because it is at these two points that messages, practices and beliefs crystallise gender ideologies’.

At the same time, it is ironic that the broad agenda of educational policy and reform which donor agencies are promoting in developing countries, in line with the current state ideology of market liberalisation prevailing in the countries of the North, is itself detrimental to increased participation by girls in education. The World Bank, now the largest single source of external financing of education, contributing a full 25 per cent of all such funds, amounting to around $2 billion per annum (World Bank 1995), is in particular enthusiastically endorsing worldwide moves
towards decentralisation of education, the introduction of school fees and other cost-sharing mechanisms in the name of community involvement in education, the privatisation and deregulation of training, and on-the-job training.

All of these reforms risk undermining attempts to reduce the gender gap in education, for they are driven by considerations of efficiency (reducing costs) rather than equity. There has been very little analysis of the impact that such policies may be having on girls’ enrolments. For example, parents who may be ready to send their daughters to school if provision is free are less likely to do so if fees and other levies are charged so that choices have to be made as to which child to send. Even community participation in educational decision-making, which most would accept as ‘a good thing’, may not be so if, as Nelly Stromquist points out: ‘parents and other community members subscribe to views of girls merely as potential mothers and consider a “relevant curriculum” only one that trains women for domestic roles’ (1994, p 26).

In rural areas, where conservative attitudes may prevail and where there are likely to be fewer employment opportunities for women, this may well be the case. The same can be said of promoting church-based or mosque-based education, because these institutions do not usually espouse a broad view of women’s role in society. Likewise, school heads and governors, who with increased school autonomy have greater powers to allocate resources and make curriculum and timetabling decisions, are unlikely to be ardent supporters of broadening female pupils’ horizons beyond early marriage and childrearing into higher education and worthwhile careers.

Conclusion

While considerable gains have been made in women’s access to education, which has benefited some, their participation continues to be lower than that of men. And crucially, there is evidence that these gains have had little impact on women’s status in the broader society. As Jayaweera’s recent study of Asian countries shows (1997) ‘there is no positive linear relationship between education and the economic, social and political empowerment of women’ (p 411). This is perhaps not surprising, for schooling does little to address the underlying causes of gender inequities in society. Attempts to get more girls into school have taken place in a social context where men usually dominate in all areas of decision-making and authority, and women are expected to play a subordinate and acquiescent role. So it is not surprising that the Jomtien Conference commitment to close the gender gap in basic education has been so ineffective — only 0.4 per cent in five years (based on UNESCO 1996 statistics) — despite the huge investment in the EFA initiative.

However, the institutions which are central in perpetuating inequalities in society can also help to eliminate them. The school has the potential to act as a vehicle of transformation, but only by first transforming itself. A school which offers young people a curriculum and a pedagogy that are gender-sensitive, that engage in gender analysis and action, will encourage both girls and boys to reach their full potential. The same applies to non-formal programmes of adult education and training. In their support for education, therefore, governments and donors need to move away from narrow and superficial interventions and seek to support the transformation of schooling within a context of broad programmes of social and economic reform, which directly tackle the problem of women’s low status.
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Education for women’s empowerment or schooling for women’s subordination?

Sara Hlupekile Longwe

This article is concerned with identifying the main elements in a programme of education for women’s empowerment, by contrasting such education with its opposite: schooling for subordination. It is here argued that education and training for women’s empowerment needs to reverse the values and beliefs which have been inculcated within the conventional school system.

Drawing on lessons from my experience in the field of gender and development, I believe it is necessary to distinguish between two very different perspectives on women’s advancement. The more limited perspective involves conventional schooling for women within the existing school system, sometimes as a basis for improving their overall position in society. But I interpret this instead as a process of schooling for women’s subordination. While this perspective considers only women’s advancement within the existing patriarchal social structure, the other, more radical, perspective sees women’s advancement as necessarily involving the transformation of patriarchal society. These alternative perspectives bring with them very different definitions of women’s empowerment. The weaker definition reinterprets the term as individual self-reliance, since the word ‘empowerment’ seems too strong for what is actually being proposed. This may be contrasted with the stronger meaning — a more proper use of the term women’s empowerment — which is essentially concerned with collective action to overcome gender inequality. On this definition, women’s empowerment is the process by which women collectively come to recognise and address the gender issues which stand in the way of their advancement. In a patriarchal society, these gender issues are the practices of gender discrimination which are entrenched in custom, law, and ideological belief. In this paper, I argue that the more limited perspective, by editing out the political and ideological dimensions of women’s struggle, cannot provide any adequate theoretical basis for women’s advancement. Instead, this watered-down interpretation of the process of women’s advancement provides the basis and legitimisation for women’s continued subordination.

Alternative perspectives on gender training

Adult education and training for empowerment are concerned with the process of enlightenment, conscientisation, and collective organisation. This involves a collective effort by adult women to throw off the patriarchal beliefs and attitudes they
imbibed during their years of formal schooling. Gender training may offer such an opportunity; or, alternatively, it may be part of the conservative agenda which perpetuates women's subordination.

As a preliminary general definition, gender training may be defined as training to provide the skills and methods for improved gender-orientation of development programmes. Such training is provided to development agencies, to enable programmes to be designed in a way which recognises and addresses gender issues which stand in the way of development. Comprehensive training is directed at people at all levels of the development process: from policy makers at one end, to the affected community at the other. But, while we may all agree on the above general definition of gender training, I argue that any attempt to define the term more closely exposes the distinction between conservative and radical definitions.

**The conservative definition of gender training**

The conservative definition of gender training relates to the perception that gender issues in development are primarily concerned with increasing women's access to resources, based on an understanding of the present gender division of labour, and the gender division in access to productive resources. This understanding of the role of gender training is still rooted in the Boserup perception that women are an 'overlooked resource'.

A example of this can be drawn from the story of a development programme which failed because it gave a heavier burden of labour to the women of the community, when they were already overburdened and stretched to the limit. The lesson from a conservative reading of this cautionary tale is that development workers should first 'do the gender analysis' to reveal the gender division of labour between women and men in that community. Development interventions will then be able to utilise women's labour more effectively, lessen their burden of labour, increase their access to labour-saving technology, and provide the skills for more efficient production. This means women's participation in the programme can be encouraged, and they will receive increased benefits from it. This is seen as the key to effective programme implementation.

Clearly, the overall perception here is that the efficiency of programmes can be much improved if they are based on a proper understanding of the social and economic location of women, and their special needs. At the planning level, gender training is therefore directed at ensuring that interventions are based on a detailed situation analysis of the gender division of labour and access to resources. At the community level, gender training is directed towards training women in acquiring productive skills, accessing productive resources, using appropriate labour-saving technology, improving literacy, and so on.

**The radical definition of gender training**

The radical definition of gender training can be understood as being a reaction to the limitations of the conservative perspective. The conservative definition overlooks the extent to which the unequal division of labour and women's limited access to resources are entrenched elements within the patriarchal structure of society. In a patriarchal society, the essential underlying gender-based division is that men have the larger share in decision making, and women have the larger share of work. This pattern is very much in the male interest, and rooted in patriarchal traditional belief. Therefore, as a development programme attempts any redistribution of resources between the sexes, the programme will run into patriarchal resistance. In a patriarchal society, women's limited access to resources is based on established discriminatory practices (often
sanctioned by law), which ensure male privilege. In Southern Africa, this male privilege includes the control and ownership of land, and the control of family income. Women themselves are also ‘owned’ by men, who buy them for a brideprice, and may ‘own’ several wives. Male wealth is based on exploitation of female labour, and individual male wealth may be increased by acquisition of additional wives.

The conservative perspective on gender and development is confined to a merely technical or economic approach to gender issues, overlooking this political dimension. If the conservative project of increasing women’s access to resources is actually attempted, it immediately runs into the problem that women’s access to resources is limited by entrenched gender discrimination which ensures male control over those same resources. Therefore increasing women’s access to resources would necessitate the removal of these discriminatory practices. A development programme must either tackle this political dimension, or abdicate any claim that it is addressing issues of gender inequality in access to resources.

Here lies the difference between the conservative and radical approaches to gender training. Radical gender training takes as its starting point that gender inequality in access to resources is the superficial or economic aspect of the problem, and that development must entail recognising and addressing the underlying causes which are rooted in structural gender inequality.

Radical gender training is concerned with enabling participants to recognise the political and ideological dimensions of gender inequality, and to address problems on this basis. Gender training is therefore largely concerned with the process of ‘conscientisation’: of enabling participants to step outside of patriarchal culture, and adopt a more feminist consciousness. Conscientisation involves the crucial realisation and revelation that women’s poverty and low status does not arise primarily from their own lack of individual effort, or from lack of literacy or schooling.

Conscientisation involves women’s identification of the extent to which their problems arise from gender discrimination within the social system, which automatically cuts them off from the opportunities which are given to men. Within a situation of structural gender inequality, women’s advancement cannot be ensured by policies purely concerned with women’s increased effort, skill training, and increased productivity. Instead, gender training must provide the analytical tools to enable participants to become dissatisfied with the current unequal status of men and women within society, which they (may have) previously accepted and taken for granted.

Radical gender training is also concerned with enabling people whose dissatisfaction was previously generated and dissipated at the personal and domestic level, to collectively mobilise around the analysis of gender issues, and around public action to address these issues.

Two definitions of women’s empowerment

One might reasonably expect that the two contrasting perspectives on gender and development, and therefore on gender training, outlined above would generate two quite different forms of discourse. However, there seems to be insufficient recognition of these two opposing paradigms within the field of gender and development. To a large extent proponents from the two sides of the divide seem, at least on the surface, to be saying much the same thing. Very often, the opposition of their positions cannot be found in the text, unless one is aware that each side is using the same words in a totally different way. A main purpose of this paper is to expose these two opposing points of view, which hide under the same vocabulary.
The word 'equity' is a good example. Both sides are likely to talk with equal enthusiasm about the importance of 'gender equity', but they are talking about very different things. When the conservatives talk of equity, it is because the word equality sticks in their throats. They have accepted the unequal position of women, and are trying to achieve a more 'just' or 'equitable' position for women within the existing patriarchal society. The radicals also use the word 'equity', but with a contrasting rationale. For them, equality for women within the present social system is insufficient, and falls short of their ideals: they are interested in structural transformation to create a more just society, run according to feminist principles. Because gender equality within a patriarchal society is undesirable and perhaps incomprehensible, they use the term 'gender equity' to denote their ambition for a new form of gender justice within an egalitarian society of the future.

**Economic empowerment, or self-reliance**

The central phrase in the *Beijing Platform for Action*, 'women's empowerment', is also used by the two opposing sides in different ways. The conservatives have a purely economic and individual version of this concept, which defines empowerment as women's capacity to make the best of their own lives. From this point of view a woman is 'empowered' when she is literate, educated, and has productive skills, access to capital, confidence in herself, and so on. Then she can 'get ahead', on the basis of her own qualifications and ability. The model for this 'empowered' woman seems to be the individual female entrepreneur or professional, who has got ahead of her sisters by her improved access to resources, and utilisation of these resources.

From the radical point of view, this view of empowerment is fatally limited. It is based on the advancement of the individual, without any societal perspective of the problem. It is concerned with enabling women to advance within the present society, rather than through structural transformation of society. It ignores the extent to which the empowered woman remains restricted by gender discrimination. It fails to address the gender dimension, since it does not address the question of whether a man, with the same access to resources as the 'empowered' woman, actually occupies a more privileged position in terms of control over income, social status, and political position in society.

This limited view of empowerment as individual self-reliance has no potential for recognising or addressing the question of how a woman can gain increased access to resources if the hurdles of gender discrimination remain in place. Even if proponents of the self-reliance model admit that gender discrimination needs to be removed, this model of empowerment provides no answer to the problem of structural inequality, and no understanding of the development process by which such structural inequality can be dismantled.

There seems to be an implicit assumption, within the 'self-reliance model', that women's increased access to resources is going to be 'given' by the men presently in control. (Explain it to them nicely!). But in politics nothing is given. Empowerment involves the process of taking. Or, more precisely, women's empowerment means generating enough political mobilisation and organisation so that women are in a position to take. If they wait to be given, definitely they shall wait forever.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the 'self-reliance model' ignores the extent to which the 'empowered' woman has got ahead at the expense of her sisters, for example by exploiting their cheap labour, or by being adopted as an 'honorary male' or 'token female' within the patriarchal system. If an individual woman's advancement is at the expense of her sisters, obviously the
method is not generally applicable to the rest of the sisterhood.

The full meaning of women’s empowerment
From the radical perspective, if ‘self-reliance’ is used interchangeably with ‘empowerment’, this entails a watering-down, even corruption, of the vocabulary of women’s advancement. This perspective has no theoretical power for exploring the political and ideological dimensions of women’s empowerment. It should be understood as part of a watered-down vocabulary for getting the awkward question of women’s empowerment off the political agenda. It is part of the vocabulary of a shallow discourse which has considerable potential for side-tracking and betraying women’s struggle.

Since a development programme is concerned with the process of social change, it is an ideal site for enabling and encouraging the process of women’s true empowerment. Community participation is now an accepted intervention strategy for most development agencies, so women’s participation within this development process provides the opportunity for increased empowerment. This entails women increasing their level of control over the allocation of resources by identifying and ending the discriminatory practices which stand in their way.

Conversely, if women fail to mobilise to advance their interests during programmes for social change, men will surely take full advantage of the changing situation to tighten the male monopoly of decision making, so as to gain further male advantage in the gender division of productive resources and other programme benefits.

Alternative perspectives on education for women’s empowerment
The above two perspectives on the meaning of women’s empowerment obviously entail the proposal of quite different types of intervention to enable women’s empowerment. This section turns from gender training to look at formal education, to distinguish between schooling for women’s subordination, and education for women’s empowerment.

Schooling for subordination
It is a common and somewhat unexamined belief that increased schooling for women will automatically bring about women’s advancement. It is often assumed that it is lack of schooling which has been holding women back. Increased female enrolment in schools is seen as a means to bring about gender equality in professional occupations, within government, and ultimately within the wider society. Such beliefs are based on the patriarchal explanation for women’s subordination, which is that women are in a subordinate position because of their lack of formal qualifications. In other words, lack of formal education has long been the patriarchal ‘excuse’ for women’s lower socio-economic status. Women’s lack of education becomes the legitimisation of male supremacy.

However, there is little or no evidence that women’s lack of formal schooling is a factor in women’s lower socio-economic status and subordinate position in the political arena. For example Zambia, immediately after independence, invested massively in schooling at all levels, and had achieved near universal primary education by the 1980s. At independence in 1964 there were only about five female university graduates; by 1991 there were about five thousand. But during this period the proportion of women in parliament did not change — it remained static, at about 6 per cent. In Zambia the socio-economic position of women relative to men has not changed much during this period. Despite the relatively high level of female schooling, legalised discrimination against women still exists in Zambia today: gender discrimination under customary law
remains protected under the new 1996 Constitution.

Internationally, there may be a general correlation between women's level of schooling and their level of political participation, but the Zambian example strongly suggests that there is no causal connection. The case of the United States is even more notable; here, women's high levels of formal schooling have not disturbed the male grip upon the political system, and female representation in the US Congress remains at 14 per cent.

The main reason why women's increased levels of formal schooling does not affect their level of political representation is that the political system is a male club which operates a gatekeeping system to keep women out. Women's lack of schooling will be used as part of the legitimisation for this gatekeeping, for as long as it appears to be a valid excuse. But when women gain high levels of schooling, other criteria for gatekeeping become more important. For example, women are excluded because it is said that they have no time for politics because of domestic duties; because they are under the control of a husband; because they lack the necessary aggression for political office; and so on. Patriarchal gatekeeping also involves a range of 'dirty tricks' to prevent women being adopted as candidates for political office.

But if we take the broader view, will women's higher level of schooling enable them to better recognise and address gender issues, and contribute to women's struggle? Will women with schooling begin their own independent women's movement, to challenge the male club which controls the political system, and which maintains the state system of gender discrimination? In other words, can schooling provide the basis for women's empowerment?

In my experience — as a former teacher as well as a pupil — schools have entirely the opposite effect. Schools are patriarchal establishments which are grounded in the values and rules of patriarchal society. Pupils are schooled to conform, and to do as they are told. In other words, girls are taught to accept patriarchal authority, and not to ask questions or think for themselves. Obviously this process is the opposite of education. That is why I refer to it as 'schooling'.

Females are schooled to accept the 'naturalness' of male domination. They are schooled to accept success on male terms. The few women who reach the top are schooled to behave as 'honorary males'. Top women professionals are accepted on sufferance within the male system, and have been schooled to believe that women already have equality — because they themselves have reached the top! They will even boldly ask 'I got to the top, so what's wrong with you others?' In other words, most top women suffer from the 'Thatcher syndrome'. It is schools which inflicted it on them.

Such an 'honorary male' is often also a 'queen bee': the last thing she wants to do is to enable any other woman to follow in her tracks. On the contrary, she will constantly kick back down the ladder, to prevent any other female ascending to challenge her unrivalled and peculiar position as an honorary male amongst the men. She is violently opposed to affirmative action to increase the proportion of women, and will argue that 'I got here on merit, and so must the others!'

Here we see that schooling facilitates the promotion of a few women within the existing patriarchal system. The honorary male contributes to the continuation of the system that subordinates her sisters. In other words, it is schooling for self-reliance, not education for empowerment. The honorary male cannot be part of the women's struggle. She is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

It might be thought that, if this is the problem, then the solution should be reform of the formal school system in order
to provide education for women's empowerment. There is no space, in this short paper, to consider the difficulties of reforming the school system. Suffice it to say that any attempt to divert the school from its present role (of inter-generational reproduction of patriarchy) will automatically attract firm and immediate opposition from the patriarchal establishment. Therefore, such reform can only be launched from a position of political power.

This reverses the argument. We began with a consideration of the proposition that women's increased schooling can lead to women's empowerment. Now we have argued towards a position which is nearly opposite: that first we need women's empowerment, before schools can contribute towards women's advancement.

**Education for women's empowerment**

So if schools can provide only schooling for self-reliance, and for the reproduction of patriarchy, where can we find education for women's empowerment? It is here that radical forms of gender training, summarised above, may prove instructive. Below are listed some of the more politically and ideologically oriented objectives which may be found within training for gender orientation of development programmes:

By the end of the training, participants should believe that gender discrimination is morally wrong, and be able to:

- recognise gender issues in their own personal experience
- analyse gender issues
- identify discriminatory practices which stand in the way of gender equality
- identify underlying patriarchal interests and beliefs which legitimate discriminatory practices
- recognise opposition to gender-oriented policies
- identify specific forms of institutional resistance to policies of gender equality
- design strategies to counter political and bureaucratic opposition to policies of gender equality
- suggest a sequence of collective actions, as a means of ending discriminatory practices and overcoming patriarchal opposition.

The above list might strike the reader as rather strange, even unsettling! The list has two main ideological elements. Firstly it asks the participant to see the world in a different way. The participant is asked to identify gender inequalities and discrimination which were previously accepted as 'natural' or 'normal'. Secondly, the participant is asked to see gender discrimination as unjust and morally unacceptable. Finally, the participant is asked to become part of a programme of collective action to end these discriminatory practices. In summary, participants are asked to put on new 'spectacles' to see the world very differently, and to question what was previously found normal and acceptable. A prime purpose of such education is to make people dissatisfied with their present world. Perhaps this is the most basic aspect of all education for development: people cannot want to change the world unless they have become dissatisfied with it.

From the point of view of this present paper, we should notice one important overall point about the above list of educational objectives: they are more or less opposite, at every point, to what is provided in formal schooling. Education for empowerment is the converse of schooling for self-reliance in that the participants learn to:

- think and work collectively with others, instead of working as an individual to compete against others
- question the social and political environment, not merely as a given, to be understood, but also as an unsatisfactory environment to be changed
- look for the political interests which underlie apparently 'technical' and 'neutral' explanations
- recognise that policies for gender equality do not command political consensus, but in fact attract both explicit and covert opposition
• question whether public institutions are working in the public interest
• develop strategies for working in an area of political conflict and confrontation
• devise strategies to counter covert bureaucratic resistance to gender-oriented policies.

With our new ‘spectacles’ we begin to see a different world. Patriarchy comes into focus! We begin to see all the things that conventional schooling conceals. To do this, we have to throw off most of the ideological and theoretical baggage that we increasingly had to drag through our years in school, and through life afterwards. Throwing away our school bags is essential for our liberation!

It is for this reason that women with less schooling may be more open to education for empowerment. In my opinion, women with less schooling are likely to have a clearer perception of the injustice of the gender division of labour. The nearer they are to the poverty line, the less they can protect themselves by exploiting the labour of women even poorer than themselves. Being unschooled, they cannot rise by becoming honorary males. Therefore the injustice of gender inequality stares them in the face, and affects them directly.

By contrast, women with more schooling are more indoctrinated. They have been schooled to believe in the value of schooling. They have been schooled to progress within the existing system, and not to change it. They have been schooled to believe that women get ahead by being schooled, and that women are less advanced than men because of lack of schooling. Women’s empowerment involves, as a prerequisite, that women throw away this false ideological baggage, and join the sisterhood.

With education for empowerment, we may even be able to turn the honorary males, and the queen bees, into feminists! This transformation would be key to the subversion of patriarchal bureaucracy! Women of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your school bags!

Sara Hlupekile Longwe is chairperson of FEMNET. This article was first presented to the Women’s Workshop organised by UNESCO’s Institute for Education at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), held in July 1997 in Hamburg. Sara Longwe can be contacted at PO Box 37090, Lusaka, Zambia, e-mail zard@zamnet.zm

Notes
The REFLECT approach to literacy and social change: a gender perspective

Sara Cottingham, Kate Metcalf and Bimal Phnuyal

This article looks at the opportunities offered by REFLECT, a participatory approach to adult literacy and social change, to promote women's rights and gender equality, outlining the principles on which the REFLECT process is based and analysing the learning points arising from an evaluation of three pilot projects using the approach.

REFLECT is based on concepts from the philosophy of Paulo Freire, and uses the techniques of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) to share and systematise the knowledge of participants, analysing topics of local concern, and taking individual or collective action where appropriate. The role of the literacy teacher (called a facilitator) in a REFLECT class (called a circle) is to facilitate this discussion, probing deeper into the relationship between power structures and social stratification, and the topic of concern to the group, and introducing literacy and numeracy skills via the discussion. REFLECT has proved to be more participatory than primer-based methods, where the emphasis is on learning to read pre-prepared social messages about hygiene, girls' education, family planning, tree planting, HIV/AIDS, and so on. In REFLECT, the acquisition of literacy is intended to reinforce a process of analysing issues of concern to the members of the circle, and the plans of action which come out of this. In its turn, literacy also enhances the discussion of the concerns of the circle, since the written word gives their ideas increased status; and acquiring literacy skills enables women and men to communicate their ideas to the wider community, and to different levels of power. This iterative approach involves a re-definition of conventional literacy training.

The REFLECT approach was developed by ACTIONAID in Uganda, Bangladesh, and El Salvador through field experience, and rigorously monitored and evaluated in comparison to control groups using conventional approaches. In Uganda, REFLECT was used as the first development intervention in an ACTIONAID operational area, and the circles had both male and female participants. In Bangladesh, it was introduced at the request of all-women Savings and Credit groups who wanted numeracy skills in order to sustain their groups when ACTIONAID withdrew direct support and handed over to a local NGO. In El Salvador, it was used as a way of promoting community development, by COMUS, a community-based organisation, with technical support from a national literacy organisation.

The REFLECT Mother Manual, drawing together the experience of the three pilots and the evaluation, was published in 1996. REFLECT is currently being used and adapted in 25 countries by 90 organisations. Gender equity has emerged as a greater priority for circles worldwide than it had seemed in the original pilots.
This article begins by describing the process of REFLECT sessions, and goes on to analyse the gender issues raised in an evaluation of the three pilot projects, focusing on a case study of ECARDS, an activist organisation based in Nepal. Finally, the article identifies problems and learning points before suggesting ways in which REFLECT's approach could be strengthened by a more explicitly feminist approach.

The basic principles of REFLECT

The REFLECT approach is based on a number of principles which underlie the process. These are:

- Gender equity is integral to all aspects of REFLECT, as it is essential for social transformation.
- The REFLECT process explores and analyses the causes of power inequalities and oppression.
- REFLECT recognises the social stratifications and power relationships which affect everyone involved in the process, and seeks to create a space and process in which they can become the focus for critical analysis.
- Conflict is a reality in people's lives, and should be addressed constructively within the REFLECT process, not suppressed or avoided.
- REFLECT is an evolving process which must be continually re-created for each new context. Innovation is integral to the process.
- REFLECT recognises that individual transformation is as important as collective transformation.
- REFLECT recognises that the equitable practice of power at all levels in the process is essential for determining empowerment outcomes. Institutional and individual changes at all levels are an integral part of the process.

Running a REFLECT session

REFLECT sessions are run as follows. First, the topic for discussion is selected by the facilitator and participants; it should be a significant issue, relevant for participants at that time. Examples of topics which might be discussed are the history of the community; the number of people and land ownership in the community; patterns of agricultural work throughout the year; division of labour between women and men; causes of conflict; causes of ill health; environmental problems; history of rent increases in the area; children's workload; the number of schools in the area; history of human rights abuse; and experiences of childbirth. Then, the objective of discussing the topic is decided; for example, the topic of general environmental degradation might be linked to a current shortage of fuel. The REFLECT circle uses a tool from Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) or PLA to pool information and organise ideas.

There are many PRA tools, but the types used here are 'information-gatherers' such as a map and or a calendar, and tools for analysis, for example the preference ranking matrix, and the Venn diagram. Facilitators choose the appropriate tool, frequently using meetings with other facilitators to discuss the selection of both the topic and the tool and share experience of what has worked well.

The participants construct the diagram on the ground, making use of any local materials with which they feel comfortable, to represent issues under discussion. The facilitator asks probing questions, for example, about root causes or about the different experiences of women and men; and recapitulates and summarises contributions so that the participants reach a satisfactory conclusion to their discussion. Other members of the community are often attracted to these discussions, which take place in the open air, as the topic will be of general interest.

Pictures are drawn on cards and labelled in the mother tongue of participants as part of the process, and at the end the whole graphic is transferred onto a large piece of paper and displayed. This serves as a record of discussion, a tool for negotiating with outside agencies, such as NGOs and local government authorities, for assistance, and as a basis for literacy and numeracy. Participants copy it into their exercise books, selecting the written words and numbers on which they wish to focus their learning. They may also agree on a short text summarising their discussion and agreed actions. This graphic,
The REFLECT approach to literacy and social change

A Gender Workload Calendar

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with all the attached writing and numeracy, replaces the text-book (usually called a 'primer' in adult literacy programmes).

From the point of view of literacy, the emphasis in the REFLECT process is on independent writing. By the end of the course, the aim is that each participant should have a series of 20 to 30 maps and matrices documenting their analysis of local issues. The programme moves at the pace of the participants, and there is no pressure to cover a set number of topics.

Evaluating the results of REFLECT

What are the results of REFLECT programmes? The evaluation of the original three pilot projects (Archer and Cottingham 1996) produced findings which continue to be a useful framework for analysing the results of further REFLECT programmes started in the last two years. Participants cited a mixture of outcomes, from practical activities (for
example, sharing of herbal medicinal knowledge, which led to the growing of more herbs); acquisition and use of literacy and numeracy skills (for example, record keeping in an individual’s projects); to attitudinal changes, such as increased self-confidence, and greater participation in their own family or community (for example, standing for election or leading a protest march against eviction in a slum area). In addition, 60–70 per cent of those enrolled achieved basic levels of literacy and numeracy, enabling them to write a one-page letter, read a passage, and carry out the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division).

How does this mixture of practical skills and less tangible outcomes relate to changes in women’s participation in development, and gender power relations? Concrete improvements have come about as a result, despite the sensitive nature of gender relations, which are often deemed too problematic to tackle.

**Women’s increased mobility**

All three evaluations have suggested REFLECT activities encourage increased mobility of women as they share information and experiences of travelling, and can thus move around the locality with more confidence. In the Bangladesh REFLECT programme, this acquisition of local information was reinforced by the habit of leaving the ‘private’ compound to attend the ‘public’ literacy circle — with husbands’ and fathers’ permission.

**Increased participation in family and community**

Another reported change was increased self-confidence on the part of women, as they claimed their right to be visible and audible in family and community meetings. There may be many reasons for this critical change, but one important one is the valuing and systematisation of previously-unrecognised indigenous knowledge held by women, through the REFLECT process. One example of this unrecognised knowledge is the ability to identify local varieties of drought-resistant seeds. Documentation of such knowledge can validate it for both men and women.

In the Ugandan pilot, 15 per cent of women reported speaking for the first time in the all-male preserve of the family meeting. In Bangladesh, the female facilitators reported that their training and new status gave them a stronger voice in decisions made by their husbands, for example, about loans. In a one-year-old Indian programme, the political context of the REFLECT circles are the gottis, traditional decision-making fora revived for literacy, which were traditionally all-male, but this time included women. There was initial resistance to women’s inclusion, so an awareness-raising campaign was necessary to change entrenched attitudes towards women’s participation in the gottis.

**Changes in the gender division of labour**

Changes in the gender division of the family workload were also reported. In the Ugandan programme, more than 50 per cent of participants reported that their husbands were fetching fuel and water, in order to free them for more agricultural work (also a woman’s traditional responsibility). This was a result of including a gender workload calendar as one of a series of units on agricultural work, marketing, and natural resources. This change was not conflictual, but was based on re-negotiation for rational economic ends. The sustainability of such a change when fundamental issues of inequality between women and men are not confronted is the crucial question. Conflict is probably more likely if equity issues are confronted, and this could be seen positively in the long term if it is managed constructively (and in the absence of violence).

The REFLECT process offers an opportunity to discuss these issues, and the REFLECT approach encompasses the description of the household gender arena as one which includes both co-operation and conflict, as described by Amartya Sen: ‘conflicts of interest between men and women are unlike other conflicts such as class conflicts. A worker and a capitalist do not typically live together under the same roof — sharing concerns and experiences and acting jointly’ (Sen 1990, 91). The same trend was observed in a more recent REFLECT programme in Nepal, where men have also started helping with domestic...
work. ECARDS is a national NGO, an activist organisation working with marginalised groups in Nepal. ECARDS has been using and adapting REFLECT for over two years in its empowerment-oriented work with small-scale landholders and landless people. Workers for ECARD report that a discussion on gender issues was initiated in one REFLECT circle, prompted by the late arrival of a male participant, who stated that he was late because he was waiting for his wife to return from the field to prepare the family meal. A few female participants asked him whether he could not have prepared the meal himself. His reply was that it was not his job. The participants, especially women, challenged his views about the concept of men's and women's work. The facilitator decided to continue the discussion on the issue and did not ask them to read or write anything that evening. Gradually, all the participants got involved in the debate. They split into two groups according to their views. It was agreed that everybody would share their views without personally attacking others: the purpose was to explore the issue. It took a couple of hours, but participants (including the man who raised the issue) eventually concluded that men could and should do domestic work such as cooking, washing, and caring for children. The behaviour of the male members of the group changed a great deal as a result of the discussion; the majority of the male participants have started to do some domestic work. Their progress has been monitored by the whole group, with the men being encouraged to undertake domestic tasks (Education Action, Issue 8, ACTIONAID 1997).

This is but one example of how the discussions and analysis generated in the REFLECT circles lead to direct action. In this case, the facilitator had discussed the gender division of labour and how it affected the unequal relations between women and men, as part of his own training. This enabled him to pick up the issue easily and informally.

Analysing the findings

It can be seen from the above that REFLECT's approach to gender issues is to sensitise men to gender issues as well as focusing on women. Men come to realise their own role in perpetuating gender inequalities and recognise that they have to change; it is not enough to have sympathy for women: men must be willing to look at and modify their own behaviour. The learning points in REFLECT operate on several levels, from individual, to group, to community. Actions planned as a result of the discussion may be undertaken at group or community level, but sometimes actions at the individual level are more appropriate. If there are separate REFLECT circles for men and women, they can come together subsequently to share their analysis. This technique often usefully highlights the different perspectives of women and men on the same issue. In mixed groups, care has to be taken to ensure that the experiences of women and other less powerful groups are not excluded and marginalised in the discussion.

The Salvadorean pilot project did not show any particularly interesting results in the area of strategic gender needs. The learning point here is that the implementing agency, COMUS, lacked gender awareness, and this lack of a gender perspective directly affected the focus of the discussions and the problems identified.

The ‘primer method’:

The majority of adult literacy programmes in the 1990s target women, and fit admirably into the ‘Women in Development’ model, where women are perceived as efficient instruments for development. The ‘primer method’ for adult literacy is used to disseminate social messages. However, these often implicitly reinforce women’s subordinate role. Typically, messages may include:

- *Children and the sick need greens* (more domestic work for women)
- *Have less children for a more prosperous life* (women’s reproductive role)
- *Work together for better sanitation* (women as community managers / servants)
Cook better-prepared meals to avoid angering your husband  
(avoiding a discussion on domestic conflict in favour of emphasising women's domestic role)

Even when more ‘feminist’ messages appear in primers, for example, about the wrongs of domestic violence, or the right to choose the number of children in your family, they are less valuable because they are presented as an imposed conclusion, rather than being arrived at by learners as the result of a collective discussion. Whatever the message in the literacy primer, it is chanted and copied with evangelical zeal. The literacy skills acquired are supposed to improve women's skills as providers of health, education, and income for their families, often in a harsh world of macro-economic reform. It is not surprising that this kind of conventional literacy programme, with its WID goals, has seldom proved successful, even in its own terms.

In terms of the empowerment goals of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach to development, the primer approach to women’s literacy does not begin to question the sexual division of labour and women’s subordination. Neither does it open up debates about why the health of the family is a woman’s responsibility, or ask if she has control of her sexuality rather than only her fertility.

**The REFLECT method:**

**a GAD approach**

Education *per se* cannot be assumed to be intrinsically worthwhile for women; it is the type of education which determines this. REFLECT is not a functional adult literacy programme and, although there are practical outcomes for REFLECT participants, these are not the main goals of the programme. REFLECT is a participatory learning process which facilitates people's critical analysis of their environment, placing women's empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development. It goes without saying that a gender analysis is crucial to this empowerment process. Transformatory education for women and men should challenge the role of conventional education in maintaining hegemony (the power held by rulers in a society, not through force but by common consent based on ideas of what is ‘common sense’), especially the role of education in perpetuating gender inequalities. The REFLECT process is a practical expression of a GAD approach to development.

**Linking literacy to empowerment**

The experience and skills of participants are linked to literacy skills which are seen as part of ‘formal education’. Participants can gain from the power associated with these skills, usually manifest in an improved bargaining position and increased ‘status’. This increase in power is particularly pertinent for women, because of their historical exclusion from all levels of education. There is a clear link between illiteracy, poverty, marginalisation of all kinds, and gender. Political and economic discrimination against people who do not have literacy skills remains common in countries throughout the world; whether it is formal (for example, in the UK non-literate people are banned from taking a driving test, and it is illegal to take another person into your voting booth even if you cannot read the names of candidates) or informal (for example, in a HIV/AIDS project in Zimbabwe, it was found difficult for non-literate people either to make wills, or for their family to enforce them legally; a special arrangement with the police for will-enforcement was the end result in this particular project) (personal communication: feedback from Stepping Stones workshop). Women often lose control of banked money, land deeds, and inheritance, both because they cannot read and write, and because others consider them to be inferior, even stupid (Kanyasigye 1988).

When participatory methods are used, and women's existing knowledge is respected and drawn upon, practical and strategic gender needs can be addressed in the same intervention. Women can pool their practical knowledge on agriculture, health, and income generation in order to carry out their daily tasks more effectively, and at the same time acquire the practical skills and ‘status’ of a
literate person. This opens doors to community decision-making (for example, where standing for positions of power has been reserved for men on the grounds that they are literate) and to a more respected position in the family, whereby women's opinion is sought. While the ability and opportunity to use literacy skills confers advantages, the benefits to participants in the programme in terms of status are often simply the consequence of being a member of a literacy class (Fiedrich, unpublished field report from Mubende, Uganda, 1997). The REFLECT process aims to utilise all the positive aspects of literacy as an intervention in its contribution to changing inequitable gender relations, the REFLECT circle becoming an empowering interface between formal and informal education.

Raising community consciousness of women's subordination
The REFLECT process provides a conventional 'safe space' over a period of time for women and men to participate in an analysis of the major issues facing the majority of women throughout the world. For example, aspects of women's subordination are their lesser access to, and control over, resources, on an intra-household basis; a lack of decision-making power within their own household, in the community, and in the wider society; and the unequal division of labour between women and men that places women in a disadvantageous position in productive work. This is allied to an ideological de-valuing of women's reproductive and community management work.

Some of these strategic gender issues may be new ideas for everyone (women as well as men) in the community, and an extended period of analysis is needed. One of the problems with methods of consultation and raising gender awareness at community level is that they tend to be one-off techniques which do not lead to ownership of subsequent development programmes with a gender component. It is critically important that local people have the chance to analyse gender issues for themselves, within their own culture and environment, if power relations are to change.

Making links from local to global
In REFLECT, discussions start from a local analysis and view but link this to wider national or global issues. One example of this local-to-global analysis comes from the experience of Yakshi and Girijan Deepika in India. The REFLECT circles they facilitated analysed agricultural issues, and particularly the advantages and disadvantages of cash and food crops. Participants had been given loans to plant cash crops (by non-gender-aware authorities) and this had reduced women's income (in addition to causing many other problems), as they were responsible for food crops. After analysis, they decided to plant half their land with food crops, reversing the trend towards planting all the land with tobacco and cotton. The in-depth analysis carried out in the REFLECT circles enabled participants to gain a wider perspective of the issues at stake, as it involved looking at the global impact of multi-nationals, and global trade patterns, that directly influenced people's lives at the individual and community level. As a result of their actions, and the greater scarcity and marketability of tobacco, prices increased. The decision to grow more food crops had the biggest impact on women, who controlled these crops.

Strengthening the GAD/feminist approach in REFLECT
The main problem encountered so far is that it is possible to side-step the gender aspects of social differentiation on most topics. For example, if the topic for discussion is human rights abuses during a past conflict, the facilitator might ask about the experiences of different income groups, or the situation for indigenous people as compared to mestizos, but avoid asking about the different experiences of women and men. It may be difficult for the participants themselves to raise gender issues, as these tend to be controversial. In training workshops for trainers and facilitators, too little emphasis has been placed on gender analysis. This
emerged as a major issue in a workshop in Guatemala in April 1997.

Work has begun on how to build a more cross-cutting gender analysis into REFLECT. In future workshops for trainers and facilitators, there will be a stronger focus on gender. We also addressed this further in an international workshop to revise the REFLECT Mother Manual, in March 1998. The manual will also influence the units designed in the field. A further REFLECT workshop focusing on gender will take place in Nicaragua in June 1998. A gender analysis needs to be integrated into all PRA exercises in the REFLECT circle; at present, the only tool which explicitly addresses gender issues is the gender workload calendar.

However, a commitment to working to achieve gender equality cannot stop with the use of appropriate analytical tools. REFLECT works best when the ideology, and the ways of working of the individuals and the implementing organisation mirror the REFLECT process. Facilitators and promoters therefore need to examine their own lives from a gender perspective. We cannot expect participants to change and be open if facilitators and other staff are not willing to analyse their own behaviour in the private and public spheres. The funding or implementing agency is also part of this process. All staff and facilitators need to understand and internalise the implication of a gender analysis. This would involve an analysis of the way the agency works, and also the personal and professional relations of the staff. Unless there are women working in the organisation, and gender and development issues are a priority, it is hard to see how the facilitators could be trained or how the discussions could be linked with activities in the local context. Our current challenge is to engage pro-actively with organisations whose work is framed within a gender and development paradigm, and who wish to use, adapt, and develop the REFLECT process in their own context.

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References


Notes

1 See the review in the Resources section of this issue.

2 The preference ranking matrix is a framework which compares and ranks people’s preferences. For example, they could rank the crops they preferred to grow and then rank the benefits from growing each crop.
Approaches to gender-awareness raising: experiences in a government education project in Nepal

Mo Sibbons

This article describes two approaches to training which have contributed significantly to raising awareness of gender issues among organisations and individuals having an interest in the development of the Nepalese education system.

Any visitor to Nepal will be struck by the diversity and difference that characterises the country. Geographical diversity, from the low, flat north-Indian plain of the Terai, to the highest mountains in the world, in the Himalayan chain, is accompanied by cultural and religious diversity. Many varieties of Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions make up a rich tapestry of difference, with numerous ethnic groups associated with particular areas and religio-cultural systems. This article will examine some of the main cultural influences on gender and education. The variety of attitudes towards education, combined with Nepal’s geographical and socio-economic diversity, results in an education system in which there are marked differences in educational outcomes for female and male students from different regions. The education system throughout Nepal appears to favour males more than females, with skewed access, skewed participation, and skewed achievements (HMGN, 1996). This paper provides a brief summary of the way in which one project introduced two distinct but complementary training initiatives, in an attempt to address these gender-related differences.

The training sessions were components of the Secondary Education Development Project, which is run by the Ministry of Education in Nepal, and supported with a loan from the Asian Development Bank and a grant from the British Department for International Development (DFID, formerly ODA). The DFID-supported components of the project are managed by Cambridge Education Consultants. The first section of this paper sets the context, highlighting those aspects of the situation in Nepal related to education. The second section gives an account of the inclusion of a relatively conventional gender-training unit within an in-service teacher-training package, and goes on to describe a second, complementary training activity: participatory gender-training workshops held in each of the five Development Regions of Nepal (Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-Western and Far-Western). The workshops were intended to raise awareness of barriers to female education caused by accepted ideas about gender roles, and also to involve participants (all of whom had a stake in the project) in developing programme activities to address problems they themselves identified at all levels of the education system. The
workshops gave rise both to new initiatives and to improvements to existing policies and programmes. Finally, the article discusses what is meant by gender-training, based on the experiences of the project.

Socio-cultural influences on gender and education

There is a marked contrast between the lives of women and men in Buddhist communities in the mountains, and in Hindu communities of the Terai plains. The former include matriarchal societies who in the past, but very rarely today, have practised polyandry (one wife with more than one husband, often brothers); in the Terai, patriarchal and polygynous households (where one husband has more than one wife) are predominant (Shrii Shakti, 1995). These diverse forms of marriage relate to complex economic, social, cultural, and religious factors.

As far as access to schooling is concerned, the geographical as well as cultural factors determine the pattern of attendance at school for children from these communities. In the mountains, physical access to school is very difficult, given the remoteness and isolation of the villages. But although the problem is the same for boys and girls, their options and ability to overcome it vary. Boys are more likely to be offered the opportunity of attending a private urban school than are their sisters (for a variety of reasons to do with personal security, perceptions of value of education and preferences on the use of marginal household cash incomes); girls on the other hand (in theory more than in practice), have access to various government schemes intended to increase their chances of getting into school (such as scholarship schemes, and subsidised hostel accommodation attached to boarding schools)(HMGN, 1996). In addition, boys may have to accompany domestic animals on their seasonal migration, making it impossible for them to attend school year-round.

Although enrolment of children in school in these areas is low, drop-out rates also tend to be low. Once in school, children remain through primary grades, and the numbers of girls progressing to secondary schooling is a reasonable percentage — about 80 per cent — of (albeit very low) primary enrollers (MoE, 1995).

In the Terai, physical access is less of a problem in the relatively densely populated, flat plain. Purdah (the segregation and veiling of females post-puberty) is practised by most families in the more traditional of the Hindu rural villages. In these communities, the pattern of school attendance is almost the reverse of that seen in the mountains. Relatively high enrolment at primary level, of both boys and girls, is followed by rapid and marked drop-out of girls, and very low transition rates of girls to secondary school. The need to segregate older girls from contact with boys and men restricts their access to the predominantly coeducational schools, where the vast majority of teachers are men (MoE, 1995). Table one provides some indication of the differences in enrolment numbers.

The Nepal Secondary Education Development Project

The project supported by DFID and Cambridge Education Consultants is concerned with qualitative aspects of education. This includes support for institution-building in the Ministry of Education, in those sections particularly involved in implementation of other project components, including planning of secondary education, in-service teacher training, textbook writing and production, testing and assessment systems for monitoring and measuring learning outcomes, and monitoring and evaluation of the project within the context of the education system. The overall aim of the project is to improve access of children to a better quality secondary education system (NSEP, 1997).
Approaches to gender-awareness raising

Table one:
Regional Distribution of Proportion of Girl Students in Secondary Schools (1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development region</th>
<th>Mountain</th>
<th>Hill</th>
<th>Terai</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Region</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Region</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-western Region</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far-western Region</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Educational Statistics of Nepal, 1995, MOE

Because of the differences described above between girls' and boys' access to school ('access' is used here to include not only the physical availability of schools, but the absence of any constraint to education or anything that prevents girls or boys going to school), a major feature of the project has been gender analysis of all activities, and the inclusion of gender-specific activities where relevant. This could be described as addressing an issue of human rights — i.e. that all children should be entitled to the same consideration, and have the same access to, and benefits from an education system.

In-service teacher training
A programme of subject-specific teacher-training has been designed and is being implemented through the Secondary Education Development Units distributed throughout Nepal. Schooling in Nepal is co-educational (other than in a few private, single-sex schools). It is known from qualitative research that the lack of female teachers in schools has a direct correlation with the achievement levels of girls (CEC, 1996). In schools where there are no female teachers, fewer girls are enrolled, and their performance is poor. There are several possible explanations for this, one of which is that male teachers favour the boys in their classes, effectively excluding girls from participation. In class, the few girls who attend are silently present in one corner at the back of the room. When questions are directed at the class, students sitting at the front are most likely to respond, and the teacher does not make an effort to encourage the more reluctant students. Our observations were that girls are much more hesitant about standing up and exposing what they assume to be their academic inadequacies in front of their peers and their teacher; teachers do not have, or do not use, skills in developing assertiveness and confidence in their students.

Head teachers who were interviewed for a small operational research study gave varying views about the value or otherwise of having women teachers on their staff. One stated: ‘Young married women should not be recruited as teachers; as they are highly fertile they tend to go on maternity leave which hampers school activities. It does not matter in other jobs, but the teaching profession is something people should not take risks with.’ This view was in sharp contrast to that of another head teacher: ‘All the female teachers in my school are very good teachers; I have had a problem with some of my male teachers ... They come late to class and leave early. The male teachers seem to be more interested in politics than in their jobs. I would much
rather have female teachers than male.’ This head teacher has taken positive steps to encourage his female staff, for example encouraging their involvement in staff development activities (such as in-service teacher training), and providing some resources (including time) for setting up a nursery so that teachers can bring their babies to school with them.

Generally speaking, during the research interviews we found that some male head teachers are aware of the problems caused by a lack of female teachers on their staff, especially when they are teaching girls going through puberty, who may need to confide in a sympathetic staff member. However, the majority of teachers are unaware of this particular problem; nor do they realise that their teaching style is to the disadvantage of the small number of girls in their class. These findings were subsequently reinforced by the discussions that occurred among teachers during the workshops described below.

Girl students do particularly badly in science subjects and mathematics (MoE, 1995). It is often claimed that this is ‘natural’; one senior advisor to the Ministry of Education, told us that there was little point in conducting a gender analysis of school performance as ‘we know that girls cannot do as well as boys in these subjects’. Now that girls are outperforming boys in all subjects in many industrialised countries, this myth can be easily dispelled — but cultural attitudes are harder to change. Expectations of teachers, parents, and students of failure results in just such an outcome.

In order to meet the project’s aim of increasing enrolment, attendance, and performance, especially of girls, in an improved secondary education system, the negative attitude of parents and teachers to girls’ education has to be addressed. Local and international project managers and consultants therefore decided to include a training unit on gender issues in teaching in the in-service teacher-training programme (INSET). However, the content of the gender unit turned out to be rather contentious.

Given the fact that the aim of the unit was to raise teachers’ awareness of gender issues and to encourage attitude change, the three social development advisers to the project (two local and one international consultant) thought that a unit designed to first train teacher-trainers, and then the teachers themselves, in social and gender analysis skills would be the most valuable. This would enable teachers to determine for themselves what differences there are in boys’ and girls’ lives and the gender roles they are expected to play, and how these influence their entry to school and their ability to benefit from the learning process.

Although the one-and-a-half-hour timeslot allotted to this training session was inadequate, results of the initial training of trainers were positive. The majority reported that they could see the relevance of what they had been asked to do, and how school practices could easily be modified to address gender constraints; and how new activities could be undertaken by the teachers in school or in the community. As an outcome of their workshop activity, they provided interesting and sometimes unexpected ideas on how they could tackle the issues they had themselves identified; for example, one group suggested they should hold village meetings to try to change parents’ views of the value of girls’ education.

However, this initial success was not subsequently consolidated. Six months later, the gender-training material had not been included in the training notes to be distributed to the training centres for use during the in-service courses. When the teacher-training co-ordinator for the project (an assigned government officer) was asked why it had been excluded, he said it was not relevant to the subject-teachers’ training programme. This view was supported by the international adviser on science subjects. The training co-ordinator thought that what was required was an exercise which provided teachers with examples of how they could enhance girls’ learning of science, or mathematics, or English (the three subjects included in the first in-service training
The local and international social development advisers explained the rationale for the unit: that the material on gender-awareness provided teachers with a method of exploring their own teaching practices in order to modify their approaches, in ways specific to their individual context, for the betterment of all children's education. However, the typical response continued to be: 'but what has this to do with science teaching'?

It was profoundly disappointing that such a lack of gender awareness should exist among international advisors; although less surprising that officials from the government education-sector should have problems in understanding the approach, given their lack of previous exposure to such ideas. Attempts to 'train' the project and Ministry staff through on-the-job support and counterpairing appear to have had little success. However, two years of constant non-threatening reminders about the issues, support in the appraisal of interventions, and help in amendments to activities do seem to be bringing about some permanent changes in understanding.

After considerable persistence on the part of the local social development consultant, the gender-training unit is now included in the training packs and is being used. The project is on-going; monitoring of the use of the gender-training unit helps to remind the trainers of its value, and to support their further development in using gender analysis.

Regional workshops for local strategy development

The second example of gender-awareness-raising in the SEP is a series of workshops held in late 1997, to develop strategies to improve the quality of education in Nepal. One was held in each region of the country, to reflect the diversity of issues arising in different regions. The findings from a commissioned research study helped the organising team to structure the workshops. The research study had been commissioned as part of the Secondary Education Development Project, looking into gender issues in the secondary education system. Although it was felt that most of the problems faced by girls in Nepal in accessing education were known, this knowledge was largely intuitive or empirical and had not been explored systematically through research.

The organising team felt that a traditional dissemination of the findings of this study to a group consisting of project staff, Ministry of Education and other government officials, and academics was unlikely to produce anything beyond an agreement that there were things that could be done! An alternative approach was developed; this involved taking the findings of the research to participatory action-planning workshops in the regions. Parent representatives of school management committees, teachers, headteachers, teacher trainers, supervisors, and district and regional ministry educational officers were invited to take part in the workshops. Women's participation was strongly encouraged, although this is difficult in the context of so few female teachers and officers. Representatives from mountain, hill, and Terai were included.

The broad objective of the workshops was to devise series of practical steps, relevant to particular localities and suited to action at different levels, which would address constraints to educational achievement identified by the participants. The research results were used to reinforce what the members of the workshop groups identified as problems, and where appropriate to give them additional information or confirmation of their views from other examples. Although the purpose was to raise awareness of gender issues, in addition to the gender-planning purpose outlined above, this was not explicit in the title of the workshops, nor did the workshops state at the outset that awareness-raising was a theme.

Workshop methodology

The first group exercise was to ask participants what they knew about current
education policies that were available to encourage school enrolment. The whole group was sub-divided into small, homogenous, working groups; for example, parents in one group, teachers another, head-teachers in another, and so on. The reasons for doing so were two-fold: firstly, so that, for example, parents were not intimidated by having to work with high-level government officials; secondly, so that differences in understanding of and perceptions about policies by the various groups could be highlighted. The groups were all mixed-sex. There were insufficient numbers to further sub-divide groups; in addition, the working environment for government officers and teachers is mixed-sex. An interactive plenary session explored the policies: which groups knew of them, what they understood by them, and how well they thought the policies worked in practice.

As an outcome of this first session, the topics for the next small-group discussions were identified. Each group was asked to look at a set of questions related to different aspects of the schooling system: school/community linkages and opportunities; current patterns of school attendance and the reasons behind them; issues associated with the recruitment and training of teachers; and the effectiveness of the school system. At the feedback session from these discussions, the other groups were asked to comment on the conclusions reached, and to provide different views or examples if appropriate. It was important to get participants to recognise the diversity of their experiences and contexts; and the first-hand information they provided added richly to our research findings.

A third workshop activity concentrated on children's socialisation through the school system, and the way texts used in schools influence children's perceptions and reinforce social and cultural norms.

The final sessions considered strategies that could be developed by different groups and at different levels to address the problems and constraints they had identified. At this point, the outcomes of the three sessions were put together: the main areas that had been identified as priorities for action were expressed in the form of 'purpose statements'; groups then developed strategies to achieve the purpose. For example, where groups had identified difficult access to physical facilities as a disincentive to school attendance they developed a strategy which would enable all children to have ready access to school.

Sharing of the results of these deliberations was interactive, and there was an exchange of practical solutions to problems. For example, one head teacher said that it was not possible to improve toilet facilities in his school because of the geology of the area, even though he knew that this caused considerable problems for female students and staff; a second head teacher then described how she had overcome the same problem, and provided the name of the supplier of a new type of toilet designed for just such an environment. Discussions of successes with school management committees, constraints in getting communities involved in increasing enrolment and attendance levels, and heated exchanges of views about the practicality of some suggested interventions all helped to add colour to these highly participative sessions.

An action committee was formed from the workshop participants to develop the strategies into action plans. These were then taken to a National Symposium, where representatives from the regional workshops presented their findings. The participants at the national meeting were drawn from each of the regions, and from the relevant institutions of the Ministries involved in education-sector development.

**Learning from the process**
At the time of running these workshops, the practical difficulties of getting together significant numbers of people, from diverse locations, in a protracted monsoon season seemed to outweigh the results achieved! (For readers not familiar with the context: many participants would have to travel on foot for considerable distances before being
of transport — a full day's walk would not be unusual.) Isolated village schools are far from main roads. Getting messages to them in the first place to request their participation is difficult, with uncertain or non-existent telephone connections. The fact that we succeeded in getting substantial numbers of participants (between 35 and 50 per workshop), who were representative of a considerable diversity of locations and sets of interests, was the first significant success of the process — and was made possible by the efforts of supportive Ministry staff.

The next significant success was the enthusiastic participation of all those attending. The process as a whole gave a range of stakeholders the opportunity to express their own views, to get those views heard by people in positions of authority, and for their ideas to feed into policy debates at national level. The workshops used untried methodology, with people who were not used to a workshop environment. For some, (particularly the parents and some of the teachers) it was the first time that they had been asked to express their own opinions in a fairly public setting. The workshops were therefore a risky endeavour. In the event we were extremely satisfied, and impressed by the sophistication of the debates and ideas that were being put forward.

After the first workshop, the approach in subsequent ones was refined as the facilitators learnt what did and did not work; materials were improved and their content clarified in light of participant responses. This was a learning opportunity for the facilitators — half of whom had not previously been involved in such interactive and participatory events — and their skills developed throughout the series of workshops.

Analysing the outcomes

The gap between awareness and action
A significant outcome was the clear articulation of local people's view of the constraints to secondary schooling of girls. For example, an illustration of the type of sophisticated and open debate that resulted centred on gender disparities in enrolment, which had been identified as significant in some schools. A headteacher from a school in Nepal's Eastern Region gave an excellent anthropological explanation of the socio-cultural constraints that prevent daughters rather than sons from going to school: 'parents value education for boys more highly than for girls; there is an expectation that girls will continue to play their main role as wives and mothers; parents are unwilling to invest in a child who will become someone else's property.' He was particularly concerned that the betrothal of young girls was a significant contributor to perpetuating this view. Despite his insight, he willingly acknowledged that he had arranged an early marriage for his own daughter.

This was a forceful example of how someone may passionately claim disagreement with the status quo, but in fact contribute to its continuation. However, the fact that he, along with a group of peers and other education sector personnel, was given the opportunity to express his opinion may provide the incentive for change, provided appropriate support is given at an organisational level.

Decentralising and democratising education planning
The final session, in which the groups made practical suggestions for policy options and strategies that could be adopted within the communities, schools or elsewhere in the education system, provided some innovative ideas, which have been passed on to those at the centre, in the project and in the Ministry.

It might seem obvious that a way to promote change in attitudes to girls' education would be to raise awareness about gender issues non-confrontationally, in a context where opportunities are provided to develop locally-specific policies. However, this requires a considerable change of attitude on the part of senior officials at the centre. Although decentralisation is on the
statute books, the threat of devolving power to ‘minor’ officials at the periphery, or even more so to teachers in schools or parents, is such that it remains a paper promise. The excellent responses of the district level officers, teachers, and headteachers, their perceptiveness, and their willingness and openness to address schooling problems, provides a firm platform from which to launch innovative and responsive policies.

Actions since the workshops

All participants in the regional workshops and all respondents contributing to the research have been kept in touch with progress, which has helped to maintain any relationships which have been created. The appointment of a Gender Officer in each of the five Development Regions of Nepal as one immediate outcome of this work has facilitated this dissemination process. A formal proposal for actions to address equity issues in education has been submitted for consideration by the joint project donors (CEC, 1998). This proposal included the actions requested by those in the regional workshops (CEC, 1997). The proposed programme of activities has been accepted by the Secondary Education Development Project Director and Manager, and it is they who will formally submit it at the next Joint Review Mission of the Project. Credit should go to all those who contributed in the training workshops for this progress towards implementation of their own ideas.

Conclusion: what is gender training?

The outcomes from the very different sets of activities described above have been markedly similar, in that in both cases, understanding of gender issues in education increased, as did the capacity to analyse these issues in a particular context. Both training activities involved looking at how individuals, be they parents or Regional Education Directors, might influence change and affect education outcomes. The regional workshops were successful partly because all participants were allowed to explore and express their own opinions and identify their own interests and needs. When training starts from the participants’ own expressed interests, rather than with a problem identified elsewhere, it is more likely to engage them. Thus, positive and possibly lasting impact is more likely.

A final learning point is that making gender training overtly sector-specific is helpful in overcoming resistance among (mainly male) policy-makers to discussing gender issues. Inviting education sector staff to a ‘gender-training workshop’ is almost guaranteed to produce a reluctant and defensive group of participants. The first session has then to be devoted to repairing the damage, in order to create a positive atmosphere in the training workshop. As a general rule, it seems to be advisable to start any training session by finding out people’s understanding and perception of a situation: in this case, their perception of problems within the education system. If participants identify the main problem as the difference in outcomes for boys and girls from schooling, this gives them an opportunity to explore why this should be the case, and how the problem might be addressed. The trainer does not have to lecture the participants about social contexts producing differences between male and female capabilities and opportunities if they have identified these for themselves (although the trainer might want to elaborate on the differences and provide the label of ‘gender’ to describe them).

In Nepal, the difference between educational outcomes for male and female students is so marked that it is inevitable that this should be identified as a problem. In other countries, this may not be the case, and more imaginative ways of inducing participants to identify gender issues as significant will be required. Even in Nepal, gender differences in education vary from place to place and at different levels; for example, in Kathmandu and other large
Approaches to gender-awareness raising

Urban centres, there are almost as many girls as boys enrolled at primary school and almost as many female teachers, although not head teachers (HMGN, 1996).

The two examples given here show how the approach of allowing participants to identify gender disparity as the cause of differences in educational outcome, rather than having gender as a label applied to the training session, has been applied. Raising gender awareness is the first stage in enabling change through the incorporation of specific actions. Getting policy changes, based in part on primary stakeholder suggestions, accepted at Ministerial level and incorporated in the Ninth Five-Year Plan is an exciting prospect. Reporting back to those primary stakeholders that their ideas have been used in this way is a further small but significant step in maintaining enthusiasm for community-level involvement in national policy and action to address gender issues in education in Nepal.

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References


Notes

1 In-service teacher training (INSET) occurs within Secondary Education Development Units, distributed throughout the country; the training is provided by qualified teachers and is designed to upgrade teaching skills, both in terms of content and pedagogy.

2 This study was carried out by the Centre for Educational Research and Institutional Development (CERID) of Trivubhan University in Kathmandu.

3 The organising team consisted of the project social development consultants, key members of the CERID research team and the gender-link person — an assigned Government Education officer.

4 The hills are the areas that are the easiest to work in, with fewer weather problems than mountains or the Terai, and containing some of the largest conurbations, including Kathmandu. These areas have a mixture of social groups and cultural beliefs and practices.

5 These were called Regional Education Action Planning Workshops.
Campaigning against female genital mutilation in Ethiopia using popular education

Beatrice Spadacini and Pamela Nichols

This article focuses on a campaign to change attitudes towards the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), and ultimately change behaviour. The campaign is based on a variety of complementary strategies, including popular education techniques.

Lights go off and the murmuring of the audience slowly fades away. On the stage the lights focus on a woman, sitting on a sofa, who has just given birth to a baby girl. Friends and relatives come to visit the mother and the new-born, bringing food and gifts. A male visitor, whose wife has given birth to three girls one after the other, is quarrelling with her, putting the blame on women for bearing female children thereby depriving the family of ‘more valuable’ male heirs.

This play, written and produced by Ayalneh Mulatu, highlights one of the traditional gender stereotypes held in rural Ethiopia, and common in many other places: that a baby girl is worth less than a baby boy, and is more of a burden than a joy. In the play, it is up to a professional nurse, a friend of the family, to dispel the myth that it is the woman who determines the gender of the child and reassure the couple that having a baby girl is just as good as having a baby boy. During the second act, the play focuses on valuing traditional practices such as breast-feeding, dispelling the myth that if a young mother breast-feeds she will lose her beauty and femininity. Once again, the nurse acts as a mediator between the old parents and the young mother, saying that breast milk is the most nutritious food for an infant, and the best source of parental love in the early stages of life.

Discussing traditional practices, whether harmful or beneficial, is a challenging task. Using theatre as a tool for communicating sensitive messages is an effective approach, especially in many parts of rural Africa, where there is a strong oral tradition. Female genital mutilation is a particularly sensitive topic; to question the practice directly challenges the status quo and women's role in society. In dealing with such issues, education is fundamental, and different communication techniques must be used to strengthen the message and increase the level of awareness.

This article is written from the authors' perspective as workers for a Northern NGO, AIDOS (The Italian Association for Women in Development), which supports an indigenous Ethiopian NGO, NCTPE (National Committee on Traditional Practices), an affiliate of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices.
Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC). AIDOS has provided support through training and advice on information techniques. This article represents an important moment of reflection in the work the two organisations have carried out together for the past five years, and is a contribution to debates with others who work on similar challenging and culturally sensitive issues.

Stating our position

Despite the position taken by many African women against the practice of female genital mutilation, there are many who question firstly, the right of Northern organisations to get involved in this issue, and secondly, the assertion that centuries-old traditional practices are violations of human rights. AIDOS began working on the issue of female genital mutilation in the early 1980s, after having followed the debate on this topic at the international level for many years. In the early stages of this international debate, many African women were mistrustful of the views held by Western feminists, asserting that the latter were opposed to the practice without really understanding its origins and the reasons behind its continuation. For example, during the Forum of Non-Governmental Organisations held in Copenhagen in 1980 during the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, African women openly spoke against inopportune interference and ethnocentrism on the part of Western women.

However, a Senegalese sociologist, Awa Thiam, takes a very different view:

it is possible ... for us to work together; it’s clear that African women need to take the initiative, but Western women have the means to help us ... our fight can’t be modelled on Western feminism, but solidarity with other women is essential (Thiam 1978).

Dr Mahnaz Afkhami, Executive Director of the Sisterhood is Global Institute, speaking on women’s human rights from a Western and Southern perspective, warns Western feminists against falling into the trap of cultural relativity:

I have seen a lot more sensitivity from Western feminists in the last few years, but must add here that sometimes their attempts at cultural awareness and sensitivity can go too far, as we see among those Western women who say that female circumcision is just another cultural practice ... this cultural relativism is just another example of the arrogance I have just described. It is as if Western feminists are saying: OK, a whole set of norms apply to us and our culture, and a whole set of norms applies to these cultures.

This strong statement does not only apply to Western feminists, but to all those who are afraid to promote the universal dimension of human rights.

It is such calls to sisterhood and solidarity which prompted AIDOS to provide technical and financial assistance to African organisations that had decided to confront the issue of female genital mutilation within their own societies and cultures, in their own way.

The context: FGM in Ethiopia

Reports from the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organisation estimate that over 120 million women around the world have already been subjected to FGM and that every year over two million girls are at risk of mutilation. The practice of female circumcision exists in 25 African countries.

A survey on harmful traditional practices in Ethiopia commissioned in 1989 by the IAC suggests that 85 per cent of Ethiopian women are circumcised. FGM has serious consequences for women’s physical and psychological health. Death can result from haemorrhage and infection, as this practice is often carried out on girls
at an early age, under unsanitary conditions and with the most rudimentary surgical tools (Dorkenoo, 1994).

The mildest form of female circumcision, known as *Sunna*, consists of removal of the prepuce of the clitoris only. A more severe type of female genital mutilation, excision or clitoridectomy, entails the partial or total removal of the clitoris, together with the adjacent tissues of the labia minora (small lips). The most severe and drastic form of mutilation is called infibulation or Pharaonic circumcision. Here, in addition to excision, the two sides of the vulva are stitched together with different materials, leaving only a very small opening at the lower end to allow the passage of urine and menstrual flow (Abdalla, 1983).

The survey indicates that the majority of Ethiopian women who undergo FGM suffer *Sunna* or excision. Infibulation is prevalent only in the eastern parts of Ethiopia. The 1990 survey also points out that FGM is unknown among some ethnic groups such as the Begas in Wellega. A more recent baseline survey carried out at the end of 1997, financed by NORAD, indicates that *Sunna* appears to be the most common practice, followed by excision. According to the raw data of the survey, the practice of infibulation seems to be on the decline, and is being replaced by *Sunna*.6

The 1997 survey also investigated the various reasons given by Ethiopia’s 65-plus ethnic groups to justify the practice of FGM. These include maintenance of cleanliness, pursuance of aesthetics, preservation of virginity, prevention of promiscuity, increase of matrimonial opportunities, enhancement of fertility and improvement of male sexual performance as motivations for preserving such a practice (information from Dr Fisseha Haile Meskal, lead consultant for the National Baseline Survey, 1997).

**Campaign methodology**

The first phase of the project began in April 1994 and lasted until December 1995. Education and training efforts were concentrated in the capital, Addis Ababa, and in Regions One and Three (Tigray and Amhara). In phase two of the project, the activities were replicated and developed further in a third region: the Southern Nations and Nationalities People’s Region (SNNP). The second phase of the project began in March 1998 and is expected to last for two years. Its primary objectives are to review and upgrade existing training and information materials and adapt them to conditions in this region, by including a discussion of abduction as a harmful practice common to SNNP, and reinforce the campaign previously started in Regions One and Three.

**Training and information for change**

The AIDOS/NCTPE project focuses on training and information. Information, education, and communication tools (IEC) are created and used to increase awareness about the issue of FGM on the part of the target groups. During training participants learn about the health consequences of FGM, the origins and the prevalence of the practice, and the myths and the facts associated with it. They discuss the issue at length, become involved, and are drawn into the campaign to eradicate harmful practices.

**Training**

The primary technique used is to conduct training of trainers (TOT) courses for regional trainers, who then conduct training seminars for selected groups who are considered socially influential. Initially, they do this under the supervision of NCTPE trainers. The NCTPE also makes sure that, through lobbying and awareness-raising, activities on FGM are integrated into the training of national agencies and NGOs.
The materials used by the NCTPE in its training activities are local adaptations of prototype materials developed by the IAC and AIDOS, with the technical support of the ILO Training Centre in Turin, Italy. The four prototype multi-media training packages, made up of modular units and audio-visual materials, were designed to be used as teaching aids in a series of informative seminars developed for four socially influential target groups: women, male and female secondary school students, community leaders, and health workers.

The training packages present FGM primarily as a health issue, while exploring the social, religious, and cultural aspects of the practice in a sensitive manner. ‘FGM is tackled from a reproductive health perspective as this is the only way people in the field are likely to listen’, says Dr Dahab Belay, who currently works as a health consultant for phase two of the project. Each training package is tailored to the educational level and interests of the target group. The training package for health workers is more scientifically detailed; the youth package provides more information on puberty, sexual responsibility, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); while the packages for health workers and community leaders emphasise the social implications of FGM and include a section on FGM and human rights. Each package also suggests how that particular target group can be involved in the campaign to eradicate FGM.

In the course of the first project, the packages were adapted to conditions in the Tigray and Amhara regions and translated into Amharic. A separate general trainers’ guide, containing technical and pedagogical suggestions to help the trainers prepare, conduct, and evaluate the training of trainers (TOT) workshops, was also developed.

Dr Belay asserts that training should have a ‘cascade effect’, gradually reaching wereda (district) and kebele (village) officials, and other influential community members. Whether this happens is unclear, but experience suggests that involving other traditional grassroots institutions will be effective as they are likely to reach a greater number of women.

**Popular education**

Linked closely to the training is the information/education campaign, which uses a variety of audio-visual and print materials on FGM and other harmful traditional practices, appropriate for particular audiences.

Several communication tools are used in training sessions to strengthen message delivery and encourage audience participation. For example, a number of videos and three sound and slide shows are accompanied by story books that participants can keep. One video, *Infibulation*, produced by the NCTPE in collaboration with UNHCR, is most commonly used in the training sessions. Trainers feel its intensely graphic images work well with all the target groups but are particularly effective with men, who are usually very much removed from the practice of FGM, despite being connected with its root causes. ‘When this video is shown, people [often] leave the room. It is very intense for men to see it for the first time and to suddenly become aware of the suffering involved’, says Dr Belay. Because of the impact of this video, other videos have been produced by the NCTPE recently. One of them, entitled TABOTUA and written by Abebe Kebede, is a theatrical representation of FGM and its health effects.

The audio-visual materials were developed by the NCTPE information officer and an AIDOS media professional, together with two Ethiopian artists. Three sound and slideshows on FGM were developed in English, Amharic, and Tigrigna. The first describes the NCTPE, and provides information about FGM and its negative health consequences. The other two are stories, written by Genet Metike and
illustrated by Messele Hailu, one positive and one negative. One recounts the married life of Fatoumata, an infibulated woman, who first loses her child in a agonising childbirth, and later loses her husband when it becomes clear that she cannot have any more children. In contrast, Yimer’s story is about a teacher and his wife, who decide to resist social pressure to circumcise their baby girl. The illustrations in the Amharic and Tigrigna versions differ in terms of the clothing the characters wear, and the economic activities they are undertaking during their discussion, so that the target groups in each region will more closely identify with the characters. For the project in the Southern region, a story on abduction is being developed.

Yimer and Fatoumata's stories have been tested with a group of students in a Youth Centre in the town of Awassa, in the Southern region. Students were eager to give their suggestions on how to improve the stories, and recommended alternative strategies for reaching people who live in remote areas. ‘The story must be read out loud and be accompanied by a story board, a set of magnified illustrations that pictorially represent what is happening to Fatoumata. People should be given a chance to come up with a different ending, to provide their own solution to the drama’, said one 17-year-old boy.

Mass information campaign
We are also developing a second category of communication tools for a mass information campaign. The most effective approach is a long-term, integrated communication strategy using mass media as well as interpersonal media, made up of mutually-reinforcing messages. In most developing countries, radio is the communication medium that reaches the largest number of people, followed by informal communication modes like theatre, and puppet shows. People can also be reached during spontaneous gatherings in public places: market squares, health posts, grinding mills, and water-collection sites.

Radio programmes
Radio is suitable for contexts where literacy rates are low, distances from urban to rural areas are significant, and access to more sophisticated technology is still for the privileged few. Adolescents and primary-school children are an important target group. In 1996, the NCTPE agreed with the Educational Media Agency (EMA), a government media agency, a series of 28 short radio bulletins on the need to eradicate FGM and early marriage. These were transmitted to 96 per cent of the school community in the country, in nine local languages. Brief radio broadcasts, several times a day, aimed to inform the school population about the types of FGM and the health complications caused by it; raise the awareness of students, teachers, and school headmasters about harmful traditional practices related to FGM; and convey prevailing social attitudes towards FGM. Two further ten-minute radio programmes for a general audience were broadcast each weekend, to expand on the brief messages highlighted during the radio spots. A set of supporting information leaflets in English and Amharic were sent to all school teachers.

Poster campaign
With the help of a graphic artist, posters on FGM were adapted to reflect the situation in Tigray and Amhara. FGM practitioners are portrayed in their traditional clothes, while the age of the girl-child undergoing circumcision varies according to the local custom. When the Amhara poster had to be adapted to reflect Oromo, Harere, and Afar cultures, local artists were briefed on FGM and came up with their own drawing depicting the practice. Each poster was tested with a group of people representing the target group, who gave feedback to the artists on their interpretation of the message.

One such experiment, carried out in Addis Ababa, proved to be extremely valuable. The poster depicted a baby girl
undergoing FGM, with a written message in Amharic which said ‘female genital mutilation can increase the chances of getting AIDS’. Two members of the NCTPE staff — a man and woman — took the poster to St Georis Square, one of the liveliest intersections in central Addis Ababa, to examine the effect of the poster on passers-by.

Addis Ababa is relatively empty of street advertising and street signs; people are generally not used to seeing and interpreting such images. On the one hand, this meant that the poster attracted a large amount of curiosity. On the other hand, what became immediately apparent was that the written message only got through to a very small percentage of people. Passers-by also had a tendency to confuse the baby girl with a baby boy, a graphic ambiguity which required immediate attention on the artist’s part. Most importantly, the poster showed a situation in which a baby was clearly suffering, but did not offer an action-oriented message: was it right or wrong to make the baby suffer, and why? What was the poster trying to say? The pre-test brought out all the ambiguities of the image, and the incoherence of the message.

An interesting suggestion came out of this pre-test which was used later on for another poster: the idea of drawing a thick red line across the image, in the manner of a ‘No Smoking’ sign, in order to emphasise that the activity was wrong. The idea was eventually pre-tested in Addis Ababa on the ‘comprehensive poster’, which shows all the harmful traditional practices and bans them with a thick red line. The poster seems to work well; it attracts attention, and clearly discourages the practices depicted. Whether this poster would function well in rural areas is yet to be seen, as street signs and no-smoking signs are even rarer in rural areas.

Information leaflets
Other components of the mass communication strategy are three informative leaflets: one on the NCTPE, another on FGM, and a third on early marriage. All the leaflets are produced in Amharic (considered to be the working language in Ethiopia) and in English. A more general brochure is also available, which puts together information on the NCTPE, the methodology to eradicate harmful traditional practices, the definition of FGM, and its scope in Ethiopia. During the second phase of the project a brochure will also be produced on the problem of abduction of young girls, a practice common to the Southern region.

Newsletter
A quarterly newsletter is published in Amharic and English, thanks to an in-house multi-copy printing machine. This low cost and relatively simple technology has allowed the NCTPE to be self-sufficient in newsletter production. The newsletter has changed and improved over time, turning into a two-way communication vehicle with the flow of information going from the periphery to the centre and vice-versa. ‘We exchange our newsletter with women’s organisations from around the world, including Japan. The English version has become an important tool for networking, while the Amharic one circulates all over the country. We often receive comments from people living in different regions and print them in a special feedback section’, says Genet Metike, Information Officer and Editor of the newsletter.

Other items
Round stickers depicting the comprehensive poster have also been printed and are distributed to donors and workshop participants to reinforce the message and give visibility to the NCTPE. A special NCTPE T-shirt was designed for the 1995 Beijing Conference. In 1997, a wall calendar was produced depicting harmful traditional practices — FGM, early marriage, unspaced births, tattooing, and uvulectomy (the cutting of the uvula in the throat) — as well as beneficial ones.
Preparing for work in the Southern region

About 80 per cent of the Ethiopian population lives in rural areas. Understanding the views of rural people on issues such as FGM and abduction of young girls is a prerequisite for designing appropriate and effective communication tools.

A number of factors, including the great cultural and social diversity that characterises the Southern Region of Ethiopia, have obliged AIDOS and the NCTPE to focus only on five ethnic groups in the second phase of the project, namely, Gurage, Sidama, Hadia, Kembata, and Wolaita. During a ten-day visit before the launch of the work in the region, contact was sought with rural people from all five nationalities. After meeting village elders, traditional birth attendants, young women, circumcisers, and farmers, it became apparent that a more participatory communication strategy needed to be developed. FGM is perceived as a normal and even a desirable part of life, a harmless practice which is likely to ensure marriage and guarantee community blessing. ‘A woman who is not circumcised is going to break things and be restless. There is never going to be enough food in the house and money will be spent faster than it comes in’, said an old woman interviewed in Awassa.

Messages simply condemning the practice are likely to be ignored or perceived as amusing or unpleasant. ‘The poster is really ugly and I don’t like to look at this picture. Anyhow a woman must be circumcised, otherwise she will be too sexy and will create problems for herself and the husband’, said one middle-aged man. At village level what is more likely to work, as students suggested, are story boards, well-drawn images that portray the reality and stimulate discussion. Role playing and theatrical representations are also likely to succeed since they usually rely on participatory approaches.

FGM needs to be addressed as an issue linked to health, human rights, and gender. Creating awareness on FGM alone is unlikely to succeed because women in rural settings are even more subordinate to men than are women in urban areas, and their ‘rights’ are secondary to many other issues. ‘The mission in the South highlighted abduction as a major problem. People living in the region want us to help them to address this issue, therefore we will tackle it together with FGM, as we previously, in region 1 and 3, included the issue of early marriage side by side with FGM’, says Ali Hassan, project manager of the current NCTPE/AIDOS project.

Conclusions

In the five years that NCTPE and AIDOS have worked together, they have come to know each other well and have successfully confronted a number of project constraints. Assessing the impact of the training and information campaign, for instance, has not been easy, as changes in attitudes and behaviour towards FGM happen over a long period of time. It is only recently, during the second phase of the project, that changes in attitudes and in the level of awareness are being observed and recorded. At the end of 1997 the NCTPE conducted a national baseline survey to assess the prevalence of all harmful traditional practices in Ethiopia, and people’s attitudes towards them. This study, which is yet to be released, will provide the basis for project evaluations and interventions in the future.

Another constraint encountered, particularly during the first phase, was the rigidity of the project framework. NGOs need to be sufficiently flexible to adapt to unexpected situations. Some of the pre-planned activities could not be held at the scheduled time, or had to be modified according to local demands. Sometimes delays had to do with a particularly heavy and long rainy season, other times with unexpected changes in the Ethiopian legislation, or bureaucratic hold-ups.
Guaranteeing the sustainability of an education project is also difficult unless the local government is supportive and decides to make it a priority. Luckily, the NCTPE in these past five years has established itself as a credible NGO, doing high-quality work, and because of this, donors have increased and government institutions are seeking to collaborate with NCTPE.

In some cases, the value of information in a country like Ethiopia was underestimated. It was not expected, for instance, that the broadcast of radio spots on health education would involve a cost. It was assumed that promoting the eradication of a harmful traditional practice, an activity supported by the Ministry of Health, was a public-health message, in everyone's interest. But air-time does have a cost, especially in a country where media enterprises are still few and operate on low budgets. Luckily, the EMA charged a reasonable price for the high-quality service provided. In addition, now that the topic is no longer a conversational taboo, more articles and stories are appearing in the press. NCTPE executive board members and staff are often interviewed and invited to participate on TV and radio programmes.

Finally, access to information must also be considered from a gender perspective. At the grassroots level, it is mostly men who own radios or have control over them. Purchasing new batteries can be a problem for both men and women, but more so for women, who rarely control the household income. Out of 50 adults representing community leaders in a Sidama village, only three owned a radio; one of them was a woman teacher in the village school. At the same meeting, a disproportionate number of men were present compared to women, and young boys compared to girls. Women are traditionally not invited to participate in village meetings. While information is being shared on FGM and decisions are being taken, most women and young girls — whose lives these practices affect most keenly — are absent collecting water or wood, or engaging in other labour-intensive activities.

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**Notes**

1 The term ‘female genital mutilation’ (FGM) is now being used at the international level to indicate a practice which adversely affects the health and the well-being of women and children; however, there is some debate on the appropriateness of applying this term to all types of ‘genital operations’. This discussion is well-presented by Walley in *Cultural Anthropology* 12:3, 1997.

2 The term ‘sensitive’ should make the reader think: ‘sensitive for whom?’ In the context of this article, the term relates mostly to Western audiences, as in Ethiopia the practice is so common that the issue in itself is not ‘sensitive’; people who are familiar with the practice are quite comfortable discussing it.

3 Interview with Dr Mahnaz Afkhami, see King-Irani.


5 See Meskal et al.

6 Written interview with Dr Fisseha Haile Meskal conducted by Beatrice Spadacini, Addis Ababa, November 1997.

7 The original project aimed to strengthen the capacity of the national committees in Ethiopia, the Gambia, Sudan, and Nigeria for carrying out training and information campaigns on FGM in their respective countries.

8 TABOTUA means ‘lamb to be slaughtered’.
‘Girls cannot think as boys do’: socialising children through the Zimbabwean school system

Rosemary Gordon

Recent research in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, is confirming that schools play a major role in socialising children into the adult gender roles they will carry out both in the family and the economy. Boys are taught to be ‘masculine’ and girls ‘feminine’, according to the norms of their society. Such education cannot contribute to development and increased gender equity.

Most of the research on gender and education in Zimbabwe has been funded or undertaken by donor organisations (Gordon 1995a, 1995b; Duncan 1989; Hyde 1994). Such research is intended to inform policy, programmes, and interventions aimed at increasing gender equity in education, and removing barriers to development. However, little attention has been paid by policy makers, educators, and donors to the process of education for gender roles taking place in schools in Zimbabwe. Where donors have given attention to these issues, they have focused on the effects on girls. However, if the development process aims to promote increased social justice and gender equity, the necessary deconstruction of femininity must be accompanied by a simultaneous deconstruction of masculinity.

Western education and ‘traditional’ gender roles

Education, based on Western models, is seen as a necessary condition for ‘modernisation’ (Gordon 1996). The education offered in schools based on Western models has been assumed to be a solution to the problem of ‘backward’ traditional gender ideologies and stereotypes (Odora 1996). Children are presented with Western patriarchal ideologies and stereotypes, which they are to taught are ‘superior’ to indigenous ones and will lead to development (ibid).

In Zimbabwe, secondary-school boys’ attitudes towards, beliefs about, and perceptions of girls and women suggest that traditional perceptions of gender are merged with those which boys acquire in school. While there has been a growing awareness in recent years of a problem with stereotypes of femininity and attitudes towards girls, the fact that the reproduction of gender in schools includes the reproduction of masculinity is still largely overlooked. Western stereotypes of masculinity to which boys are exposed in schools, and which they internalise, are considered non-problematic. Interventions and policies appear to exclude any dimension aimed at boys in schools and the deconstruction of masculinity.
The formal and the hidden curricula

An important aspect of education which channels children into gender roles is the curriculum they are permitted to study. The formal curriculum inherited by Southern African states, including Zimbabwe, at independence was modelled on the British education system, in which girls were educated for domesticity (Wolpe, 1994) and boys prepared for employment in the public sphere, fitting them for a role of family head and breadwinner (Davison and Kanyuka 1992; Gordon, 1995a).

Prior to independence, the curriculum in Zimbabwe was gender-differentiated, boys and girls being directed into different areas. Boys were offered subjects such as metalwork, woodwork, building, and technical drawing, and encouraged to study the ‘hard’ sciences. Girls, on the other hand, were offered shorthand, typing, and home economics. Extra-curricular activities such as sports were also gender-differentiated. Participation in sports was considered essential for males, with rugby being considered the most ‘masculine’ and ‘virile’ of all the sports.

This situation has, in the main, continued to the present day. Whilst some attempt was made at state level to encourage schools to offer boys and girls the same subjects, this has largely been left to the discretion of individual school heads. In general, boys and girls continue to be directed into different vocational and technical courses. Where offered the same choices, girls and boys have been found to opt for those subjects traditionally offered to and girls and boys, respectively (Gordon, 1995a). This may be explained by factors in the school other than whether or not subjects are available to both sexes. These factors include the gender typing of subjects as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ by teachers, parents, and other pupils. The typing of subjects in this way is also related to perceptions of masculine and feminine occupations in the wider society, and the gender-differentiated nature of the occupational structure in Zimbabwe.

Thus, while the formal curriculum may appear to be gender-neutral, the hidden curriculum may influence children to make gender-specific choices. Subjects presently typed as masculine (by teachers and pupils) in the schools include physics, chemistry, maths, building, woodwork, technical graphics, metalwork, geography, and history. The local languages (Shona and Ndebele), English language, religious education, biology, fashion and fabrics, food and nutrition, and commerce are typed as feminine. Those subjects typed masculine are seen as prerequisites for occupations considered masculine: tradesman, scientist, airline pilot, doctor, for example. Feminine subjects are perceived as being useful to women in their roles as mothers and housewives, and in occupations appropriate for women: nurse, teacher, child minder, secretary.

Research has shown, also, that factors such as seeing teachers as role models, the attitudes and expectations of teachers themselves (Gordon, 1995a), and the authority hierarchy in schools may influence pupils’ gender self-concepts in relation to the school and education.

Male domination of the educational structure

In Zimbabwe, the secondary-school environment is overwhelmingly male-dominated. In 1995 there were 386,120 boys and 323,818 girls enrolled in Zimbabwe’s secondary schools (Government of Zimbabwe, 1995), and 17,523 male teachers and 9,797 female teachers in the secondary school system (ibid). The vast majority of co-educational (and all-boys) schools are headed by headmasters, and many more have deputy headmasters than have deputy headmistresses. In the few cases where there is a headmistress, the deputy
head is a male; corporal punishment (caning) is permissible for boys, not girls, in Zimbabwe and it is considered appropriate for male heads and deputies to cane boys.

Teachers' attitudes and expectations which are communicated to pupils during classroom interaction have been found to be rigidly dependent on gender ideologies (Gordon 1995a). In my 1995 study, I found that teachers of both sexes believed that it was their duty to guide pupils towards 'gender-appropriate' behaviours and occupations, and believed, too, that boys and girls are endowed with different and gender-specific natures, intellectual abilities, aptitudes, and potentials. Boys are described by teachers of both sexes as more serious about school work, more intelligent, and better able to grasp difficult concepts, when compared to girls. Furthermore, teachers believe that girls are overly preoccupied with 'romance' and love affairs, and are morally weaker than boys. Girl pupils are more often perceived, by both male and female teachers, as the initiators of sexual activity with boys and male teachers than as the victims of sexual harassment and abuse.

Gender stereotypes in educational resources

A recent study by Brickhill et al (1996) has shown that school textbooks also play a large part in perpetuating the exposure of Zimbabwean pupils to gender stereotypes. In their study of 42 primary school textbooks used in Zimbabwe they found:

..negative representations of women as housewives who cook and clean and nag their children and husbands ... an absolute preponderance of women associated with children and men associated with property ... In social studies teachers are openly advised to encourage gender stereotyping ... the father is the provider and takes important decisions. The mother is the housewife and supporter of the father. No other roles are even acknowledged (Brickhill et al, 1996:22).

It would seem, therefore, that the primary gender socialisation to which children are exposed in the home is reinforced in the schools, and is further translated into anticipatory socialisation in relation to adult roles in the family and economy.

Boys' attitudes towards girls: a case study

The study on boys' attitudes towards girls discussed below was undertaken to complement an earlier study on the attitudes of girls, parents, and teachers. The aim was to discover how secondary-school boys perceive girls and women in relation to education, the economy, and the family. At the same time as boys revealed their attitudes towards, beliefs about, and perceptions of girls they exposed, also, their perceptions of masculinity. Boys' beliefs about male attributes, abilities, and roles in the family and economy were clearly revealed in the survey.

The study was undertaken during a six-week period in June and July 1995. Six secondary schools in the Matabeleland South and Midlands areas of Zimbabwe were selected. The schools included one each of the following: government rural, government urban, government peri-urban, church, mine, and rural district council. These categories of school cater for the vast majority of Zimbabwean secondary-school pupils. At each school, fifteen Form 1 and 2 boys were randomly selected to complete questionnaires, and a further ten boys were randomly selected for interviews. The questionnaires included both open-ended and closed questions. Boys were required to explain their responses to the closed questions. The interviews were unstructured but focused, designed to elicit more detailed information on the topics and issues included in the questionnaires.

Who should be educated and why?

Boys were asked a number of questions relating to the importance of, and necessity
for, the education of girls. Most boys involved in the study (77.5 per cent) believed that it is equally important to educate boys and girls. Of the 22.5 per cent who stated that it is more important to educate boys, most believed that girls will be supported by their husbands, who are the family breadwinners; and girls get pregnant, so the investment in their education is wasted.

Those boys who believed it necessary to educate both boys and girls gave several reasons:

Life is very hard now, and a woman must have a job to help her husband to support the family. To get a good paying job, a girl needs education.

Today in this country there are equal rights for men and women, so that is why I say boys and girls must be educated the same.

If a girl is educated she can get a job. There are jobs for girls and jobs for boys and both need education.

An educated girl is a good mother and wife for the family, and an educated boy will get a good job, good money.

Who is more intelligent?
The boys were asked about the levels of intelligence and academic abilities of girls and boys. Of the respondents, 36.0 per cent believed boys are more intelligent, while 50.6 per cent believed girls and boys are equally intelligent. Further questioning revealed, however, that even those boys who believe girls and boys are equally intelligent differentiate between girls’ intelligence and that of boys:

Girls have another intelligence. Intelligence in different subjects...for food and nutrition, fashion and fabrics. The boys have their intelligence in science and mathematics.

They have equal intelligence, but there are subjects which girls are more intelligent for. Boys have intelligence for science, agriculture, and building.

These differences in intelligence, together with a range of gender-specific aptitudes and endowments, were given as the reason why girls do not do as well at school as boys, and are not as good as boys at science, maths, and technical subjects:

Girls cannot think, reason as boys do. They cannot understand ideas so maths is hard for them.

Girls have less concentration and brain power. That is why I say the subjects like maths and science are difficult for girls but not for us boys.

Girls cannot construct things, they cannot build and measure accurately.

Who should do which school subjects and which jobs?
School subjects were gender-typed on the basis not only of the perceived abilities required to master them, but also of the occupations for which they were considered prerequisites:

Science is good for boys. They can be mechanics and doctors. Girls cannot do such jobs.

Fashion and fabrics, and food and nutrition are good for girls as they can use these in the home to take care of the family.

Biology is more useful for girls, to know about women’s things and caring for the children. For boys, they can be a doctor.

By far the most common reason for jobs being defined as suitable for women was that they were perceived as ‘easy’ and ‘light’. Jobs for men, however, were seen as requiring bravery and strength. Nursing and teaching were thought to be suitable for women who are believed to have, unlike men, caring natures:

Girls can be good at looking after some people, children, sick people. Boys are not like that. Girls can be nurses.

A woman cannot do a dangerous job, a miner or driver. It needs the power and bravery of a man. Women must have clean jobs, and light. Like a secretary or a nurse or a cook ... A man can do heavy work and dirty, also dangerous. He can be a miner, a pilot, and such things.
A man cannot be good for a nurse. It needs a tender heart.

A girl cannot be an engineer or a scientist because they are not strong or very intelligent like a man. A man has body power and brain power.

Women cannot ... control a business. They cannot give orders to other people. They cannot be a boss.

All the boys participating in the study expected their wives to work and contribute to the family income. They were asked which occupations are most suitable for men and women. The occupations most suggested as best for women were cook, tailor/sewing, teacher, nurse, and domestic worker. Jobs most frequently seen as best for men were builder, carpenter, teacher, and miner.

Who is the head of the family?

Boys' responses to questions about the roles of men and women in the family indicate that they believe the husband is the family head, decision maker, and breadwinner. Almost 90 per cent of boys believed that 'a wife should obey her husband':

A husband is the family head. He supports the family and must be obeyed by the wife. He is strong and intelligent, more than the wife.

We will make decisions together, but if we don't agree I will decide, as husband.

My wife must obey me because I paid the roora for her.

We will both obey each other. A husband obeys when he buys the things the wife needs for the family. A wife obeys when she does all that the husband tells her to do.

My wife will work, she will be a nurse. She will work to help me, the father.

Not unexpectedly, in light of the above, 83.4 per cent of the boys stated that it is the responsibility of the wife to take care of the home and children, and 60.5 per cent felt that the wife should do the cooking and cleaning. The minority of boys who did not feel this way believed that there were certain circumstances under which the husband should help out: when the wife is sick or has just given birth.

Conclusion

As Joseph (1996) has noted 'patriarchy works because it becomes part of the psyche'. The internalisation of patriarchal principles occurs not only in the family but during secondary socialisation in the school. It is there that pupils develop their academic self-concepts and a sense of themselves in relation to the school. It is there, too, that children are prepared for participation in the modern sector of the economy. As the above findings show, in Zimbabwe the academic self-concepts developed by boys in schools are differentiated by gender.

The data above suggest that, with regard to gender, there has been little substantive change in the colonial education system inherited at independence. Such education cannot contribute to development and increased gender equity. Policy makers, educators, donor organisations, and NGOs need to recognise the ways in which schools manufacture gender identity, not only femininity, but also masculinity. In order for development to occur, for gender equity to be achieved, and for men and women to develop their full potential as individuals, education provided in the schools must contribute to the eradication of gender stereotypes.

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Notes

1 The first study was supported by SIDA. The second study, discussed in this article, was undertaken as a part of the UNICEF Gender Equity in Education Project.

2 Only a portion of the data collected is discussed here. For a full report of both studies see Gordon (1995) and Gordon (1996).
Gender training for development practitioners: only a partial solution

Fenella Porter and Ines Smyth

The authors investigated the scope and impact of gender training in Oxfam GB and concluded that to be fully effective, gender training must be part of a broader strategy for organisational transformation.

Development ideas and practices have evolved and faced challenges over the years, and among the forces which have contributed to this have been those demanding gender equity. The promise of a fundamental transformation of gender inequalities, both in society at large and in development institutions, is not yet realised or perhaps not fully realisable. Development institutions differ very widely in the extent to which they are committed to gender equity, what that commitment entails, and the means they propose to adopt to achieve related goals.

Gender training is a strategy often advocated by development institutions as an answer to these questions. Gender training is sometimes presented as the technical solution to the stubborn refusal of development policies and projects to become 'gendered'. More fundamentally it is also presented as a way to address the root causes of systematic inequalities between women and men in the development process. This perception mirrors 'human capital theories' in management, which claim that training and education of women can redress the imbalance of their under-representation. At the opposite end of the spectrum of approaches to gender training lies an understanding which relies on Freirian ideas of learning as a process of self-awareness leading to social mobilisation. Such a view of gender training fits well with many feminist principles:

Gender training is a tool, a strategy, a space for reflection, a site of debate and possibly of struggle. Training is a transformative process: it aims to increase knowledge and to develop understanding as a way to change behaviour, and to offer new skills with which to do this. (MacDonald 1993, p.32)

This article specifically addresses gender training for 'development practitioners' or 'implementers': those working within the context of a development programme or project in a particular national context. Oxfam staff at this level are often national staff and therefore represent the culture in which they are living and working, as well as representing the values and culture of Oxfam. Gender training must be fully informed by and relate to the reality of implementers' lives and work. The way in which implementers experience gender
relations, and their ability to understand and implement work for gender equality, are controlled not only by the complexity of their context, but also by their hierarchical position within it.

The limitations of a perspective of gender training as merely the acquisition of skills and a ‘quick-fix’ solution, are evident. More recently, consensus has been built around the institutional aspects of gender issues in development. The realisation that ‘institutions are gendered’ (Goetz 1995) has led to the conclusion that development organisations cannot achieve gender fairness in their work unless they undergo fundamental changes in their own structures, practices, and culture.

These two elements form the focus of this paper: contextualising gender training for development practitioners, and the potential of gender training as a transformative tool within institutions.

**Gender training in Oxfam head office**

Oxfam, like most international NGOs, aspires to be a ‘learning’ organisation. Learning is understood as the cycle through which planned activities produce information on their nature and impact; these are in turn analysed to influence the new cycle of action and learning (Howes and Roche 1996). To what extent is training part of this commitment to learning in Oxfam? Until the early 1990s the Training Department delivered a range of mandatory and optional courses open to all staff. They included courses on gender and development, and gender and communications.

Since the disappearance of the Training Division, training has been provided through each separate division, according to its needs and priorities. The newly established (1996) Learning and Development Team of the Human Resources Department in the International Division stresses the importance of individual learning, and of individual responsibility for organisational learning.

However, with the abolition of the Training Division, there is no form of gender training available centrally in Oxfam. The one remaining course open to all staff which has a gender component is the ‘Knowledge of Oxfam’ course for new staff and volunteers in the UK which includes a one-hour session on Oxfam’s gender and development work.

Though training is only one avenue to learning, it could be argued that the change from central provision of training has weakened Oxfam’s ability to use formal training as part of a broader learning strategy. The disappearance of the gender-specific courses has deprived Oxfam of a valuable method of building the competence of its staff to implement the gender policy. The reduction of training on gender to a one-hour slot is also a signal to new staff of the secondary importance which the organisation attributes both to gender issues and to the awareness and skills necessary to operate effectively as a development worker.

**Gender training in the field context**

It is important to clarify here what we mean by ‘context’. Gender training for implementers is at the interface between a development organisation and a local context. Implementation staff are required to understand concepts of gender as they relate to their work, and also as they relate to them personally within their own cultural context. It is vital that gender training is presented in such a way as to make sure that ‘gender relations’ are understood not as foreign and imposed concepts, but important social relations that affect not only their work but their lives.

Local trainers are a vital link with the context, both in order to relate concepts of gender to it, and to build local capacity to support work for gender equality.
Alongside this, the presence of a trainer or co-trainer from the 'central' office of the organisation can help to position gender issues as an integral concern of the organisation. The use of local trainers and co-trainers in Oxfam is both widespread and very varied. In many field offices, gender training is carried out with local gender trainers, and Oxfam staff have taken on the role of gender trainer themselves with local counterparts.

However, gender trainers do not only represent a context, but also a hierarchical position within that context. The age and the sex of the trainer will, in many cases, dictate her or his position within a hierarchy, and may influence the effectiveness of the training. Many development organisations (including Oxfam) have appointed gender advisers or gender officers to carry out training. Although these roles enable staff to develop the training over time, they have not generally been roles of particular authority or power. Despite the considerable success so far (mainly thanks to the commitment and vision of individuals), gender training, and commitment to gender equality have not yet been systematically endowed with authority within Oxfam.

Another important element in ensuring the success of gender training is how it is presented. The principles of pedagogy concern how people learn, as opposed to what people learn. There is little written on the pedagogy of teaching the various gender 'frameworks' which have become widely used in development contexts. In general the 'framework' being taught (ie. what is being taught) is often assumed to be the same as the pedagogy (ie. how it is being taught). This leads to misunderstandings about frameworks, and how they can be used. Frameworks are only tools, and a particular framework can be used with different pedagogies, and applied in varied contexts. Above all, frameworks are not the answer to the challenges of carrying out gender-sensitive work.

Frameworks are seductively universal, presented as providing universally applicable tools. Experience has shown however, that they are not universal and cannot be universally applied (ODA 1996).

Practitioners often understand this. For example, participants in the Oxfam South Sudan training observed:

*The discussion highlighted that in using such frameworks it is important to be aware of their limitations. These are important considerations, given the uncritical way in which these frameworks are often proposed ... most seriously they run the risk of being equated with the long-term work of developing and implementing appropriate gender strategies* (Smyth 1997).

Developing gender training material for specific contexts ensures that the material reflects the dynamic nature of the contexts in which practitioners work. This is a constant creative process, and much learning can take place between gender trainers and development agencies as the material develops. The *Oxfam Gender Training Manual* is widely used at the present and, more importantly, the translations which so far have been made (in Spanish, French and Arabic) have offered the opportunity of adapting the material to different regional contexts.

One of the limitations of the present gender training is that there is a distinct shortage of material that is produced from gender training courses or workshops. For example, there is little material available centrally on the gender training that Oxfam project officers carry out with partner organisations. If an organisation is to learn and develop further strategies of gender training, documentation of gender training is essential, including the recording of failure. Existing documentation of gender training will seldom include any notion of failure. Although failure may be shared internally and informally, this constrains a wider sharing of experiences and longer-term development of the training itself.
Finally, it is important to address some of the problems and resistance that are often encountered in gender training. Many difficulties that arise in gender training are a consequence of trainees' personal resistance to concepts of gender. There may be emotional reactions from men and women who have much invested in the patriarchal system, the legitimacy of which is being questioned in the process of gender training. Resistance will inevitably restrict participants' understanding of gender, and when participants do not fully understand concepts, they cannot understand where they fit into their work.

Key concepts in gender analysis have often been developed in other cultures to those of the trainees, thus giving rise to resistance. Underlying this difficulty is the fundamental question of what concept of gender should we expect people to understand? Practitioners are fearful that their legitimacy within the community will be negatively affected by their espousal of gender concerns that have been developed in another culture.

One of the principal fears that participants have about dealing with gender issues in their work is that gender is an imposed agenda and one which may create dangers for the programme and for individual staff members when promoting this agenda in the local community (El Bushra: 1996:4).

Language barriers can create problems. This is because training at the implementation level is often targeted at people for whom English (or French, Portuguese etc.) is not the first language. There is a real lack of training material in local languages, and this compounds difficulties with conceptual understanding:

Workshops and related activities conducted in a multi-lingual environment always present difficulties of communication .... the question of language and communication should be explicitly addressed in all programme activities (Smyth: 1997).

Gender training for field staff can also pose logistical problems. Field-level training will often be in relatively isolated areas, with poor infrastructure; participants may experience difficulties in travelling to a training course. Logistical problems are gendered. If gender training is designed to give a clear message about gender relations, awareness of the constraints of the trainees' productive and reproductive lives must be incorporated in the training itself. The idea of 'gendered time and space' has clear implications for the way in which gender training is organised, as well as for the way in which gender concerns are integrated into development projects.4

**Gender training as a transformative tool**

Success at relating concepts of gender to complicated contextual situations is an important step in ensuring the impact of gender training. However, it is only a partial solution. In order to increase the capacity of staff to implement gender-equitable programmes and projects it is vital that gender training goes further, and becomes part of a more fundamental personal and organisational strategy of transformation.

Oxfam's basic gender training is based on a personal approach:

*Awareness-raising ... addresses attitudes, perceptions and beliefs; unless people are sensitive to gender inequalities, gender analysis training is unlikely in the long run to change planning and practice in development and relief agencies' work. We believe that unless people's emotions are touched, and their practices in their personal lives are brought into the discussion, there is a risk that gender awareness will remain merely an intellectual construct, and will be limited in its power to bring about meaningful social change.*


Only after this personal exploration of the issues do most workshops analyse the
projects from which the participants are drawn, and develop relevant tools and skills (Williams:1994). This kind of training can be threatening, as it challenges basic assumptions that are part of people's identity. But if it is facilitated carefully it can be a non-confrontational process of discovery, with the participants themselves bringing out otherwise difficult elements of gender relations, as shown by the following comments:

The role-play generated a lot of discussion ... the other issue ... which aroused a lot of comment was ... the gender perspective with regard to leadership, particularly as the elders were not only talking on behalf of the women but were also talking as if the men were a homogenous group ... It was generally felt that the workshop had been useful, interesting and challenging (Walker 1993).

When gender training is seen by development organisations as only a set of skills for planning, implementation or evaluation, it will very seldom reflect back on the working relationships within the organisation itself:

Gender and Development (GAD) policy initiatives have, at least in principle, been accepted by the development establishment, yet the fact that social institutions and development organisations continue to produce gendered outcomes which can be constraining or outright disadvantageous for women means that we must interrogate patterns of administration and rule from a feminist perspective, and insist on accountability to women as a serious issue in development management and politics (Goetz: 1995:1).

Equality in working relationships have for some years now been governed by an equal opportunities policy. Employers who have a stated commitment to social justice, as do organisations working for development, have an obligation to take equal opportunities initiatives seriously. These policies concern not only recruitment, promotion, training opportunities, and physical facilities, but also the establishment of a physical environment free from sexual harassment, and a work culture which allows both men and women to contribute fruitfully.

The Oxfam equal opportunities policy (established in the late 1980s) applies to the whole organisation. Oxfam also has a gender policy (established in 1993). The two policies are structurally connected and between them there is considerable transformational potential for both the organisation and its work. But this connection is at best unclear and certainly not brought out in gender training. Oxfam's gender training has, like that of other development organisations, concentrated on programme and project work, not on its internal functioning as an organisation. This reinforces the separation between the gender policy and the equal opportunities policy: the equal opportunities policy being more focused on management issues, monitored by personnel and central human resources departments; and the gender policy being more focused on programme issues, monitored by desk and field staff in the international division.

Conclusion
Implementers occupy a complex contextual place in the development process. Their position is at the interface of the development organisation and the local context. Training (amongst other initiatives for increasing the capacity to carry out gendered work) for implementers therefore needs to reflect their positioning in this complex and sometimes conflictual reality. Further to this, implementers are positioned hierarchically within both the local context and the organisational context. Gender training should relate to the opportunities and limitations that are presented by the trainees' hierarchical positioning.
Gender training for implementers can increase the capacity of organisations to address gender concerns in their work. However, if gender training is only seen as access to technical skills, the concepts and tools with be misunderstood and ineffective.

Gender training without transformational potential it is still only a partial solution. The transformative potential of gender training is in its personal and political nature, affecting as it does personal perspectives and questioning fundamental social relations. Denial of these elements of gender training leaves it with a lack of political clout and relegates it alongside other ‘technical’ interventions.

Above all, we need to ensure that a commitment to gender equality is institutionalised into all structures of the organisation. Training as a part of this institutionalisation can contribute a great deal to building the capacity of development organisations to carry out transformative work.

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ODA ‘Towards the design of a Post-Beijing training strategy, Report of Workshop held 4 March 1996’

Notes

1 The original paper from which this article is drawn was prepared for the Department for International Development (DFID), and used multiple examples from DFID and other development institutions. This article uses more selective examples from Oxfam’s own experience, drawing specifically on the implications for gender training and capacity building at the implementation level of the field offices.
2 Oxfam’s Gender and Development Unit (GADU) included an in-house gender trainer from 1989 to 1991.
3 ‘An analytical framework sets out different categories of elements/factors to be considered in any analysis: it draws attention to the key issues that have to be explored. A framework may outline a broad set of beliefs and goals, or it may be more prescriptive and give a set of tools and procedures’ March:1996:i.
4 Goetz, in Sweetman: 1997
5 But in field offices local national law mitigates them.
Conference report
Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), Hamburg, Germany, 1997

Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo

Women have a right to equal opportunities; society, in turn, depends on their full contribution in all fields of work and aspects of life. Any attempts to restrict women’s right to literacy, education and training must be considered unacceptable. Practices and measures should be taken to counter them (Article 13, Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning).

A year ago, UNESCO organised the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), bringing together more than 1,500 participants from governments, NGOs, research, training and educational institutions, intergovernmental organisations, and foundations.

Held every 12 years, this particular conference differed from the previous four, in that it had involved the broader adult education community, including NGOs and academic institutions, from the beginning. Moreover, compared to other UN conferences, CONFINTEA V was unique as it did not have a separate NGO Forum; instead, NGO representatives attended the meeting as official participants. Assessing the gains for women’s education, it could be said that these two developments facilitated the visibility of women as educators, policymakers, and learners, and the highlighting of specific women’s issues in adult education.

From the start of the conference preparations, procedures were in place to ensure women’s visibility. In the Governing Board Meeting of the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE), which was the lead agency for CONFINTEA V, in 1996, it had been recommended that the invitation letter to the member-states as well as to other participants, specify a gender balance among selected delegates. The preparatory regional (Asia, September, 1996; Africa, October, 1996; Europe and North America, December, 1996; Latin America, January, 1997; and Arab, February, 1997) and thematic meetings also discussed women’s education, and the gender perspective in adult education.

Finally, an international seminar on ‘Promoting the Empowerment of Women through Adult Learning’ was also convened by the UIE in Thailand in February 1997, to examine the range of women’s educational practices, and elaborate on the strategies for CONFINTEA V.

At the conference itself, almost 40 per cent of participants were women, who occupied highly visible positions, as President (Rita Sussmuth, President of the German Parliament), Keynote Speaker (Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh), Rapporteur General (Esi Sutherland-Addy of Ghana), as members of the drafting committee (half the committee were women), and as speakers both in the plenary sessions and thematic discussions.
More important, many of them highlighted women’s concerns and women’s initiatives. For example, Prime Minister Sheik Hasina shared her country’s experiences in the implementation of adult literacy programmes where at least 50 per cent of these initiatives are female literacy centres; and one clear lesson is that empowerment of women can be facilitated through greater participation of women learners in literacy activities. Esi Sutherland paid tribute to the efforts of the women in CONFINTEA V when she spoke of the ‘effective participation of women in panels and in delegations ... all of this has provided the opportunity for a critical mass of women to affect the proceedings of the conference’.

While the contribution of the above-mentioned individuals in making women and women’s issues visible throughout the meeting was significant, it is also equally important to highlight the efforts of women working together. The Women’s Caucus, being the most active and productive network, provided visibility to women collectively discussing, and lobbying for, gender justice in adult education.

Given the preparatory work and the high visibility of women and their educational issues, it is no surprise that the main outputs of the conference, the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, and the Agenda for the Future, reflect women’s education concerns and include action points for mainstreaming the gender perspective in adult education. Specifically, Theme 4 of the conference (focusing on adult learning, gender equality and equity, and the empowerment of women) dealt with the issues of equitable access to and representation in education, gender-sensitive participatory pedagogy, adverse effects of sexual violence, globalisation and structural adjustment, and promoting women’s organisations. Other themes also addressed women’s issues: for example, Theme 1 (adult learning and democracy) particularly focused on encouraging leadership capabilities among women, and Theme 5 (adult learning and the changing world of work) sought to promote gender-sensitive approaches within extension services, answering the needs of women in agriculture, industry, and services.

One of the most critical outcomes of CONFINTEA V was the advancing of women’s learning opportunities side by side with calls for gender sensitivity and gender justice. The AGENDA emphasised that equal opportunity in all aspects of education is essential to enable women of all ages to make their full contribution to society. With regard to the need to address the slow closing of the gender gap in literacy, there is commitment in the Agenda to reducing the female illiteracy rate by the year 2000 to half the 1990 levels.

Participants at the conference recognised that, since the majority of women live and learn under impoverished and violent conditions, educational opportunities should be able to address these problems. There is a loud and clear message in the Agenda that it is necessary to ‘educate men and women to acknowledge the serious and adverse impacts of globalisation and structural adjustment policies in all parts of the world especially upon women’. There is commitment in the Agenda to ‘through information and counselling, women’s ability to protect themselves from domestic and sexual violence and by involving men in these educational efforts’.

The presentations, stories, and data shared throughout the conference showed us the large body of contradictory knowledge and experiences available. For instance, in some workshops, it was evident that while formal and non-formal education and training opportunities have contributed to the emancipation of women, some of these initiatives also serve to reproduce and reinforce gender inequalities, and stereotype gender roles. In her report at the end of the conference, the Rapporteur General noted that even as non-formal education programmes have successfully addressed the issue of women’s empowerment by building on their family and community experiences, there are still large gaps in the implementation of pro-
grammes to make both men and women gender sensitive.

At the conference, it was evident that women's access to and representation in education is only one aspect. Learning about gender justice is a project for both men and women where gender inequalities have to be addressed whether it be in the home, in the form of domestic violence, or at the level of society, in the forms of dictatorship, wars, structural adjustment, and exploitative global capitalist relations.

It is therefore necessary to continue efforts to raise awareness about prejudice and discrimination in society. One way is through the development of education programmes that enable men and women to understand gender relations and human sexuality in all their dimensions. Another is to extend health education for women and men in order to share responsibilities and to broaden concerns related to reproductive health and child care.

While there were many examples of female-led community education and economic initiatives, and their contribution to the building and strengthening of democracy, there were other accounts of women being politically marginalised. It is therefore important that women make governments and NGOs accountable, as well as their own organisations. One of the recommendations of the Agenda stresses the 'need to encourage and develop organising and leadership capabilities among the adult population, especially among women, to allow them to participate in institutions of the state, the market, and civil society'.

At the same time, mechanisms have to be in place to allow women to gain access to formal structures of power and to decision-making processes in both private and public spheres. One critical recommendation in this regard is the 'investment of an equitable share of resources in women's education to ensure their full participation in all fields of learning and knowledge'.

The success of bringing women's issues and a gender perspective in CONFINTEA V was made possible through the concerted efforts of governments, women's organisations, NGOs, and academia. Whether it be in the large and small meetings of the Women's Caucus, or among governments, or in the workshops, women and some men made sure that women were visible. Women, individually and collectively, were actively involved in shaping the outcomes of the conference such as the Agenda and the Declaration. The challenge now is to take these forward, by either formulating policies or implementing concrete programmes and projects.

In acknowledging the cross-cutting and all-pervasive characteristics of gender inequality, the Rapporteur General reminded the participants to build on the decisions and commitments made at the international conferences held during this decade in Beijing, Cairo, Copenhagen, and Vienna among others. The same plea was made by the Women's Caucus in its lobbying efforts. The sweet promise of gender justice in Hamburg, just as those made in other international conferences, has to be disseminated and not allowed to remain unfulfilled. Women have been promised so many things in their lives. The first thing in the agenda is to make public these promises. The next should be to discuss strategies to bring these promises to reality. The final step is for women to 'just do it'!

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CONFINTEA V Background Papers, Deutschen Volkshochschule-Verbandes (DVV) and UNESCO Institute for Education, 1997.
REFLECT Mother Manual: Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques
By David Archer and Sara Cottingham

ACTIONAID, 1996.
ISBN 1 872502X
278 pages, spiral bound, softback
Price: £10.00

The REFLECT Mother Manual will make most development workers and educationalists itch to get out into the field with the book and try out the techniques. It is written with enthusiasm and commitment, backed by the experience of successful pilot projects in three contrasting, linguistically diverse communities, in Uganda, El Salvador, and Bangladesh.

The name ‘REFLECT’ derives, somewhat clumsily, from Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques, but relates more comfortably to the process of thought, discussion, and action through which literacy is developed in a group. This approach has famous forbears, in the work of Paolo Freire, the Brazilian radical educator, the language and concepts of gender and development, and the best practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

Entitled a ‘mother’ manual, the authors stress that users must create their own manual by adapting this approach to their own local circumstances, rather than buying an ‘off-the-shelf’ literacy programme. This book provides a wealth of practical support to this end. Section One explains how to use the manual; Section Two makes REFLECT’s theory and philosophy explicit. Section Three explains how the REFLECT process works in a literacy circle, while Section Four provides clear instructions on how to proceed, including details of how to develop a local manual, and how to select and train facilitators. Ten sample units are provided in Section Five, along with prompts and suggestions for many more covering agricultural/micro-economic, health, and socio-political themes, leaving no doubt as to the range of possibilities open to manual writers and facilitators. The last major section suggests ways of adapting the approach to different communities, to work with children, and how other participatory approaches can integrate with REFLECT. Contact lists and lists of related resources are also included.

A strength of the REFLECT Mother Manual is its acknowledgment of the importance of literacy facilitators themselves. There is no attempt to produce ‘teacher-proof’ materials that almost anyone could use regardless of their training, background or attitude. Nevertheless, the manual still provides enough structure and guidance to be readily adaptable in the field by non-experts.

The REFLECT method successfully treads a fine line between a highly structured
approach to developing literacy, and genuine participation in the process on the part of learners themselves. Power and responsibility over the outcome is devolved to the learners, meaning that the results are not predetermined. In line with this, the great strength of this manual is that it gives potential users support and then encourages them to take the initiative, be creative, and take risks. As the End Note says ‘without risk-taking there will be no change and it is time for some change. We need ... to look for new solutions.’ The possibility of failure is inherent in risk-taking, and the manual is honest in recording the problems and difficulties faced in the pilot projects, so that readers can learn from them.

Nevertheless, optimism abounds throughout the manual; it may be seen by some readers and users as overabundant, with largely untried ideas being advocated, for example, for adapting REFLECT for work with pastoralists, refugee communities, and in particular with children. In comparison with the wealth of detail in the sample units, there is little anticipation in these suggestions of the kinds of problems which might emerge, or of dealing with conflicts either with existing ways of working, or those wedded to them. Arguably, this is because the current Mother Manual is a working document and a stimulus to further action. Future editions will be able to incorporate experiences from new projects as and when they emerge, and in the meantime, this edition remains an excellent buy. For those unable to be involved, it will be fascinating to see what further insights into literacy and community empowerment future editions will give.

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Further reading:
Books

Gender in Popular Education: Methods for Empowerment, Shirley Walters and Linzi Manicom (Eds.), Zed Books Ltd., 1996.
7 Cynthia Street, London, N1 9JF, UK.
A collection of critical reflections on feminist adult education work in grassroots organisations, development projects, formal institutions, and community education programmes in a variety of countries. Examining methodologies that lead to women's empowerment, it aims to give feminist popular education work a much wider audience.

This collection exposes the volatility of gender reform programmes currently in practice in Australia. The importance of local cultures is considered as the book discusses how to make more equitable environments for boys and girls in the school system.

Racism, Gender Identities and Young Children; Social Relations in a Multi-Ethnic, Inner-City Primary School, Paul Connolly, Routledge, 1998. ITPS/Routledge, Cheriton House, North Way, Andover, Hampshire SP10 5BE, UK.
This study of a British inner-city, multi-ethnic primary school and its surrounding community provides an account of how and why children draw upon race in the development of their gender identities.

This collection of critical essays from leading academics, professional practitioners, and education activists from more than a dozen countries looks at the impact of globalisation on adult education and training (AET), with
a particular focus on women, and the effectiveness of AET strategies, workplace training, and experiential learning.


Shows how projects to promote women’s literacy can contribute to their improved status, better health care, greater environmental protection, and effective economic activity. Includes step-by-step details on preparing literacy activities for women.


Examining the link between the university curriculum and gender issues, and emphasising the importance of education as a means of empowering women, this book attempts to identify whether and how the teaching, training, and research functions of higher education sensitise students to the principal questions affecting women and their role in society.


This manual looks at the obstacles girls face in receiving an equitable education. Five thematic sections discuss girls’ access to education; safety in school, particularly sexual harassment; content and curriculum; the school environment, including teacher attitudes, classroom atmosphere and teaching methods; and strategies for action.


This book results from an action research project by the UNESCO Institute of Education focusing on the power dimensions underlying literacy work, in the Asian context. Looking at literacy as a structural issue, it asks: ‘Who makes the policies? Who defines literacy?’

*Women Education and Empowerment: Pathways Towards Autonomy*, Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo, UNESCO. Institute for Education Feldbrunnenstrasse 58 PO Box 13 10 23 20110 Hamburg, Germany

A report from a seminar about refining the framework of women’s education and empowerment through analysis of the different practices. Discusses theoretical, practical, and personal perspectives and asks from whose perspective we evaluate assumptions about women’s education and empowerment, practices and their outcomes.


Analyses the effects of adult education on the economic realities and personal lives of women. It also discusses future strategies and research areas in women’s adult education, and the reasons why more funding is needed.

*The Politics of Women’s Education; Perspectives from Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, Jill Ker Conway and Susan C. Bourque (eds.), University of Michigan Press. PO Box 1104, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1104, USA.

Reveals the complex changes that have recently occurred in women’s education throughout the world. Although women have made remarkable progress, their educational equity remains elusive and politically contested. The book provides a comprehensive
assessment of what has been attempted, what remains to be done, and the options for reform.


The AAUW Report reveals how girls in grades K–12 receive an inferior education to boys in America’s schools. Girls receive less attention in the classroom than boys; although the gender gap in mathematics is shrinking, the gender gap in science is increasing; African American girls are more likely than white girls to be rebuffed by teachers. Includes concrete strategies for change and recommendations for educators and policymakers.

*Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America’s Schools*, American Association of University Women, 1993. Educational Foundation Research Department RR.INT, 1111 Sixteenth St., NW Washington DC 20036, USA.

The first US national scientific study of sexual harassment in public schools. Based on the experiences of 1,632 students, in grades 8 through 11, the research found that 85 percent of the girls and 76 percent of the boys surveyed have experienced sexual harassment. The survey also found that although both girls and boys experience sexual harassment, this takes a greater toll on girls: girls who have been harassed are more afraid in school and feel less confident about themselves than boys who have been harassed.


Gives educators, policymakers, parents, and students insights into strategies that foster girls’ achievement and healthy development. This national review of more than 500 reports and studies on girls in grades K–12 offers compelling evidence that innovative approaches such as team learning, all-girls classes, and greater hands-on access to computers and tools benefit girls’ ability to succeed in school.


This report and the accompanying video show how adolescent girls, regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or region of the country, use a common set of behavioural strategies to meet the challenges of middle school.


In November 1997, the Foundation convened a roundtable to examine the collected research on single-sex education in grades K–12. A summary of that discussion, papers submitted, a review of the literature to date, and suggestions for future research have been gathered into this report that challenges the popular idea that single-sex education is better for girls than coeducation.

*From the Personal to the Political: A Women’s Education Workbook*, AONTAS Women’s Education Group, Attic Press, c/o Cork University Press, Crawford Business Park, Crosses Green, Cork, Ireland.

A comprehensive and clearly structured workbook for women’s education groups, focusing on education, health and sexuality, covering all aspects of working in groups, including facilitation skills.

*Women’s Education and Fertility Behavior*, Population Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, United Nations Secretariat, 2 United Nations Plaza (Rm. DC2-1950), New York, NY 10017, USA.

This research survey looks at the measurable effects of women’s education on fertility and
female autonomy. There is little consensus on the exact nature of the relationship between education, fertility, and autonomy; the evidence from the developing world that has emerged over the last 20 years is reviewed.


*Developing a Gender Policy in Secondary Schools: Individuals and Institutions*, Jean Rudduck, Open University Press, 1994. Explores how secondary schools have tried to build concern for gender equality into school structures and practices. Reflects the experience of a number of schools, serving urban communities of moderate to severe social and economic disadvantage.

*Education and Gender Equality*, Julia Wrigley, Falmer Press, June 1992. Aims to build a feminist framework for analysing education. The book has a wide scope, containing comparative historical accounts of the development of women’s education, chapters on girls’ academic achievement compared with that of boys, and ethnographic material on the interplay of race and class in shaping women’s schooling. Other chapters focus on feminist pedagogy, gender differences in parents’ involvement in their children’s schooling, and working-class women’s transfer of educational ambitions from themselves to their children.

*Sex Roles and the School (Education in Society Series)*, Sara Delamont, Routledge, 1990. ITPS/Routledge, Cheriton House, North Way, Andover, Hampshire SP10 5BE, UK. Updated edition (first was 1980) of a work that documents the variety of entrenched practices and assumptions in British schools which support and reproduce gender bias, leading to a persistent pattern of under-achievement, particularly among working-class girls. The book examines strategies for change, and includes a comprehensive bibliography, the first part for general readers and the second of particular use to researchers.

*The Power of Women-Positive Literacy Work*, Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1994. 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON Canada, M4E 2V6. Provides the background for the research, details the research process, and describes what actually happened when women in twelve literacy programmes decided to do something they considered women-positive.

*Women in Literacy Speak*, Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1994. 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON Canada, M4E 2V6 Includes material written by literacy students and staff, and a summary of the research process for the book, analysis of the issues, and recommendations.

*Making Connections: Literacy and EAL Materials Developed from a Feminist Perspective*, Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1996. 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON Canada, M4E 2V6. A collection of lesson plans, sample lessons, materials and resources on themes such as her-story, role models, cross-cultural awareness, work, safer sex, identity, and self-esteem.

*Gender and Education in Asia and the Pacific*, Sally Baden and Cathy Green, BRIDGE Report 25, 1994. Publications Office Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex Brighton BN1 9RE UK Tel: (01273) 678269 (Intl +44 1273) Fax (01273) 621202/691647 Email: ids.books@sussex.ac.uk

This report reviews the Asian and Pacific experience of education of the last 20 years, using statistical data. Examines gender-based constraints to education, and policies and programmes implemented to address these constraints, with case studies of China and Vietnam.
Policy makers and social scientists envision a role for educators in development based on 'human capital' theory. In the Brazilian Amazon frontier community of Itaituba, female educators contribute to community, human resources, and economic development in ways consistent with gender and class expectations and constraints. Their overall impact on economic development, however, is negligible because the extractive economic system favours cheap, unskilled labour rather than a better-trained, more productive local labour force.


This paper examines the status of female participation in formal education in Africa at the close of the International Decade for Women. In-school dimensions of the equity issue are also outlined as a conceptual framework for future studies. Trends of the past two decades indicate that increased numbers of African girls have gained access to a primary level of education to acquire those basic skills and attitudes considered necessary to support general development goals.

Family Life and the Subordination of Women in the Teaching Profession: The Case of Mexico City, Regina Cortina Working Paper 128, November 1986 Publications Office Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex Brighton BN1 9RE UK Tel: (01273) 678269 (Intl +44 1273) Fax (01273) 621202/691647 E-mail:ids.books@sussex.ac.uk

This article examines the unionised teaching profession in Mexico and explores ways in which female subordination is maintained in the field of education, and in particular, how cultural and material factors within the family affect women's participation in union politics and the educational profession.


This paper considers the introduction in 1976 of Universal Primary education in Nigeria, and the effect on popular perception of women's role in an Islamic society, and the girls' perceptions of themselves and their own life prospects, of sending Hausa Muslim girls to school.


This paper examines classroom interaction patterns within an elementary school attached to a Nigerian university, and whether these interactions vary by student gender, level in school, or teacher gender. The impact of classroom interactions on academic achievement and career choice are also discussed.
Different writers show how education in disciplines such as music, science, teacher-training, adult literacy, community education, media and law are essential for the full development of Indian women.


Studies in demography and education demonstrate the fundamental flaws in the belief, widely-held by policy makers, that sending girls to school to ‘educate’ them is sufficient to ensure fertility decline. The studies make clear that the need to expand contraceptive use, maternal and child health services is more important than ever, and increasing school enrolments of girls is not even a partial alternative to achieve a decline in fertility.


Reviews the interventions, policies, programmes, and projects that have been implemented by governments, donors, and other institutions to increase girls’ access, persistence, and achievement at the primary-school level. It examines both the formal system of primary education and non-traditional, alternative approaches to reach out-of-school girls, to identify the strategies, practices, inputs, and factors that have had measurable impact in improving the availability and accessibility of basic education to girls in developing countries.


This report presents case studies of various incentive programs used to increase girls’ enrolment, attendance, and performance in primary school. Programmes described include the Guatemala Association for Family Life Education Scholarship Programme, the Female Education Scholarship Programme in Nepal, a school feeding programme in Haiti, and the Sindh Primary Education Development Programme in Pakistan.


An analysis of data from interactive radio instruction programmes around the world which offers evidence of the positive impact of IRI on student achievement. The first section discusses the potential of IRI and whether girls are learning more through IRI as compared to girls not receiving IRI, and how girls are doing relative to boys. The next section is a practical guide for IRI scriptwriters and other creators of educational materials. It examines common gender biases in existing scripts and proposes options for making scripts more gender-neutral and more beneficial for girls’ learning.

Resources on training for women/ gender training

The Oxfam Gender Training Manual, Suzanne Williams, Jan Seed, Adelina Mwau, 1994, Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DZ, UK.
This training manual draws on wide experience and is designed for use by staff of NGOs who are familiar with running workshops or training courses, and for experienced gender trainers. Practical tools are offered for the training of development workers who are in a position to influence the planning and implementation of development and relief programmes at different levels. The manual combines activities to raise self-awareness with others to explain gender analysis techniques. It includes a summary of concepts related to gender and development and the principles of gender training, and case studies of gender-sensitive appraisal and planning. The use of images and text to communicate gender-sensitive messages is explored, and activities suggested to help workshop participants use their acquired awareness and analytical skills to plan practical action.

A Guide to Gender Analysis Frameworks,
Ines Smyth and Candida March, 1998, Oxfam
A guide to all the main analytical frameworks for gender-sensitive research and planning, aimed at students of gender and development, and practitioners who wish to compare the frameworks. Includes step-by-step instructions for using the frameworks, summarising their advantages and disadvantages in particular situations, and placing them in the context of gender-transformatory development work and research.

Gender Training for Development Policy Implementers, Fenella Porter and Ines Smyth, 1998, Oxfam
A critical look at gender training, drawing on the experience of five different international development organisations based in the UK. The paper suggests that gender training for development practitioners should be rooted in the local and the organisational context as development practitioners are at the interface of these two situations, and that gender training is only one element of a broad strategy for change. The paper arises out of research originally commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID).

Gender Training: The Source Book,
SJR Cummings, Hvan Dam and M Valk (eds), KIT Press, Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Mauritskade 63, 1092 AD Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Reviews gender training experiences of practitioners in a broad sense, including those involved in gender education and training, as well as research. Including contributions from different geographical regions and divergent fields, regional studies are complemented by a detailed case study from South Africa.

Triple Roles, Gender Roles, Social Relations:
the Political Sub-Text of Gender Training,
Naila Kabeer, Discussion paper, 1992, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9RE
An examination and critique of three frameworks (gender-roles framework, triple-roles framework, and social-relations analysis) taught in gender training. All share a common objective, to challenge biases in the planning process by
alerting planners to gender divisions in resources
and responsibilities, but they vary in terms of
world view and visions of gender equity.

Institutions, Relations and Outcomes:
Framework and Tools for Gender-Aware
Planning, Naila Kabeer and Ramya
Subrahmanian, Discussion Paper, Institute of
Development Studies, University of Sussex,
Brighton, 1996
This paper develops an analytical framework
and a set of tools which can help planners to
ensure that gender is systematically
integrated into all aspects of their work. It
guides readers through the way in which
gender-differentiated outcomes are produced
in the development process, stressing the
importance of participation, not only in
ensuring that goals, objectives, and activities
are tailored to the realities of those excluded
from the development process, but also as an
integral aspect of the transformative potential
of any attempt to address social exclusion.

On Our Foot: Taking Steps to Challenge Women’s
Oppression — A Handbook on Gender and
Popular Education Workshops, Liz Mackenzie,
Adult Education and Development,
University of the Western Cape, Centre for
Adult and Continuing Education (CACE),
Private Bag x17, Bellville, 7530, South Africa.
A guide for organising and running a work-
shop on gender and women’s oppression and
an introduction to popular education and its
main principles. The Centre for Adult and
Continuing Educating (CACE) ran work-
shops on women’s oppression and popular
education in 1990 and 1991 as part of a project
on gender and popular education, which
aims to develop methods of education which
help people to challenge the gender bias in
organisations and educational programmes.

Gender Workshops with Men in South Asia:
Experiences and Reflections, Kamla Bhasin,
Convergence 29, 1996
Experiences of gender workshops run by
female trainers for senior men in decision-
making positions in NGOs in India, Bangladesh,
and Nepal. Participants appeared to be well
aware of the subordination of women, but
reluctant to consider the possibility of
equality between the sexes. Dialogues to
reduce hostility, misunderstandings, and
misconceptions about feminism and the
women’s movement were a major task.
Evaluations reflected improved under-
standing and desire to move towards better
gender relations. Participants recommended
that such workshops should be mandatory for
men working in development organisations.

No Short Cuts: A Starter Resource Book for
Women’s Group Field Workers, Nicky May,
Actbook 1, 1986, CHANGE, PO Box 824,
London, SE24 9JS, UK.
Guide and tool for fieldworkers to issues and
problems in the area of women and devel-
opment. Simple and practical guidelines on
how to proceed with assistance to women’s
groups, give technical support and advice on
how to solicit funds, and basic organisational
skills.

Journals

Gender and Education Journal, UK. Carfax
Publishing Limited PO Box 25 Abingdon
Oxfordshire OX14 3UE UK
Telephone + 44 (0)1235 401000
Fax + 44 (0)1235 401550
E-mail: enquiries@carfax.co.uk
Web site: http://www.carfax.co.uk/gee-ad.htm
A journal that aids the distribution and
exchange of feminist research and ideas in the
multidisciplinary, international area of
education. Since it is the policy of the journal
to establish a forum for discussion and debate
about gender in education, articles that
examine the experiences of boys and men as
well as girls and women are welcome.

Journal: Adult Education and Development, Institut
fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit des Deut-
schens Volkshochschul-Verbandes (IIZ/ DVV)
Obere Wilhelmstrasse 32 D-53225, Germany.
A half-yearly journal for adult education in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A forum for dialogue and exchange of information among educators around the world in middle-level teaching.

**Organisations**

**Women, Ink**, 777 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA, E-mail: wink@womenink.org
URL: http://womenink.org
Women, Ink is the largest distributor of women’s books. It is a project of the International Women’s Tribune Centre to market and distribute books on women and development worldwide. Distributes 200 titles from publishers all over the world, and is the exclusive distributor of publications from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

**American Association of University Women**, 1111 sixteenth street NW, Washington DC 20036 Tel: 800/326-AAUW Fax: 202/872-1425 TDD: 202/785-7777
E-mail: info@mail.aauw.org
A national organisation that promotes education and equity for all women and girls. AAUW is composed of three corporations: the Association, a 160,000-member organisation with more than 1,600 branches nation-wide that lobbies and advocates for education and equity; the AAUW Educational Foundation, which funds pioneering research on girls and education, community action projects, and fellowships and grants for women around the world; and the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, which provides funds and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sex discrimination in higher education.

**CARE**, Women’s/Girls’ Development Education Project, 151 Ellis Street NE Atlanta, GA 30303-2439 1-800-521-CARE, ext. 999.
E-mail: info@care.org
CARE launched its Education Programme in 1994 with pilot projects in Peru, Guatemala, India and Togo, and in two years expanded to 19 projects in 18 countries. Programmes improve education for all children, with an emphasis on keeping girls in school. Groups of parents and teachers are encouraged to discuss traditional educational barriers, such as housework or baby-sitting, that keep girls from attending school. CARE also provides economic incentives to help parents to cover the cost of keeping their daughters in school.

**US Agency for International Development**
Ronald Reagan Building, Washington, DC 20523-0016 Tel: 202-712-4810
Fax: 202-216-3524
USAID created its worldwide project, Advancing Basic Education and Literacy (ABEL), to address national and international concerns across the broad spectrum of basic education, formal education systems, early childhood education, and non-formal education for out-of-school youth and adults. Broad consensus on the urgency of these issues was reached in 1990, when the nations of the world and the international and bilateral donors met in Jomtien, Thailand at the World Conference on Education for All. Nations and donors committed themselves to making education a high priority for intellectual and financial investment.

**NAWE: Advancing Women in Higher Education** 1325 18th Street NW, Suite 210 Washington, DC 20036-6511, USA. Tel: (202) 659-9330 Fax: (202) 457-0946
E-mail: nawe@clark.net
Founded in 1916, NAWE is a non-profit membership association dedicated to the advancement of women in higher education and related fields. Membership includes administrators, faculty, and students from all sectors, plus leaders from associations, business and government agencies.

COL has embarked on a programme for women in development, which has the overall aim of improving the status of women
through widening access to education. Distance education is envisaged as a means of enabling more women to improve the quality of their lives, to play a more active role in their communities, and make a greater contribution to their countries' development. Priority is given to improving access to education for those who, despite poor basic education, must acquire relevant skills in order to support families, or who wish to re-enter the workforce or assume community leadership roles.

Katha, Katha Building Centre, Sarai Kale Khan, New Delhi 110 013. Tel: 91-11-462-8227; 464-4031; Fax: 464-3998 E-mail: DELAAB05@giasl01.vsnl.net.in Katha is a non-profit organisation devoted to enhancing the pleasures of reading. Its objectives are to spread the love of books and reading; to break down gender, cultural and social stereotypes; to help people, especially children and women become self-reliant, confident and creative.

Empowerment through Enlightenment, Saminaz Akhter, President Empowerment through Enlightenment 540 Memorial Drive Suite 1409 Cambridge, MA 02139 (617) 621-9919 http://www.jagunet.com/~spectrum/ete/PAGETWO.htm Empowerment through Enlightenment is a non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering poor, urban women in Dhaka, Bangladesh through health-care education and literacy programmes.

Volunteers in Service to Education in India, Inc, PO Box 713, Hartford, CT 06101, USA Promotes women’s education projects in India, and also education for handicapped children, to help them become integrated into society.

Foundation for Women's Education in the Rural World, Dr. N P Singh, 4412 Fortuna Way Salt Lake City, Utah 84124 (801) 278-6769. http://server.berkeley.edu/asha/projects/gmv.html A non-profit organisation dedicated to furthering and enhancing the education of women in rural India. The foundation's goal is to establish one girls' school in a rural area of every district in the country. Its first women’s college is in Gangapur.

Web resources

Women’s International Electronic University (on line university for women) http://www.wvu.edu/~womensu/mail: Madonna Kolbenschlag WIEU, Health Sciences South, PO Box 9247 Morgantown, WV 26506 An international, independent non-profit consortium dedicated to educating and empowering women through computer-modem technology, promoting cross-cultural communication, and providing a base for collaborative teaching, research and projects.

The Women in Development Network http://www.focusintl.com/widnet.htm This is an excellent resource with translations in both French and English. It has huge databases on gender and development for practitioners and academics.

http://www.nald.ca/canorg/cclow/cclow2.htm This Web site contains information on women’s literacy publications.

http://www.femina.com/femina/Education/Lists links to Web sites on women’s education

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Extensive information on UNESCO’s educational work.

http://www.education.unesco.org/educnews/new_idx.htm http://www.education.unesco.org/toc.html Education periodicals at:

http://www.education.unesco.org/educsect/ed_period.html
Useful statistics on women’s education at:
http://www.education.unesco.org/educprog/stat/spreadsheets/yb_02_01.html
http://www.education.unesco.org/educprog/stat/spreadsheets/yb_02_04.html

**Women and Education Resources**
http://aztec.lib.utk.edu/~mack/wom_ed.html
This list provides links to many gender and education Web sites, including academic programmes and departments; women’s centres; colleges and universities; and library and archival resources. Subject areas covered are: women in science and technology; gender studies and women’s issues; and other general and related topics.

**E-mail lists**

**ACADEMIC-WO** is a forum for staff in British higher education institutions to discuss all issues relating to the work and professional experience of women as academic and academic-related staff. To subscribe to the e-mail list, send the message: JOIN ACADEMIC-WO Firstname Lastname to MAILBASE@NEWCASTLE.AC.UK

**Women-Related Email Lists About Education or Campus Life**
http://research.umbc.edu/~korenman/wms/t/f_educ.html
These e-mail lists focus on education or campus life. To find out how you can subscribe, contact:
Joan Korenman korenman@umbc2.umbc.edu

**ADJUNCT-FACULTY** has been established to discuss strategies for bettering conditions for part-time instructors, many of whom are women. Besides being a forum for discussion, the list encourages networking among part-timers. To subscribe, send the message:
SUBSCRIBE ADJUNCT-FACULTY Your Name to LISTSERV@NMSU.EDU

**ANTIGONE** is a list for women in legal education. It is run by the Association of American Law Schools section on Women in Legal Education. You can subscribe from the ANTIGONE web site or by sending the message:
SUBSCRIBE ANTIGONE Your Name to LISTPROC@ASSOCDIR.WUACC.EDU .

**CAMPCLIM** provides a forum for discussions pertaining to college campuses’ personal, educational, and physical environments. Send subscription messages to:
LISTSERV@UAFSYSB.UARK.EDU (Internet) or LISTSERV@UAFSYSB (Bitnet).

**EDEQUITY** (Educational Equity Discussion List) encourages discussion of educational equity in schools, colleges, etc. among teachers and other educators, equity practitioners, advocates, parents, policymakers, counsellors and others interested in equity. The list serves as a forum to discuss how to attain equity for males and females; and how gender equity can be a helpful construct for improving education for all. The participation of both women and men is welcomed. To subscribe, send the message:
SUBSCRIBE EDEQUITY to MAJORDOMO@CONFER.EDC.ORG .

**FEMPED-L**, a feminist pedagogy list, has been designed for discussing issues of power and positionality in the classroom and how feminist pedagogy can be used to challenge patriarchal models and methods that silence and intimidate women in educational settings. Send subscription message to:
LISTSERV@UGA.CC.UGA.EDU (Internet) or LISTSERV@UGA (Bitnet).

**NAWE** is a list for members of the US National Association for Women in Education and for those who may be interested in NAWE, a volunteer professional organisation that addresses issues in higher education of particular interest to women, such as women’s scholarship and the advancement of women educators and students. To subscribe, send the message:
SUBSCRIBE NAWE Your Name to LISTSERV@LIST.UVM.EDU.

POSTGRAD-WO is 'a discussion list for postgraduate women who are doing research and/or for postgraduate women doing research around women’s/gender issues.' The list welcomes discussion, debate, ideas, etc. about all areas of research and researching as female research students in higher education institutions. To subscribe, send the message:

SUBSCRIBE POSTGRAD-WO firstname lastname to POSTGRAD-WO-REQUEST@MAILBASE.AC.UK

WINVET (Women’s Network for Technical and Vocational Education and Training) has been established so that women involved in technical and vocational education in the Asia Pacific Region can access professional information and discuss issues, ideas, and achievements. To subscribe, send the message:

SUBSCRIBE WINVET to MAJORDOMO@SUNSITE.ANU.EDU.AU

More information about the WINVET network and the e-mail list is available at the WINVET web site.

WLDADD is designed for professionals in the fields of education, psychology, or health services, who are interested in topics relating to women and learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorder. The focus is primarily on adult women with learning differences and higher education. College educators, researchers, counsellors, disability support staff, admissions, or psychologists and therapists in private practice who work with women with learning differences may be particularly interested. Women who have learning differences are especially welcome. To subscribe, send the message:

SUBSCRIBE WLDADD Your Name to LISTSERV@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM.

WOMCOLLIB has been established to share information among those working in libraries at women’s colleges and to share scholarly inquiry dealing with women’s colleges or women’s education. Examples of issues include ways in which women access and process information, ways library facilities may be best designed to serve women, and scholarly resources valuable to the study of women’s education. To subscribe, send a message to: LIST-REQUEST@CATT.COCHRAN.SBC.EDU; in the SUBJECT HEADER, say SUBSCRIBE WOMCOLLIB Firstname Lastname. Not that this goes in the subject header, not the body of the message.

WOMYNWIT is a list for women professors of adult education and is open only to them. For more information, write to the listowner at WOMYNWIT-REQUEST@TAMU.EDU. To subscribe, send the message SUBSCRIBE WOMYNWIT Your Name to: LISTSERV@TAMVM1.TAMU.EDU (the 1 at the end of TAMVM1 is the number one).

WRAC-L (Women’s Resource and Action Centers List) focuses on issues and resources of significance to women’s centres. The list is open to the staff and affiliates of women’s centres, whether community-based or associated with schools, colleges, or universities. Send subscription messages to LISTSERV@DARTMOUTH.EDU.