



FROM PARITY TO EQUALITY IN GIRLS' EDUCATION: HOW ARE WE DOING IN SOUTH ASIA?

Els Heijnen-Maathuis



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SERIES FOREWORD

There is a growing sense of momentum around education in South Asia. Governments are engaged and a lot has been done. The Millennium Development Goals have added an additional spur to action as indeed have greater awareness on gender disparity and the need for educated workers. There is though a long way to go if the rights of all children are to be realized.

Providing access to education is only part of the story. Once children are enrolled and attending, the quality of their education must make it a worthwhile experience. The special needs of girls in the social and cultural context of South Asia call for special measures, as do the needs of all children in situations of conflict and emergency. South Asia has many rich, positive examples of success in advancing basic education. It is important that these are shared and built on if there is to be an overall improvement throughout the region.

This series of papers aimed at promoting better education in South Asia grew out of collaboration between the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and the newly formed UN Girls' Education Initiative, and had its genesis at a Regional Meeting on Accelerating Girls' Education in South Asia in February 2005.

Essentially the series is intended to be a forum that allows debate, exchange of ideas and to break new ground. It will aim to capture the momentum and extol good practice to all engaged in educational policy and implementation.

The series does not seek to represent a specific viewpoint, but rather is intended to enable specialist contributors to present issues in greater depth and breadth than is often the case in official documents.

Initially the series will focus on girls' education but it is hoped that eventually it will broaden into a platform for more general education issues related to South Asia, with a particular emphasis on social inclusion. Contributions and feedback are invited from academics and practitioners from throughout the South Asia region and beyond. The series editors are particularly interested in submissions which offer new ideas and strategies that can assist those needing answers, and which can add impetus to the ongoing efforts in the region to provide quality education for all.

Come, join the debate!

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Els Heijnen-Maathuis

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AS	Alternative Schooling (India)
BEHTRUC	Basic Education for Hard to Reach Children (Bangladesh)
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Programme (Nepal)
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Action Committee
BSC	Back to School Campaign (Afghanistan)
CA	Continuous Assessment (Bhutan)
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CEC	Community Education Committee (Afghanistan)
C-EMIS	Community-based EMIS
CFA	Continuous Formative Assessment
CFS	Child Friendly School
COPE	Community Organized Primary Education (Afghanistan)
CPA	Continuous Pupil Assessment (Bangladesh)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRP	Child Rights Programming
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEO	District Education Office or Officer
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme (India)
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System

EW	Education Watch (Bangladesh)
FSP	Female Stipend Programme (Bangladesh)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEEI	Gender Equality in Education Index
GEI	Gender-specific EFA Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GO	Government Organization
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HBS	Home-Based Schooling (Afghanistan)
HREP	Human Rights Education Project (Pakistan)
IDEAL	Intensive District Education for All (Bangladesh)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILFE	Inclusive Learning Friendly Environments
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MDA	Mid-Decade Assessment (EFA)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDM	Midday Meal (India)
MLE	Multi-Lingual Education
MML	Minimum Standards of Learning (India)
MOE	Ministry of Education
MWTL	Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning (Bangladesh)
NAPE	New Approach to Primary Education (Bhutan)
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board (Bangladesh)
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFBE	Non-Formal Basic Education (Pakistan)
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NFPE	Non-Formal Primary Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
NWFP	North West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
PD	Professional Development
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme (Bangladesh)
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSDP	Primary School Development Programme (Sri Lanka)
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTI	Primary Training Institute (Bangladesh)
QERP	Quality Education Resource Pack (Nepal)

RBA	Rights-Based Approach
SPW	Students Partnership Worldwide (Nepal)
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (India)
SSHE	School Sanitation and Hygiene Education
STE	Science and Technology Education (Nepal)
TEP	Teacher Education Programme (Afghanistan)
TLM	Teaching–Learning Materials
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VEC	Village Education Committee
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation
WBL	Working for Better Lives (Bangladesh)
WFP	World Food Programme
WTS	Welcome To School (Nepal)

TERMINOLOGY

Gender equality means that girls/women and boys/men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development. It is the equal valuing by society of the similarities and differences of girls/women and boys/men, and the roles they play.

Gender equity is the process of being fair to boys/men and girls/women. To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the existing historical and social disadvantages. Equity is a means, while equality and equitable outcomes are the results.

Gender parity in education is about giving every boy and girl the opportunity to have access to education and go to school. The drive to put equal numbers of boys and girls into school is referred to as achieving gender parity in education.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) – commonly used to assess gender difference – is the value of an indicator for girls divided by that for boys. A value less than 1 indicates difference in favour of boys, whereas a value near 1 indicates that parity has been more or less achieved.

Stereotypes (related to gender or other aspects of difference) are ideas held by some people about members of particular groups, based solely on membership in that group. They can be positive (black men are good basketball players) or negative (women do not understand mathematics). Used negatively, stereotyping statements reveal prejudice often resulting in discriminatory behaviours.

SUMMARY

Whether or not girls receive an education is influenced by factors such as socio-cultural context, safety concerns, the presence of female teachers, and facilities and approaches that address the specific needs of girls. Education is a right and girls who are not in school are being denied that right. The right to education is emphasized in international treaties and declarations, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA, 2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG, 2000). Education of girls is embedded in these visions of development priorities. It should be stressed that different goals and articles are cross-cutting and complementary. Quality issues are therefore not limited to EFA goal 6 and neither should discrimination only be considered under CRC Article 2. Equality of access, opportunity and outcome, as laid down in the CRC, EFA and MDGs, are important aspects of quality education and interlinked dimensions of a rights-based approach.

South Asian countries are committed to education as a basic human right, which is reflected in the ongoing EFA Mid-Decade Assessment.¹ To work from a rights perspective has far-reaching implications for education development and reform. It necessarily entails values, knowledge and skills that revolve around the basic principles of non-discrimination, participation and equality. Education, supporting the EFA and Millennium Development Goals, therefore must facilitate a process that enables learners to take charge of their lives and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Governments in South Asia at their meeting in Islamabad (2002) pledged to mobilize resources to provide 'free, inclusive, gender responsive quality basic education for all'. This requires us to look at how countries ensure the right to education for every child and at how national policies promote (equality in) quality, linked to the potentially transformative quality of education.

Even though most countries have abolished tuition fees, parents may still have to pay for books, exams, uniforms or school development funds. Such costs make education *inequitable*. The implications are that those who can afford to pay are educated, while others continue to be denied their right to education. Girls are often the first to be affected. It is precisely to break the vicious circle of poverty and social exclusion that primary education was made a public responsibility. To make education available to all, it is important to cut its costs to families and improve its quality, because 'as long as education is costly or in short supply, access will continue to be "rationed", with those who are wealthy, urban and male at the front of the queue ...' (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005).

CRC AND EDUCATION

Art. 28 All children have a right to education. The state is obliged to provide formal schooling, 'progressively, and on the basis of equal opportunity'. Primary education should be free and compulsory. Styles of school discipline should reflect the child's human dignity.

Art. 29 The purpose of education is to develop children's personality and talents, to prepare them for active adult life, to foster respect for basic human rights and a respect for the child's own culture and those of others, and life in a free, peaceful and tolerant society.

Art. 2 All rights laid down in the CRC shall be respected and ensured to all children without discrimination of any kind on grounds of race, gender, economic status, religion, citizenship, social class, ethnicity, language, etc. and measures will be taken to *protect* children against all forms of discrimination.

Art. 12 Children have a right to express opinions and their *views* shall be sought and considered on all matters that affect their lives, individually and collectively.

Art. 3 In all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child must be a primary consideration.

Art. 6 The right to life, survival and optimal development.

EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA)

EFA Goal 2 Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly *girls*, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory education of good quality.

EFA Goal 5 Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

EFA Goal 6 Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG)

MDG 2 Achieve Universal Primary Education – ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education.

MDG 3 Promote gender equality and empower women – eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

With respect to education, being female tends to be a disadvantage in South Asia, though this is slowly changing. Gender disparities persist throughout education systems from enrolment to career development. There are special challenges related to the enrolment and participation of girls, and if they come from excluded groups such as ethnic minorities or low-caste families then their disadvantages multiply.

Net Enrolment Ratios (NER) and Gender Parity Index (GPI) figures are less useful as indicators of success beyond enrolment because they provide little information about the quality dimensions of schooling. There is a need to look at what happens in classrooms and ask questions like: 'How do teachers interact with students?', 'Do girls participate meaningfully?' and 'Do teaching-learning materials and subject choices challenge gender stereotypes?' Quality education for girls must contribute to achieving gender and social equality by being empowering and overcoming the multiple sources of exclusion.

Most gender-related education statistics have focused on quantity issues, celebrating increased enrolments. It may now be time to focus on 'non-enrolment' as a

challenge, rather than as an indicator of progress. Children who have not been enrolled or do not attend regularly must become a priority for education planners and practitioners. Exclusion forces us to ask questions about which children are not in school and why, and what can be done to reduce barriers to participation and learning for different children. The complexity of inequalities of class and gender, ethnic, religious and other differences that constitute education deprivation forces governments to find better strategies to accommodate diversity – also beyond schooling. For education to be empowering (MDG3) it needs to result in equality of opportunities and in girls having more choice in their lives.

The role of education as a vehicle for overcoming marginalization and social exclusion must be reinforced. It is also clear that the persisting problem of poor quality teachers and teaching and the limited learning achievements in South Asia need to be addressed now in order to prevent the gains in increased enrolment from being lost due to disillusioned and frustrated learners dropping out.

Countries in South Asia have developed and implemented different policies and interventions to increase the enrolment of girls and, more importantly, retain them in school. Educational expansion has, however, often been achieved at the expense of quality, with large budgets spent on enrolment incentives and untrained or under-trained teachers being confronted with overcrowded classrooms. And while the focus on the remaining out-of-school girls should not be decreased, equal attention must be given to what happens in schools when girls have enrolled so as to safeguard meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes.

Quality education – also related to relevance and safety – is very important in closing the gender gap while also reaching out to other learners vulnerable to exclusion. There are even suggestions that more children may be out of school because of the poor quality of public schooling than for other reasons.² If so, the most serious crisis in education is not related to gender or poverty, but to lack of learning. If parents already want to educate sons, but are not sure about educating their daughters, quality improvements will be especially critical for girls.

Societies must change to bring about social justice. Those who have been marginalized, based on gender, socio-economic background, caste, ethnicity or other aspects of difference, must be included, and education plays a critical and enabling role in such a process. Examples of quality, gender-equitable education programmes must be identified, shared and scaled up in the region, structured around a rights-based framework (see box).

STRATEGIES TOWARDS RIGHTS-BASED EDUCATION

*1. Equality of opportunities / Right **to** education: girls and boys are offered the same chances to access school*

- Make education free of costs.
- Provide incentives for poor and marginalized families (stipend; scholarship; school-feeding).
- Make schools (distance; infrastructure; curriculum) accessible to all learners.
- Provide non-formal education (NFE) for older, out-of-school and hard-to-reach children.
- Support Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes for the most disadvantaged.
- Involve parents and communities in school–community partnerships.
- Ensure that teachers share the culture and language of the learners.
- Develop adequate water and sanitation (WATSAN) infrastructure.
- Pay attention to protection of learners in school and on the way to and from school.
- Ensure that there are sufficient female teachers to support and act as role models for girls.

*2. Equality of pedagogy / Right **in** education: girls and boys receive the same respectful treatment and attention, follow the same curricula, enjoy teaching methods and tools free of stereotypes and gender bias*

- Develop inclusive education policies that acknowledge and address diversity equally and respectfully.
- Train and support teachers to understand (and act on) issues of social and gender discrimination.
- Provide enough and well-trained (male and female) teachers.
- Develop policies that protect children from harassment, abuse and other forms of violence, including gender-based violence, bullying, physical and mental punishment.
- Ensure that curriculum and textbooks are academically and pedagogically of good quality, with positive images of boys and girls and other aspects of diversity and also challenging prevailing stereotypes.
- Acknowledge curriculum and assessment flexibility and adequately respond to different learning needs and learning styles.
- Sustain mutually beneficial school–community partnerships.
- Train and support teachers in using a diversity of teaching methods, especially (inter)active methods.

3. *Equality of outcomes / Right **through** education: as a result of education and beyond, in society more generally*

- Make sure that learning achievement, length of school careers, academic qualifications and diplomas do not differ by gender.
- Create continuing and equal opportunities for lifelong learning, professional training, empowerment and positive participation in society (decision-making power, control of resources, etc.).
- Increase tertiary education options, especially for girls and other disadvantaged groups.
- Increase employment and equal income opportunities for men and women, especially from socially disadvantaged groups.
- Abolish discriminatory laws, customs, practices and institutional processes.

Adapted from: Seel (2006) p.7; and UNESCO (2003) p.44.

This paper seeks to identify factors behind processes and progress towards improved quality education for all learners, girls in particular, and to learn from innovative policies and practices across the region. It examines how countries try to meet international targets and national goals for Universal Primary Education, in enrolment and completion.

Lessons learnt based on evidence from the South Asia region are presented, giving different perspectives from a great number of national and international (secondary) resources. While acknowledging and sharing successful country examples, remaining challenges and how these relate to wider issues of social exclusion are also discussed.

The paper is meant to generate further discussion and has as its intended audience policy-makers and practitioners – including teacher educators – as well as (inter)national organizations. It is hoped that it will help them to find new sources of insight. It is written from a belief that education goals and policies must be based on equal rights and opportunities, implying that public education should be made accessible and beneficial for all learners. It underscores the joint responsibility to reach out to and include those who have been traditionally un-reached or excluded – many of them girls.

Chapter 1 provides the context, taking account of the region's diversity. This is followed by Chapter 2 describing how education must and can become more girl-

friendly to retain girls in school and help them learn. Chapter 3 focuses on quality aspects at the school level to promote and support positive learning experiences and learning outcomes. Both strengths and weaknesses of interventions are reflected upon. Chapter 4 places quality and equality of education into a rights perspective. It highlights important implications for educational policy and practice of implementing the CRC, illustrated by the development of child friendly or rights-based schools throughout the region. Chapter 5 provides recommendations for policy and practice based on the wider analysis of the earlier chapters, providing strategies and tools for advocacy and change that can be used by policy makers, education advocates and practitioners.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Regional level

1. Conduct a gender review of textbooks and other teaching–learning materials to identify the challenges still to be addressed. Develop a common set of analytical tools, recommendations for revision and cooperation in the development of new materials, involving researchers, authors, curriculum specialists and policy makers.
2. Undertake a joint impact study of incentive schemes such as stipends, scholarships, school feeding programmes, etc., especially at the individual level of girls in terms of behaviour, (e)quality of opportunities and (e)quality of outcomes.

National level

1. Use the existing CRC Implementation Handbook and checklists to analyse the child rights situation in the country for improved educational planning, monitoring and evaluation. Develop policies and programmes that look more critically at quality and equality of education through the lens of rights-based and transformative change.
2. Ensure the safety of school children – especially girls – by taking strong legal measures that outlaw gender-based violence and harassment in school and on the way to and from school, with clear procedures for dealing with violence. Adopt, implement and monitor prohibitions on the use of *corporal punishment* in school.
3. Review existing or develop new education policies, while raising issues of exclusion by asking what kind of diversity is acknowledged in education policies and practices (gender, ethnic, linguistic, religious minorities, disability, etc.).

4. Enhance accountability through improved data collection and analysis disaggregated by gender, income, region/district, urban/rural, public/private, formal/non-formal, social group and disabilities, so that inequities can be quantified and appropriate strategies devised to minimize imbalances.

School level

1. Integrate gender into all school policies and practices and increase knowledge on gender issues and gender-based violence among teachers and in the school curriculum. Conduct *school-based research* of safety and security of students, including students and their perspectives.

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

1.1 A Region of Diversity

South Asia is a diverse region with generally strong patriarchal and hierarchical social structures. Where gender gaps are wide and families poor, the chances are less that many girls are in school.

Many parents in **Bhutan** say they cannot afford to send their children to school, or need them at home to work. Officially education is free. One survey, however, revealed that over a period of six months parents had to pay an average of Ngultrum 1729 per student – for uniforms, school feeding, fees and other contributions – and this among a sample where 40 per cent of households had a cash income of only Ngultrum 5000 per year and an average of 3.4 children per family.

Source: Black and Stalker (2006).

Despite (inter)national commitments, the enrolment rate between girls and boys in South Asia still shows discrepancy between promise and reality. Sri Lanka and the Maldives have achieved gender parity, while in Bangladesh there are now more girls than boys enrolled. Enrolment has increased throughout the region, but access for children from low income and socially marginalized groups remains a challenge, contributing to the high proportion of out-of-school children, many being girls. These more than 40 million children vary by country and context but are likely to include, for example, children with special needs, affected by conflict, 'river gypsies', Dalits, religious and ethnic minorities, migrant workers, nomadic populations, and child labourers.

To be able to achieve MDG 2, enrolment is not enough, as gender parity can also be achieved in situations of low

enrolment. Furthermore, net enrolment figures only provide a picture of the number of children on the school register, not of their attendance, passing of grades or effective learning. Studies have revealed that at least half the children finishing primary education in South Asia cannot effectively read, write or do simple mathematics. (Herz, 2006). Quality education is therefore an important factor for realizing universal primary education and a serious concern for all countries in the region (UNICEF, 2006).

Many girls face discrimination and challenging circumstances that keep them out of school or preclude them from meaningful learning. In some countries there is a strong 'son preference' where parents tend to value education for boys more than for girls. Furthermore, early marriage and teenage pregnancy are still widespread in most South Asian countries, which further reduce girls' opportunities for education, influencing their attendance and retention.

Contrary to often held beliefs, parents, including those with limited resources, want education for their daughters. The quality of education is, however, important in their decision to send girls to school because of the generally higher opportunity costs of girls. If they are not learning due to low expectations and poor quality teachers, if they are maltreated and school is perceived as an unsafe environment, parents are likely to keep their daughters at home.

In Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan and India, separate schools for girls may be the only way to increase education opportunities for girls. The lagging performance of Pakistan in girls' education may, however, have to be attributed in part to the need for double investments in single-sex schooling. Bangladesh, with co-educational primary schools, has sped ahead while Pakistan continues to struggle with expanding separate schools for boys and girls (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006).

Cross-country comparison may be difficult in such a diverse region, while also within countries great urban-rural and socio-economic disparities exist. For example, unlike other countries, in Bangladesh the government manages less than half of the total number of primary schools, the other half being managed by NGOs. India is dealing with a school-going population much larger than any other country in the region, with diverse cultures, topography and levels of development. Though small in size, Bhutan's difficult topography and remoteness of most rural areas present a number of challenges that need special efforts and attention. Child labour is common in South Asia, and the work girls are involved in is often hidden. Large cities in South Asia 'house' many street children, most of whom have no access to education and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse – especially girls. HIV/AIDS is a growing concern, in India in particular. Most formal education systems have yet to educate

young people about risks and prevention strategies. In India and Nepal, caste, associated with gender, ethnicity, occupation and residence seems to overrule all other factors in explaining non-enrolment and non-completion (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006).

Relatively large numbers of children in South Asia attend religious schools. Monastery schools exist for example in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, and madrassas in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan. These schools are difficult to monitor, but they tend to be restrictive and rigid. Furthermore, religious schools are more likely to uphold gender differences than eradicate them (UNESCO, 2003). There is a need for governments to look into the quality issues of religious schools as curricula are often limited, living conditions poor (in the case of boarding schools) and discipline strict. Studies, for example by Save the Children, have revealed how children in monastery schools and madrassas are subject to rigorous corporal punishment. Religious schools must be mainstreamed to make sure that children attending such schools are also receiving quality education.

Access, attendance and learning outcomes have also been undermined by armed conflict (Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan) and natural disasters (tsunami, earthquakes), seriously impacting on all children's education rights – but often more so for girls. Girls and women experience conflict and disaster differently from boys and men.

Their different roles, activities, skills, positions and status create gender-differentiated risks, vulnerabilities and capacities in such situations. Extra attention and care is warranted for vulnerable groups such as internally displaced girls or those in refugee camps, girls with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities. In situations of conflict or natural disaster, quality education is a necessity that can be both life-sustaining and life-saving, providing physical protection, psychological and social well-being, and cognitive development.³ Such programmes must focus on survival skills (learning to live where you live), developmental skills (learning to be) and academic skills (learning to learn) while incorporating the skills, understanding and attitudes needed for peace and conflict prevention as well as natural disaster preparedness.

Whether children stay in, and benefit from, school depends on what happens in school. Throughout the region public schools face challenges of poor management and low teacher quality. Teacher absenteeism is high, especially in Pakistan, Nepal and India. Teaching is often not stimulating and the school curriculum too theoretical. This poor quality of government education has resulted in private schools mushrooming in South Asia. As there is a tendency to especially send boys to private schools, this may create a two-tiered system of education which entrenches inequalities based on social class and caste, while also increasing the gender gap (Bista, 2004). In addition, public school

students may have to engage in private tuition to be able to pass exams and complete schooling, further raising the costs to families and pointing at the lack of quality teachers in many schools. In countries like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh this seems to have become institutionalized.

Throughout the region incentive schemes like scholarships, stipends and school feeding programmes have been implemented. This has resulted in increased enrolment of girls and other disadvantaged children, but also in overcrowded classrooms where the quality of teaching and learning may be at stake. Whether such incentives have been successful in addressing the needs of hard-to-reach socially excluded groups is not clear, and more research may be needed to look into groups reached and its impact. Incentives for girls from excluded groups, for example, may need to be accompanied by other forms of compensatory support to help them

succeed in school, such as 'bridge courses' or remedial coaching. Furthermore, in-school programmes that compensate for the absence of education reinforcement at home are critical to retaining disadvantaged learners and helping them learn, ranging from academic support to after-school supervision. Such additional support offers a major incentive to parents to keep their children in school.

In some countries scholarships are inadequate and quotas small and thus do not help poor families to meet the most essential education costs (Bista, 2004). Furthermore, challenges around these programmes reported from countries like Bangladesh (and Nepal) include scholarship money being delayed and/or misused, lack of transparency in identification and distribution of scholarships, poor coordination and monitoring of its effectiveness, and parents being unaware of the various scholarship programmes (Ahmed and Chowdhury, 2005).

An education programme launched by the Mumbai-based NGO PRATHAM (India) provides remedial education to groups of 15–20 children who are lagging behind. Using young female high school graduates, who earn \$15 a month, from the same communities in which the schools are located, the Balsakhi programme teaches core competencies to 2nd and 3rd graders. Evaluations have shown significant academic progress as a result of the programme and comparison between children in public schools without remedial education and those in the Balsakhi programme have shown that remedial education is 10 times more cost-effective, suggesting that it may also be more effective than expanding the public teaching force to compensate for repeaters.

Source: Lewis and Lockheed (2006).

School feeding programmes are also implemented in South Asia, for example in India and Afghanistan. In some cases these programmes have been associated with reduced dropout rates and higher student achievement, but insufficient research has been undertaken to prove this. To be most effective in boosting children's achievement and behaviour, micronutrient-fortified school meals must be given as early in the day as possible.

Some studies suggest that in places where enrolment is already high, school feeding programmes are less effective. Most of these programmes target children of poor families. However, identifying who is poor and which communities are most vulnerable is difficult. In that respect, universal school meals may be a better strategy. Midday meals in India target all students of government-aided and Education Guarantee Scheme Centres⁴ with the objective to boost UPE by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance, while improving the nutritional status of children.

In addition, the World Food Programme (WFP) provides take-home food rations in various countries in return for a child's regular school attendance. Questions though may have to be asked whether school feeding programmes and 'take-home' rations provide additional nutrition or simply substitute for home meals not received.

Though children certainly learn better when well-fed, without improving the quality of education the impact of school feeding programmes on learning is likely to be minimal. These programmes need to be complemented by other measures that improve what happens in schools in terms of teaching and learning, such as for example the development of Inclusive Learning Friendly Environments (ILFE) and Child Friendly Schools (CFS) as described in later chapters.

Countries in South Asia are using the Mid-Decade Assessment (MDA)⁵ when identifying priorities and strategies to achieve the international goals. The Maldives – having achieved UPE – need to focus on including children with special needs and enhancing the quality of education, while providing more support for under-served schools in remote areas. One major challenge is the shortage of trained teachers. Despite the more than 97 per cent enrolment rate in Sri Lanka, 17 per cent of children do not complete the compulsory education (6–14) cycle. There is an urgent need to develop strategies to address the non-completion rate.

Afghanistan is in some parts of the country still coping with a situation of armed conflict, while rebuilding the education system – both enrolment and quality. Though Bangladesh has done well in achieving gender parity, 15 per cent of school-age children are out of school, including tribal children, street children and child workers, those with

disabilities and children living in slums. Important challenges include improving the quality of education, reducing dropout rates and expanding facilities for disadvantaged groups.

In Nepal and India social inclusion is a challenge, especially with regard to Dalits, children with special needs, and those from linguistic and ethnic minorities. Girls in such groups tend to be more disadvantaged than boys. Education must be improved in terms of learning environment and achievements, while enhancing gender sensitiveness. Strategies to address the different challenges include decentralization of training and school development, support services and monitoring. Throughout the region common priorities are to seek out learners who have not been reached, while enhancing educational quality and relevance.

1.2 Multiple Dimensions of Inequality and Social Exclusion

The lack of reliable data on marginalized and socially excluded children – many of them girls – prevents governments in South Asia from responding effectively. In general, not much value is attached to the

education of street children, working children, children of migrant workers, children with disabilities and other disadvantaged children as compared with the education of middle-class children (Heijnen, 2003).

There are many reasons for the gender gap in access and retention, and disparities are magnified by poverty. Large differences can be found in India, with a 10 year gap between the average number of years of education of the poor (0) and the rich (10), while in Pakistan the gap is 9 years and in Bangladesh 6 years. Not only gender or poverty, but also ethnicity, language, social status or caste, are major barriers to access and successful completion of primary education.

Understanding the patterns of social exclusion is crucial for identifying successful interventions. Who these children are, where they live and why they are excluded is difficult to know as countries have no information on school participation disaggregated by subgroups subject to exclusion. Analysing data from different sources may, however, give us an idea of the reality, and it seems that nearly three-

In **Pakistan**, even among urban girls, fewer than 60 per cent complete primary school. Among minority girls from rural areas, fewer than 10 per cent do so. Enrolment rates follow a similar pattern. Gaps in enrolment between the better-off and the poor are even larger.

Source: Lewis and Lockheed (2006).

quarters of girls who do not come to school are from socially excluded groups.

Diversity itself does not need to lead to a failure to educate girls: 'it is diversity accompanied by derogation and discrimination that leads to exclusion' (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006). Any child may at times suffer exclusion. Critical are those children affected in major and permanent ways by *where* they live (rural/remote areas, urban slums, refugee camps), *how* they live (in poverty, chronically ill, malnourished), and *who* they are (with disabilities, gender, from ethnic, language, religious minorities). These children are unable to break the cycle of discrimination and exclusion without affirmative action by local communities, national governments and international agencies. Most current education strategies and programmes have been insufficient regarding the needs of children vulnerable to social exclusion. When programmes do exist, they are often planned and implemented as *special* programmes for children identified as 'different' or 'difficult'. This has resulted in parallel education systems within countries: for the poor, for working or 'hard-to-reach' children, for children with disabilities, and private schools for the privileged (Heijnen, 2003). The question remains how such parallel programmes can challenge social exclusion in society at large and whether they will result in more equal opportunities beyond education.

In **India**, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a government flagship designed to get all children into school, especially girls disadvantaged by caste, tribe or disability. It relies on community participation and monitoring with an emphasis on the recruitment of women and members of disadvantaged groups. The initiative evaluates every aspect of the learning space against gender-friendly standards, including the provision of safe water and sanitation. To ensure the retention of girls, schools serve midday meals and offer girls scholarships for uniforms and school supplies.

Source: Jha (2004a,b).

1.3 From Parity to (E)quality In and Beyond UPE

As education becomes an increasingly important process in social stratification, it is crucial to ensure not only equality to education, but also equality in and through education. Expanding opportunities to girls and other marginalized children reveals how far South Asian governments have come in understanding and acting on all persons being equal and having a right to expect fair and equal chances. Still, there is a long way to go.

The focus up until now has been on improving access for girls by, for example, providing incentives to

families, by employing more female teachers and by improving schools' infrastructure. Quality and equality of learning, however, go beyond equality of resources. Too many children now in school have not mastered basic competencies. Present investments in education will only pay off if a minimum quality is achieved. This will require employing sufficient teachers for lower student-teacher ratios, improving teacher education, shifting from rote learning to developing problem-solving skills, and revising curricula and textbooks (Herz, 2006).

More attention needs to be paid to the educational experience of girls, because access to education of poor quality is no access at all. Poor quality education is

costly as it results in high repetition and dropout rates. Improved quality is crucial for retention and survival, and to ensure sustainable learning outcomes. EFA cannot be achieved while discrimination – especially of girls – persists in school (UNICEF, 2002).

Ensuring attendance and completion of those who were previously excluded is a challenge, especially in the case of girls, whose progress may be constrained by factors linked to responsibilities at home, safety or hygiene. Transitions must be made from approaches that encourage gender parity in access towards approaches that promote equality in quality. This requires the institutionalization of non-discriminatory measures that focus on process and outcomes. Such a transformation implies that education is not only about teaching of English, mathematics or science and that the benefits of girls' education should go beyond better health, smaller families and improved economic participation. Equality as an integral part of quality implies that education must deal with all dimensions of inequality, such as of social status, decision making and empowerment. To make this happen requires changes of perception, attitude and expectation.

Equality in schools and classrooms is rooted in teacher attitudes, beliefs and skills to teach boys and girls with diverse languages, cultures, experiences and learning readiness. Teachers are the

Teachers' attitudes towards girls and boys as learners in **Nepal** often reveal rather stereotyped perceptions: girls are perceived to be quiet, calm and submissive and thus more easily controllable. Girls are reported to be nervous to ask questions. This belief on the part of teachers combined with the lack of action to correct the so-called 'shyness' may contribute to the poorer learning of girls. Girls are also believed to be less able to learn mathematics and science, are less interested in studies and less able to learn in general.

Source: Bista (2006).

In **Nepal** a pilot programme has targeted girls from Dalit communities through a process of community mobilization and trust building. Dalit castes are historically butchers, milk sellers, drummers, town criers (Khadgi) and sweepers (Dyola). The stigma of the Dalit label leads to many children refusing to enrol in school, especially if the school lies outside their immediate neighbourhood. In the school context discrimination often continues both from peers and teachers. Teachers may claim to be unbiased, but it is unlikely they would visit a Dalit household or allow a Dalit student to enter their own house. It is this kind of customary discrimination that is most difficult to eradicate.

Family support for Dalit children – girls in particular – to enrol and stay in school is generally poor and thus affects children's study. The negative influences range from active disruption of study by unsupportive parents, to basic logistical issues such as lack of space or light for studying. Though the government has created a Dalit scholarship programme, this does not sufficiently take into account costs of textbooks, stationery, clothing and fees for exams. Still, the girls involved in this pilot project say they are happy in school and teachers treat them well. However, what they feel very uncomfortable with is the 'Dalit' label of the scholarship.

Source: UNESCO Kathmandu (2005b).

agents of change and efforts to improve quality must begin with an understanding of how children learn.⁶ Teacher education must play its part by training teachers in reflective inquiry so that they

are able and willing to reflect on their own practice when seeking explanations for lack of student achievement and consider inadequacies in content, methodology and learning environment.

Loreto School, Sealdah (**India**) is a private school, but can be highlighted as an example of best practice in its pursuit of excellence and equity. The school has moved away from education for a privileged few, towards community schooling, including Kolkata's street children. Loreto has integrated children from poor and rich families without resorting to any form of selection, yet has maintained a track record of excellent academic results based on a non-competitive ideology, defying the logic that social class counts in the success or failure of a school. Loreto Sealdah opened its doors to at least 50 per cent of non-fee-paying students from nearby slums, 'bustees' and poorer areas of Kolkata, who receive free uniforms, food and books from the school and are subsidized by the fee-paying students. Education about human values and practising these are an important part of school life, both for students and staff and have been translated into sound educational practices. What is unique about the school is its ability to combine 'best practice' in terms of academic excellence and 'best practice' in terms of children's rights to non-discrimination, optimal development, participation and protection.

Source: Jessop (2000).

The EFA MDA⁷ revealed strong government commitment to continued innovative approaches and school quality improvement in South Asia. This includes adequate school supplies and infrastructure. Children do better when they have textbooks, when their schools are not in disrepair, when they have school libraries, and when their teachers have teaching resources. It will be clear, however, that it is easier to distribute resources than to (re)educate teachers, and that changes in student achievement are likely to be greater with more professional teachers than with more textbooks and other materials. This highlights the need for looking more critically into contents and delivery. If education is to reflect the CRC, EFA and MDGs there are great challenges in implementation, especially related to the empowering and transformative aspect of education and the necessary changes in instructional and assessment practices.

Bangladesh has made great progress in gender parity. A closer analysis, though, reveals that the progress is attributable to enrolment at primary and lower secondary levels, and that many other inequalities remain. Gender parity of enrolment does not tell us about parity or disparity in other areas of education, such as in classroom dynamics or achievements.

Source: USAID/ABEL (1996).

Quality education is education which is relevant to children's lives. This includes awareness raising and addressing the region's deep-rooted gender-based violence. As such violence is not limited to schools it cannot be dealt with from within the education system alone.

Nevertheless, there is much that can be done to protect girls, to change attitudes and to create safe, girl-friendly learning environments. As reported by the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children,⁸ many children in South Asia, regardless of their social class, religion or ethnic origin are abused and exploited. Most child victims, however, suffer violence at the hands of their parents and teachers. Often this is in the guise of 'discipline'. Even in countries where corporal punishment is banned, the practice continues. It is especially the everyday examples of verbal and sexual harassment and abuse that need to be addressed through quality education. Violence hinders children physically, emotionally and cognitively. It is one important reason for children not to attend or even drop out of school, while in safe and secure learning environments children can learn skills that protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation.

Achieving universal primary education (UPE) is a first step towards an educated society. This may, however, not result in equality of outcomes. Meaningful employment opportunities for those with only primary schooling are few or non-

existent – it is secondary education that will place a girl (or boy) in a position to gain economic and social benefits. Throughout South Asia primary education outcomes have been inadequate, and without a transition to further education countries may be left with outputs that are unsustainable. The incentives used to help children complete primary schooling should ideally be continued into the secondary level.

To respond to the challenge of increasing secondary enrolment and retention, countries such as Bangladesh and India are implementing secondary school stipend and scholarship incentives. The Female Stipend Programme (FSP) in Bangladesh is such a scheme. However, as with primary school incentives, they may not cover all education costs nor provide adequate support to girls, especially from poor families, to be also successful in learning outcomes. This may partially explain the high dropout rates of girls between grade 6 and 10, highlighting the risk of a trade-off between higher enrolments and lower quality (Raynor and Wesson, 2006). Not enough research has been done to objectively assess the impact of incentive schemes such as scholarships, stipends or school-feeding programmes on the quality of outcomes.

The increased enrolment has not been linked to changes in curricula content or teaching methods. This has resulted in the kind of schooling that has little relevance to the world outside, without

links to potential future employment and without challenging the gender inequalities that exist in Bangladesh society.

Bhutan has focused on achieving Universal Basic Education (UBE) up to grade 10, while in India girls – especially those in tribal areas – can continue their education through residential or ashram schools. In Nepal and Bhutan, children of remote and rural populations have also benefited from boarding schools. A study in Nepal showed that feeder hostels for girls promoted their retention and achievement in education (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005). It is, however, important that boarding schools are well managed, and thus offer security and protection to girls, as well as good nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, personal care, recreation and study support.

There is no lack of demand for secondary education. The main barriers are absence of secondary schools in rural areas and high direct and indirect costs. Location and accessibility of schools become more important for girls as they grow older. Safety and economic concerns make parents reluctant to send girls to boarding schools or let them walk long distances to day schools.

Secondary education is where girls are most at risk of dropping out. In countries affected by armed conflict this is further exacerbated by the risk of abductions by

armed factions. The pressure for girls to leave school also peaks with the advent of puberty and the problems that accompany maturity, such as sexual harassment and parental pressure to marry.

It is important that secondary school opportunities expand to reap the full benefits of female education for national development and individual well-being. Retention and success in secondary school are even more directly tied to the quality and relevance of education than in primary school.

Curricula and teaching-learning processes need to become relevant and girl-friendly taking account of the needs of adolescent girls. Learning content continues to take for granted girls' traditional roles of wife and mother with

limited attention to other learning needs such as those which build their confidence and self-esteem, assist them to understand their lives and the choices available to them, including those of marriage, financial independence and employment.

Empowerment is difficult to quantify. Still, access to education can represent an opportunity for girls and other disadvantaged learners to move out of isolation, allowing interaction with others outside their own small circle, which in turn broadens experience and provides access to new resources and skills. Social exclusion and gender discrimination need to be challenged in society, and education can and must help girls (and boys) to question rather than to conform and accept.

HOW DO EDUCATION QUALITY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION LINK?

- Gender equality is central to achieving rights of not only access but also of participation, recognition and valuing of all learners.
- Gender equality is integral to improving the quality of basic education.
- Democracy in the classroom and democratic learning is based in gender equality and quality education.
- Inequalities and discrimination exist – class, caste, ethnicity, gender – and we need to work with them and not ignore them.

Source: Arnot (2004).

GIRL FRIENDLY EDUCATION

Retaining girls in school requires measures beyond incentive schemes and must concurrently look into interventions that make learning environments more girl friendly. Most schools in South Asia are not girl friendly, and girls often suffer from harassment, bullying and other forms of intimidation. Making schools girl friendly, or child friendly, also benefits boys, as this includes improving the physical school infrastructure, teaching in ways that discourage gender stereotypes, providing trained (female) teachers to act as role models, and including the community in the management of schools.

2.1 Female Teachers

Throughout South Asia there is a need for more and better quality teachers – especially female teachers and teachers recruited from minority populations.

Except for the Maldives and Sri Lanka, women are seriously under-represented in the teaching profession, while there are also few female headteachers, principals, administrators and policy makers. Lack of female teachers is more problematic in rural and remote areas. In Afghanistan and Pakistan this is said to be directly correlated with lower achievement and retention levels of girls. A woman as teacher, though, may be more important where girls are secluded and for girls approaching adolescence. In secondary schools in Bangladesh there are few female teachers but still girls' enrolment and attendance tend to surpass that of boys.

Various countries have established quotas for female teachers, yet few have managed to fill them, primarily because governments have not developed effective incentives and support

mechanisms to encourage women to work as teachers, especially when deployed outside their home communities. In Nepal, for example, more than 62 per cent of primary school teachers in Kathmandu are women, while the average for the whole country is 29 per cent with only 19 per cent female teachers in the Far West Region (Bista, 2006).

Having quotas only makes sense if these also include measures to develop women's capacity so that their presence translates into influence. Without this dimension, quotas are only symbolic, with female teachers continuing to play relatively minor roles, either because of

the type of responsibility they are given (only lower grades) or because of their own lack of confidence. The feminization of the teaching profession – as is the case in Sri Lanka and the Maldives – may also reinforce the impression of women being especially suited for nurturing and caring jobs.

In many education systems women have lower status and lower pay than their male colleagues. Initiatives to promote employment of more female teachers by reducing the qualifications needed for entry into the profession, and employing mainly women in non-formal or alternative schools for little or no remuneration, may confirm assumptions about women's inferiority in society at large.

The acute shortage of female teachers in **Afghanistan** has been dealt with by accepting a community-selected woman with lower levels of education (usually grade 9) and providing teacher training supported by regular on-job monitoring and mentoring. While the weakness of this approach may be the quality of education, it has nevertheless reinstated female education disrupted by conflict or lack of qualified teachers, and, more remarkably, it has also facilitated first-time-ever female education in a number of rural communities. Emphasis is given to frequent and effective monitoring to support and maintain quality.

Source: World Bank (2005).

Arguments in favour of having women as teachers vary and include perspectives of community demand on the one hand, and girls' specific needs on the other. Having female teachers does not, however, automatically translate into a girl friendly and gender sensitive learning environment. While there are good reasons for encouraging women to enter the teaching profession, it may be more important to look at the quality of teachers – irrespective of gender – and how they create gender sensitive and learning friendly environments that support girls and boys.

One important argument in favour of female teachers is that they act as role models for girls. In rural situations,

where girls do not come across many educated women, the presence of female teachers serves this critical purpose. Other arguments relate to safety and security of girls and to the issue of gender equity. Children, girls and boys, are expected to be more gender sensitive if they grow up in an environment where they see both men and women perform similar functions and duties as compared with one where they see women performing only stereotyped jobs.

A gender balance in teaching and education leadership is important and must be based on professionalism and gender equality.

2.2 Teacher Education

Teacher training may seem a technical matter focusing on contents of curricula and specific teaching methods. To bring about quality change in what happens in schools, however, training of teachers may need to go beyond obtaining technical knowledge and skills. Being certified as a teacher does not guarantee success in the classroom. Effective teaching is often described by words such as competent, dutiful, fair, responsive, flexible, reflective, expert, inclusive, welcoming and respectful – also by students (Heijnen, 2004).

Good teachers understand that their work goes beyond the transmission of curriculum and the assessment of measurable achievement. They are aware of the challenge of the broader

social contexts in which they teach and keep searching for more effective ways to reach all students.

Throughout South Asia, teacher training and ongoing professional development of teachers (in-service training) has become a priority area in the quality improvement of education. To enable also female teachers to benefit from in-service training and enhance their professional knowledge and skills, their specific needs must be taken into account. Professional, institutional and family reasons continue to prevent women from participating in training courses (Bista, 2006).

In Bangladesh professional quality of primary school teachers in the field is enhanced through a 12 month Certificate in Education course conducted by Primary Training Institutes (PTI). In-service teacher training includes a unit on gender issues, providing teachers with a method of exploring their own practice and developing more inclusive teaching approaches. In many states in India decentralized in-service teacher training takes place, while training curricula are reviewed and improved. Training is especially needed in the situation that two-thirds of teachers have to face: multi-age, multi-lingual and multi-grade classrooms (Shukla, 2004). In Bhutan UNESCO's 'Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments' is integrated into the existing pre-service education programme in the modules

Teachers in rural schools often lack strong foundations in the subjects they teach. A study in rural **India** found that only half of the grade 4 teachers tested could correctly answer 80 per cent of the questions on a grade 4 test of mathematics knowledge.

Source: Lewis and Lockheed (2006).

'Understanding the Learner', 'Child Development and Psychology' and 'Teaching–Learning Processes'.

In most countries teacher education is theoretical and lacking opportunities for supervised practice. Teachers have to learn how to cater for a wide range of students – boys and girls – including those from poor, disadvantaged families, students who may have to work after school hours, students from minority populations and those with a variety of

learning difficulties. None of these situations or factors cause educational problems per se, but these students may have negative and meaningless school experiences if teachers feel no empathy for all children and are not ready for them with effective instruction and classroom strategies. Furthermore, teacher education needs to focus on how teachers can use methods and facilitate processes that are transformational rather than reproducing gender prejudice or discrimination.

Approaches to gender equality in the classroom focus on interaction and relationships between boys and girls and between teachers and students. They address:

- Gender stereotypes, i.e. challenging stereotypical views for example that girls are less able to succeed in science and mathematics.
- Sexual violence, abuse and harassment: raising awareness of the issues and using teachers to raise awareness of learners.
- Differential enrolment of boys and girls in school.
- Ideologies underlying the curriculum.
- Curriculum choices: e.g. encouraging girls to take technology subjects.
- Teaching styles, including differential attention paid to boys and girls.
- School organization and discipline: making schools more girl friendly and child friendly.
- Extra-curricular activities: e.g. providing sporting opportunities for girls as well as boys.

Source: UNESCO (2003).

2.3 Gender Sensitive Curriculum

Considerable progress has been made in designing more gender sensitive curricula. But textbooks with stereotypical images of women and men are still common in many countries, where women are consistently depicted solely as mothers and housewives. In addition, teachers may compound gender stereotyping by asking girls to make tea, wash cups and sweep floors, while boys are asked to clear bushes, cut grass and carry heavy items.

Throughout South Asia, countries are involved in curricula reviews. In Afghanistan much work is being done to change the low quality and outdated curriculum – including the portrayal of gender roles. In Bhutan a gender perspective is incorporated in the ongoing review of curricula, textbooks

and other teaching materials, also ensuring a gender balanced representation among curriculum writers, and inclusion of gender-related activities in the teachers' guides.

In Sri Lanka the secondary school curriculum needs to be reviewed as certain education processes reinforce gender stereotypes, perpetuating inequality. A common curriculum in life skills in the first two years of secondary school is followed by home science for girls and woodwork and metalwork for boys. Curriculum reforms need to challenge this. Other reforms in Sri Lanka, though, emphasize school-based projects and enriched social studies including peace education, democratic principles, human rights and environmental conservation. In Nepal, an ADB loan has supported the development of a curriculum which is sensitive to gender and cultural diversities.

In textbooks used for Hindi language teaching in Madhya Pradesh, **India**, there has been a conscious effort to present girls in positive roles. Famous women from history are included, for example women who fought for their state and women renowned for their educational achievements and service to society. Clear messages on girls' education and the need for equal opportunities are included.

Unfortunately, the tendency to cast the positive roles of women in the characters of the idealized and exceptionally heroic has not been very effective. In addition, gender stereotyping and inequalities persist in the narratives. Women appear largely in maternal roles, while the decision makers and protectors tend to be male.

Source: Oxfam (2005).

Textbooks and other materials must represent girls and women through non-stereotyped images, show excluded groups, and should not refer to urban or international experiences that are likely to be foreign to rural children. Such changes improve student motivation and their perception that school is relevant to them. Restructuring of the curriculum to relate to children's life and learning processes does lead to better quality schooling, especially benefiting girls and other disadvantaged learners.

It should be stressed, however, that discriminatory attitudes are not simply removed by developing a new curriculum

and that more needs to be done to reverse deep-rooted, often negative, perceptions of diversity.

At every level and in every subject area, textbooks can become important vehicles for promoting the principles and practice of non-discrimination and gender equity. They can also function as valuable resources in the process of education for sustainable development, for prevention of and response to gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. Textbooks and learning materials which effectively integrate these themes and teach relevant skills in culturally appropriate ways are a key component of quality education for girls and boys.

Loreto Schools, in **India**, have designed their own curriculum, which is allowed as long as students are prepared for the State Exams in year 10 and year 12. The curriculum is an enabling curriculum in the sense that it tries to challenge the status quo. Students receive positive messages on possible roles of women through role models and through the learning materials. Attempts are made to provide strong non-stereotypical messages and images about women's roles in life (as can be seen in the Value Education Books 'We Are the World' which portray women as surgeons, construction-site managers, scientists, etc.)

Source: Aikman and Unterhalter (2005).

2.4 Language of Instruction⁹

In many countries the language of instruction in primary schools is a national or regional language, even though large numbers of people have a different mother tongue. A mismatch between the language spoken at home and the language of school has several negative consequences, such as increased chances of repetition and dropping out. This affects girls more than boys as their lives are often restricted to the home and family where only the local language is spoken.

There is inequality of opportunity in such learning situations, because those who speak the language of school can start learning from the first day, while the others must first learn the foreign code.

In that regard girls from minorities have multiple disadvantages, and their access to schooling is most limited when schools expect them to have linguistic resources that do not exist in their living environment.

The cognitive demands on children who are required to learn multiple languages are substantial. The effectiveness of teachers may be seriously compromised by their lack of knowledge of the home language of their students. Differences in language competence in school often remain unnoticed by teachers, especially where children are given fewer opportunities to speak and where girls are expected to perform less well than boys.

When children do not speak the language of instruction, specific responses are necessary to bridge that gap. While public schools in Sri Lanka offer instruction in Tamil and Sinhalese, India and Nepal have made strides in providing mother tongue instruction at the primary level.

Effective bilingual education starts with developing the child's reading, writing and thinking skills in the mother tongue. At the same time, the target language can be taught as a second language. The downside of bilingual education is that if the programme is not well developed and implemented, children do not master the majority language, limiting their opportunities for upward mobility.

Children from ethnic and language minorities in **Bangladesh** are disadvantaged by a mainstream education that does not recognize their language or culture. Their problems can be grouped into four main areas:

- 1. Poor access:** discrimination by teachers for poor Bangla language skills; inflexible school calendar, not reflecting local conditions; lack of schools in Adivasi communities.
- 2. Poor quality:** learning needs of Adivasi students unrecognized; insufficient teachers from Adivasi community; teacher deployment does not take account of ethnicity of teachers/learners; schools in Adivasi areas receive less government support.
- 3. Cultural inappropriateness:** foreign language of instruction; local culture, values not recognized in curriculum; education system does not recognize strength of diversity.
- 4. Lack of local control:** parents not involved as teachers do not speak community language; parents see less value in education not linked to culture and language.

Source: Durnnian (2007).

Research suggests that recognizing the importance of mother tongue languages in a bilingual or multilingual education structure results in improvements of educational attainment and helps to retain students from minority groups in

school. Mother tongue based education has been found to be particularly effective in breaking down barriers against girls.

Research has also found that girls who learn in their home language stay in school longer, are more likely to be identified as good students, do better on achievement tests, and repeat grades less often than their peers who do not get home language instruction. When learners can express what they know in a language in which they are competent, and their backgrounds are valued and used in the learning process, they develop higher self-esteem and greater self-confidence, as well as higher aspirations in schooling and life (Benson, 2005).

Bilingual education is widely agreed to be the best approach for integrating non-native speakers into the mainstream language. Even where teaching takes place in a local language, instructional materials may not always be available. India guarantees the right of children to be educated in their mother tongue in the primary grades and most states publish textbooks in multiple languages, but these are often printed and distributed with less priority and arrive too late in schools.

2.5 Infrastructure

Water supply and sanitation and transport facilities are important aspects of girl friendly infrastructure. This also implies

that latrines need to be user friendly, regularly cleaned, and designed and constructed in a gender sensitive manner. It is thus important to involve students in the planning, implementation and evaluation of school water supply and sanitation projects.

There are many examples in South Asia of infrastructure initiatives that have resulted in improved girls' attendance and retention, while at the same time studies have revealed that though water and sanitation infrastructure for boys and for girls are increasingly implemented, they are often poorly serviced and maintained, again increasing the risk of girls dropping out of school (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005).

During the last few years water and sanitation facilities have been installed or upgraded in thousands of schools in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. In Alwar, India, also the introduction of School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE) projects has resulted in a high increase of girls' attendance over a period of some years, highlighting hygiene education as a critical aspect of a quality life skills curriculum. In Bangladesh the SSHE project has especially focused on adequate water supply and personal hygiene issues of girls.

Distance can also be an obstacle for girls to enrol and stay in school – especially to continue education beyond primary school. Sometimes girls can

In some countries students are targeted as change agents by involving them in promoting water, sanitation and hygiene activities in school through Child-to-Child cooperative teaching and learning, using the toolkit on 'Hygiene, Sanitation & Water in Schools'.

Source: www.schoolsanitation.org.

walk in groups or older women accompany girls to school when outside the village, or stipends may cover transportation costs.

In Madhya Pradesh (India) the Education Guarantee Scheme has started the practice of para-teachers or helpers collecting girls from their homes and dropping them off each day at school to ensure their regular attendance, while also ensuring their security.

2.6 Safety and Protection

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/04 states that '... schools are often sites of intolerance, discrimination and violence. Girls are disproportionately the victims ... Closing the gender gap means confronting sexual violence and harassment in schools.'

Only limited research about gender-based violence in schools has been carried out in South Asia, but sexual harassment – often called 'eve teasing' – is widely reported from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Girls who live at some distance from school are especially vulnerable.

Gender-based harassment and abuse in schools tend to relate to what happens (or may happen) to girls, based on gender and power inequalities. In addressing gender violence in schools, a

Let's Talk Men – a film project in South Asia by Save the Children and UNICEF – aims at increasing understanding around masculinity and its relation with gender inequity and gender-based violence. Local filmmakers in **India, Nepal, Bangladesh** and **Pakistan** made four documentaries. They explore different aspects of male identity and provide a way to deconstruct patriarchy in their cultural context. The primary target audience for these films is adolescent boys and girls. Targeting boys is particularly important since so little media is addressed to them, even though it is men who are the main perpetrators of violence against girls. The films (and accompanying workbooks) have been used in schools in order to raise issues about gender-based harassment and violence against girls, and present alternative role models and ways of behaving for boys.

Source: *Save the Children (2003)*.

whole school approach involving the management, teachers and students as well as the curriculum is needed to ensure that messages are consistent and reinforced by both teachers and students. To make such a change may be an uphill struggle in many countries as it means challenging deeply entrenched male attitudes towards female sexuality, but at the same time schools can never become 'girl friendly' as long as such attitudes and practices are allowed to persist.

Making access to education easier and safer for girls, for example by building schools within a 'safe' walking distance of their homes, is useful as a stopgap, but will not address the hostile environment girls may face while in school, and the wider societal issues of gender-based violence (Oxfam, 2005).

In different countries NGOs have started to address the issue of school-based violence. The Centre for Mass Education and Science (CMES) and BRAC, for example, organize workshops for adolescent girls (and boys) throughout Bangladesh. While such programmes are promising, they are only able to reach a small part of the population and are difficult to scale up as they are developed outside the formal education school setting.

Although most governments have made explicit commitments to meeting the goal of gender equity in education, there is little evidence of national strategies to tackle gender violence in schools. Neither have Ministries of Education incorporated topics about gender violence in schools in the curriculum (Dunne *et al.*, 2003). Therefore a whole school approach to eliminating gendered violence should include a review of existing policies and cultures. Students need opportunities to explore the ways in which traditional views of masculinity and femininity inform and constrain them, and strategies to empower them to embrace change and develop respectful gender relationships. This is a critical aspect of quality education. Teachers may begin by counteracting the gender stereotyped models and messages that burden boys with a male ideal that does not allow them to express emotions, and that burden girls with a female ideal of physical beauty.¹⁰

Teachers can be key instruments for change and make education child friendly and gender sensitive. Teacher education must prepare teachers for such a role. There is an urgent need for the development of national and school-based initiatives to tackle gender-based violence in schools – fully integrated into the educational system and addressed through the curriculum.

In **Nepal**, the Safe Spaces project, funded by Save the Children, has involved girls in participatory research (PRA) which has proved a source of empowerment for them by allowing them to identify the characteristics of a safe environment and to develop an action plan to 'take back their space' in the community and on the way to and from school. Boys were involved in the process only when the girls felt it was necessary. In order to reclaim their 'space', the girls identified the need:

- for parents to recognize the importance of girls' education;
- to avoid conservative traditions such as gender discrimination within castes, between sons and daughters, and early marriage;
- for girls to be able to demonstrate their ability within the community;
- for people to speak out against the injustices and oppression of girls;
- to raise awareness of girls' rights and enable their access to equal opportunities.

As a result of the process, changes have occurred within the community. For example, the girls' group was consulted by the community members on various cases of abuse or mistreatment of girls and the girls' group got an abducted girl released by contacting the police, local NGOs and the District Child Welfare Board; teachers and boys within schools and the community are paying greater respect to girls than earlier and boys who were initially teasers now support girls' efforts to manage change. Boys are beginning to advocate respect for girls through drama. Support groups for girls who have faced abuse have been established by local communities.

Source: www.id21.org/education/gender_violence/index.html.

QUALITY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Countries in South Asia are now giving priority to improving the quality of education. The government of Pakistan has chosen 2000 schools to transform into Child Friendly Schools (CFS) and trained teachers accordingly. Sri Lanka is reforming primary education and in

Nepal child-centred methods are used in Out-of-School project classes. These and other responses are important to address the challenges linked to quality education and to the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources.

EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS FOR GOVERNMENTS TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Access and retention-related indicators

- Government spending on education – 20 per cent of budget
- Spending on primary education – 50 per cent of education budget
- Teacher salary – about 3.5 times GDP per capita
- Non teacher salary spending – 33 per cent of recurrent spending
- Average repetition rate – below 10 per cent
- Annual hours of instruction – 850 or more

Quality-related indicators

- *Instructional time use*: schools should be open at least 90 per cent of official

days, teachers present 90 per cent of open days, and classes engaged in learning at least 75 per cent of the time.

- *Early mastery of fluent reading*: by the end of grade 1, nearly all students will be able to decode; by end of grade 2, 95 per cent of students will read at 45–60 words per minute with 90 per cent accuracy.*
- *School health*: all students should be free of parasitic infections and deficiencies of iron and iodine that significantly reduce cognitive processing. (School feeding is desirable if it can be reliably organized at reasonable cost.) Country-level school health targets should be set based on local prevalence in collaboration with the health sector. (* Early mastery of arithmetic is equally important, but maths tends to correlate highly with reading.)

Source: *Abadzi (2006)*.

Though educational quality is often measured by means of quantitative data such as 'attendance' or 'time spent' in school, without qualitative indicators related to classroom observation it will be difficult to adequately address issues related to equal learning opportunities, because: '... Quality

education is not acquired in isolation from the social setting in which students live. It embraces the notion of education as a transformative process which promotes social change and contributes to building a just and democratic society ...' (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005).

The National Programme for Education of Girls is implemented in **India** in areas with low female literacy. The programme has introduced flexible learning packages to suit children in different circumstances, including out-of-school girls, to gain quality education and develop self-esteem. Model girl friendly schools are established in each cluster of villages. These schools are provided with teaching learning equipment, books, games, etc. Facilities are used for learning through film shows, reading material, self-defence, life skills, riding bicycles, etc. Instructors are hired for specific time periods to impart vocational and other training. As the model school in the cluster, its girl friendly infrastructure is open for use by other schools and for teacher training.

This programme pays special attention to adolescent girls through the development of supplementary teaching material including on women achievers, stories that can enhance the image of women and girls, nutrition, environment, gender and legal issues.

Source: *Jha (2004a,b)*.

Classroom-based research can provide rich information about the learning atmosphere and the opportunities provided for participation and learning to students. Integrating 'action research' into the pre-service teacher education in Bhutan can be considered an effort to promote reflective practice, where teachers for example investigate the impact of their teaching on different students.

Reviews of curricula in the **Maldives** aim to make subjects more interesting and relevant and are designed to encourage teachers to change their style of teaching by encouraging them:

- to develop meta-cognitive skills and understanding;
- to be problem posers and guides rather than problem solvers;
- to present the material in everyday contexts;
- to encourage wider involvement of the parents and the wider community in the learning process;
- to enhance group work; and
- to encourage process-oriented teaching.

The feedback from schools has been very positive. It claimed for example in social studies that students' interest in the subject had increased and was generating lively classroom discussions. It also encouraged critical thinking and made students more active participants in class.

Source: Mohamed and Ahmed (2000).

3.1 Teachers: The Critical Link

Though the number of teachers throughout the region has grown, the pace of growth has not kept up with the increase of enrolments, resulting in teachers struggling to manage large classes. Bangladesh for example needs an additional 167,000 teachers (UNESCO, 2006). The gradual erosion of teacher terms and conditions has also resulted in a decline of teacher motivation and morale. Furthermore, primary teaching in particular is undervalued, while teachers at this level have the most critical task of laying the foundation for life-long learning. Educational and financial investment is especially needed in the lower primary grades (Abadzi, 2006).

All countries in the region continue to rely on traditional teacher-centred classrooms, with programmes forcing teachers to teach to the test and learners to memorize facts in order to pass exams – in some countries starting at pre-primary level. Child-centred teaching is perceived as difficult and time consuming. Countries have now started to respond with various interventions, one of them training more and better teachers – both in the subjects they teach and in teaching–learning methodology. Teachers are the cornerstone of education systems and the mediators of quality in education.¹¹ A good teacher can make a difference in girls' attainment even without much of a school building – at least at primary level.

Pedagogical processes in the classroom must change. Teachers are not just responsible for teaching a curriculum; they must teach *children*. It is crucial to reflect on the roles of teachers as their attitudes, behaviour and methods can either enhance or impede a child's ability to learn effectively. In overcrowded classrooms and where undifferentiated large group instruction is the norm, teachers do not detect individual learning needs or signs of neglect or abuse. Children who do not progress in such situations are easily labelled 'non-achievers' and may subsequently drop out, while they may find the curriculum irrelevant or have problems in understanding the language of instruction. High repetition rates and poor learning achievements are closely linked to what and how teachers teach children.

Prejudice, negative language use, corporal punishment, and stereotyping of girls or children from minorities remain critical barriers to children's learning. In Nepal, teachers tend to routinely use biased language which reinforces distinction of class, caste and gender. Children from poor and low-caste

In **Bhutan**, teachers claim they cannot use participatory teaching-learning methods as these are too time-consuming and there is much pressure to finish the syllabus. More focus on Continuous Formative Assessment (CFA) and the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) tried to change this. Both approaches have helped teachers to become more responsive to different learning needs, while the overloaded curriculum and memory-based exam system are also being addressed.

Source: Heijnen (2005).

backgrounds are most often discriminated against, and they are not helped by the fact that teachers mostly come from higher castes. When marginalization continues inside classrooms, enrolment of previously excluded children is meaningless. Teacher training therefore needs to focus on how teachers can create learning environments where the participation and contribution of all students is sought and valued, where all girls and boys can feel secure, where stereotypical views are challenged and where children learn to appreciate diversity.

A study in **Nepal** assessed girls' access to and participation in science and technology education (STE) while also reviewing its curriculum using a gender lens and observing classroom dynamics. The study revealed continuing obstacles to gender equality in participation – some of which are teachers' gender insensitive behaviour and stereotypical notion about girls' aptitude, girls' inhibition to be interactive in STE subjects, gender-biased attitude of male students towards girls, gender unfriendly classroom seating, inadequate access of girls to STE labs and libraries, and low career options for girls.

Source: Koirala and Acharya (2005).

Within the same classroom, girls and boys often have different and unequal learning experiences. Teachers may call on boys more than on girls, or assign science and computer studies to boys and domestic subjects to girls. Girls are often pushed into non-professional courses. Such practices are discriminatory and stereotyping. Teachers should receive careful training in how to encourage all students equally.

Boys and girls have different thinking and learning styles. Teachers who recognize and address such differences can teach all students more effectively.

Classroom management is a key component of effective teaching. Coercive discipline, including corporal punishment, is common in South Asia. The full extent of corporal punishment,

involving both physical and psychological aspects, is still not well understood in many countries. Sri Lanka is the only country with laws banning corporal punishment in schools. However, even where it has been abolished, enforcement and monitoring remains a challenge.

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The Primary School Development Programme (PSDP) in **Sri Lanka** was introduced to improve the quality of primary schooling by schools joining hands as a 'school family'. Headmasters, teachers, parents and students of all schools get together to design and implement programmes that enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Leaders, selected from each school, are also members of a coordinating council at divisional level which helps them access resources for programmes. Some activities carried out by School Families are:

- Professional development programmes for teachers
- Organization of extra-curricular activities
- School-family-based community involvement programmes
- Welfare programmes for students and staff.

Professional development programmes for teachers include classroom observations as well as teacher and school development activities. School visits provide opportunities for peer support and exchange of experiences. Each teacher is expected to make two visits to a neighbouring school each year.

Source: Jha (2004a).

A situation analysis on violence in schools was undertaken in **Sri Lanka** in 2004, collecting inputs from children, teachers, parents, social workers and the general public. Several successful advocacy campaigns have been carried out in newspapers, with posters showing the negative effects of physical and humiliating punishment on children, as well as television commercials showing alternatives to corporal punishment.

Source: Save the Children / UN Study on Violence against Children. www.violencestudy.org.

The level of sanctioned violence in South Asia is relatively high. Teachers are considered figures of authority to be obeyed and children are expected not to question, but to adjust and comply. Many children fear the punishment of teachers. Education does not thrive in an atmosphere in which children live in fear of those who teach them. Students are often punished for minor 'offences', such as being tardy, wearing a torn or dirty uniform, or not being able to answer a question. Such punishment is destructive to a child's self-esteem. Girls may be punished differently from boys, but for both, worse than the actual punishment are the feelings of failure and humiliation. The message that children derive from such teacher behaviour is that violence is acceptable in settling conflicts. The use of corporal punishment in dealing with children's behaviour reflects the lack of effective alternative techniques that professional teachers should have. Children's experiences and views regarding corporal punishment are now slowly beginning to be heard in the region.

A teacher is the central figure in the process of quality change at the school

'If I was unable to do my lesson, the teacher would hit me with a cane and pass humiliating remarks such as, "such a big girl and she still doesn't know how to do this" ...'
Girl from **Bangladesh**.

Source: Save the Children (2001).

level and thus it is necessary to invest in the skills and motivation of teachers. In all countries pre-service and in-service teacher training is being improved. Training opportunities have increased, especially at district and sub-district level, many using cascade models for arranging large-scale training programmes, such as in India and Sri Lanka. The main features of these programmes have been the use of (1) new methods such as role play, discussion, games and activities, assignments, case studies, (2) raising the motivation level of teachers, (3) developing a better understanding of child-centred classroom practices, (4) content and subject area strengthening and (5) preparation and use of teaching-learning materials (TLM).

Perspectives of children, parents and teachers in **Pakistan**:

'A good teacher is soft, loving, courteous, tolerant and considerate. S/he is regular and punctual, makes good use of time, is ethical, keeps in contact with and respects parents, and organizes extra-curricular activities. A good teacher is competent in the subjects s/he teaches and completes the syllabus. S/he displays good teaching skills (plans and structures a lesson, explains well, uses AV aids and activities to teach, assesses child in class, gives and checks homework). A good teacher also reinforces positive behaviour and gives extra work to bright children.'

Source: Save the Children (2001).

Just more teacher training, however, is not enough. Close and responsive monitoring is important to make the impact of improved training visible in the classroom. As studies in Bhutan and Nepal have revealed, teachers in the field tend to feel professionally unsupported and excluded from decision making in educational planning. Furthermore, where teacher education has improved, but the examination system not reformed at the same time, content heavy and exam-driven systems will remain an obstacle to quality teaching and learning.

3.2 Student Participation

Those who are not engaged in learning or who are not participating in class will

often be the students who drop out. Those who cannot afford textbooks and notebooks to enable them to succeed and those who do not see the relevance of what they are learning may also leave school.

Non-discrimination and participation are important dimensions of quality education. Children's right to participation is still somewhat controversial in most South Asian cultures. Education may be best placed to take a lead in changing this while transforming education into a more interactive process. Within the learning environment children must be able to express their views, thoughts and ideas to participate fully and to feel comfortable about who they are, where they come from, and what they believe in.

It is important to ensure that children – boys and girls – have a say in policies and practices that affect them. This means that adults need to listen to what students have to say. When given opportunities, children have shown that their voice can be a real force for change. Examples can be found throughout the region, such as refugee children in Pakistan successfully campaigning for a school and the creation of student councils in Sri Lanka. Giving children a say in matters that affect them improves standards, behaviour and inclusion, while recognizing that social and emotional learning is as important as academic learning. Children need to build knowledge and understanding of issues

Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW) – an NGO in **Nepal** – is committed to children's participation in decision making about their education. SPW facilitated consultation exercises by involving schoolchildren in discussions at village, district and regional levels on the issues of quality education and gender equality in education. On the basis of those discussions, selected student representatives brought recommendations to policy makers at a national level forum through different media including art, drama and dance. SPW also mobilizes young Nepalese graduates as volunteer assistant teachers and 'youth animators' in rural schools. Over half of these volunteers are female and they can be powerful role models for young rural girls, while playing an important role in encouraging girls to stay in school.

Source: UNICEF (2005a).

like social justice, human rights and sustainable development. As such, education should create the basis for a democratic and just society.

Teaching strategies that require active engagement by learners are more effective than approaches that restrict students to passive roles. But these are

more time consuming and require a critical reconsideration of present curricula and exams. Extensive research has shown, however, that more interactive teaching-learning approaches and the development of problem solving and critical thinking skills result in a more sustainable and higher quality of learning.

Intensive District Education for All (IDEAL) in **Bangladesh** has been an important component of PEDP. It especially focused on enhancing the effectiveness of primary education, by improving the quality of teaching, the school environment, the learning achievement of children and decentralizing schools. The main objectives of IDEAL were to establish and strengthen local level planning and management, improve classroom teaching and learning methods, reduce gender disparity, and promote active community participation. The project started in one district and was scaled up to other districts. An innovative teaching approach known as Multiple Ways of Teaching Learning (MWTL) based on the multiple intelligence theory of Howard Gardner was effectively adopted and applied to make teaching more child-centred, participatory and joyful. Lessons learned have revealed that IDEAL helped significantly to increase student learning achievement. In addition, School Management Committees also became more active in improving and supporting the schools.

Source: Aikman and Unterhalter (2005).

3.3 Curriculum

In many countries in South Asia curricula remain outmoded and *equality* as a key component of a good curriculum is often missing. Teaching and learning materials, evaluation and assessment procedures as well as language policy are all components of a curriculum. And all have gender dimensions, challenging or reinforcing equality. Similarly, a curriculum reproduces ideas about caste, class, religious and ethnic identities and divisions. Curriculum policies are now being developed, for example in India (Madhya Pradesh), stressing the importance of critical self-awareness amongst learners and indicating the potential for learning materials to be concerned with equality issues. Analysis of a curriculum is a useful first step in learning about quality and equality issues. It highlights the importance of asking questions regarding what girls and other previously excluded learners are being taught about themselves, whether they can effectively participate

and whether situations of girls and other learners are enhanced or diminished by the education they receive.

Goals of some curricula are explicitly differentiated by gender. In some countries girls are denied access to, for example, manual arts, technical subjects or higher mathematics. If they are able to enrol in those courses, textbooks and teaching are often geared mainly to boys. Research shows, however, that girls are as capable as boys in these subjects. Schools and teachers must thus shape learning environments in which the right of children to learn is not linked to their sex. Girls may need to learn about cooking or vegetable gardens or traditional dancing, yet if these are only taught to girls, stereotypes and gender barriers are reinforced. Such subjects should be open to boys as they also need domestic skills, while on the other hand girls may need technical, mechanical and mathematical skills.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has negotiated with communities in **Afghanistan** to get their consent for older girls' continuation to secondary levels by community provision of transport to a secondary school in an adjacent village, teaching single grade cohorts at separate times and using a house-based location in the village. Community suggestions to include domestic studies and healthcare in addition to the required academic subjects perpetuates what are considered appropriate gender roles, but also offer the opportunity to introduce good practice and thus may help meet female practical gender needs. Community-driven concepts of relevance have also determined content of 'second chance' education for girls. In the experience of the IRC, the focus has been on incorporation of life and livelihood skills appropriate to the local context.

Source: World Bank (2005).

Curriculum development in South Asia tends to be a male dominated process. In Nepal for example most textbook writers are males with potentially inadequate sensitiveness to gender issues in education. In the then developed materials men are shown as breadwinners, doctors, principals and scientists, and women as nurses, teachers, mothers and servers of food. Curriculum developers and reviewers need to develop an understanding of how learners and teachers respond to different materials. There is a need to develop links between curriculum developers and teachers for mutual feedback as well as create opportunities for curriculum developers to observe classroom teaching.

Textbooks and curricula are being improved, often making programmes competency-based and skills oriented. In Bangladesh the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) identified 53 terminal competencies. India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka all focus on improving curriculum relevance for rural areas and different social groups. In view of its multi-lingual society, Nepal has formulated a new language policy emphasizing the right of children to learn in their first language. Incorporation of values of different cultural groups is also being planned. Pakistan aims at making curricula more learner-centred, while removing urban and gender biases from textbooks and other materials.

India has spent considerable time and budget on renewal of curricula and textbooks aiming at making it broad-based and the textbooks more relevant, interesting and child friendly. Three steps characterized the process of material development: (1) a participatory approach involving teachers, field staff and experts in developing textbooks; (2) textbook developers being exposed to a number of 'good practices' in other states and in NGO programmes; (3) field testing and systematic feedback leading to refinements, before large-scale introduction of new materials. As a result, the new textbooks for primary level are significantly different from the old ones.

Source: Jha (2004a).

3.4 Assessment

Education systems tend to measure achievements by outcomes, based on testing and reflected in scores. This normally implies standardized tests and national exams. There are, however, serious limitations in relying too heavily on tests or educational outcome measurements as they do not tell us if what children have learnt is meaningful to them.¹²

To be able to assess education efficiency and effectiveness it is important to look at classroom practices, as these have the strongest association with

achievement. As teaching and learning must reflect on how different children – boys and girls - learn, so must assessment. Girls for example tend to respond better to more collaborative and participatory pedagogies. Assessment can be a powerful tool for quality improvement in education provided it is used as a means of *enhancing learning*, rather than for selecting out 'poor achievers'.

The kind of assessment that dominates in most schools in South Asia is summative or assessment *of learning*. This mostly happens at the end of a topic or unit through tests or other graded work. Its results 'count' and appear on report cards, but generally provide little more than a rank or a number. Summative assessment by itself is an inadequate tool for maximizing learning because waiting till the end of a teaching unit to find out how well students have learned is simply too late.

Assessment requires attention to outcomes as well as to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. Achievement is

important, but to improve achievements we need to know about the student experience along the way – about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to a particular outcome. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under which conditions and with such knowledge their learning can be enhanced.

Policies are needed to promote alternate methods of 'authentic' and formative assessment, to look at how schools support the learning process and progress of students, especially girls and socially marginalized learners, and to help teachers focus on performance indicators rather than just attainment measures. In Bhutan teachers are trained to use continuous formative assessment (CFA) as a strategy to monitor and support student learning by means of observation techniques, learning logs, portfolio reviews and feedback.

Formative assessment is embedded in the daily teaching-learning process and is used to make decisions about

Community schools and home-based schools in **Afghanistan** follow the assessment policies mandated by the Ministry of Education. Students are graded according to a breakdown of 80 per cent from their cumulative scores on year-end exams in seven subjects on which they must score at least a passing grade of 60 per cent, 10 per cent from homework, and 10 per cent from classroom participation.

Students who fail one or two subjects are permitted to retake exams while those who fail three or more subjects must repeat the school year.

Source: USAID (2006b).

instruction to assist students' learning. It is subjective, informal, immediate and based on students' performance in situations where they demonstrate proficiency. Yet, teacher practices for formative assessment may be flawed due to poorly focused questions, predominance of questions that require short answers, repetition rather than reflection, and it can be too much influenced by the requirements of public examinations. Therefore, assessment procedures and materials need to be improved.

Whether children learn effectively is determined by the teacher–learning relationship and methods used. Thus, to encourage improved learning, the desired change must be in improving these processes. Measuring change in what happens in classrooms is likely to be a more reliable indicator of improved quality than measuring narrowly defined outcomes.

3.5 School–Community Partnership

Community and parental participation in the education of children has been found to be a useful condition in getting children – especially girls – to school and keeping them there. Promoting a positive interaction between the school and the community is fundamental to the success and sustainability of any school improvement process (UNICEF, 2004). The provision of nearby and safe schools, such as community or home-based schools in Afghanistan and Bhutan, gives

The competency-based primary education curriculum introduced in **Bangladesh** is an effort to enhance relevance and quality of education. Children's attainment of the 53 competencies in general has been poor, also in core subjects like English, Bangla and mathematics. Use of Continuous Pupil Assessment (CPA) for grades I and II with no annual examination for promotion to the next class has now been introduced. Unfortunately many teachers have had no training in using CPA and are reluctant to use it; they prefer the traditional written or oral test method.

Source: Ahmed and Chowdhury (2005).

communities and parents a voice in the running of such schools. They are particularly valuable in reaching girls by offering flexibility in timing, venue and curriculum, which accommodates the domestic demands, safety concerns, and relevancy requirements of parents.

Though situations differ by country and context, research has shown parent and community involvement as a strong predictor of student success, while making schools accountable in terms of their effectiveness and performance (Lewis and Lockheed, 2006).

In many countries in South Asia communities are mobilized through

Community Organized Primary Education (COPE), developed by CARE, targets under-served regions with quality, community managed education opportunities in different countries in South Asia, for example in **Nepal** and **Afghanistan**. COPE schools are managed by Village Education Committees (VEC) and have higher survival rates and lower dropout rates than public schools. The government curriculum and formal examination schedule is used, while COPE teachers receive regular in-service training and in-school support. COPE's considerable investment in TLM – textbooks, teacher guides and stationery – supports a learning environment conducive to optimal learning. Additionally, continuous assessment, high levels of student–teacher contact time, and the positive learning environment of these schools has contributed to consistently strong test results. COPE schools are created based on five criteria: (1) target communities must demonstrate a strong interest in primary education; (2) no other functional primary school exists within a three kilometre radius; (3) the community must produce a list of potential students, at least 30% girls; (4) the community must provide a space for the school; and (5) the community must be willing to form a VEC, select and pay a teacher's salary. One of the many reasons for success of the COPE programme is the response to community interests in religious subjects. Community members and local authorities are pleased with COPE students' demonstrated knowledge of religious subjects. This reveals the critical importance of building upon existing ways of thinking to ensure that local actors are critical partners together with whom change can be defined and shaped.

Source: USAID (2006b).

village education committees (VEC) and school management committees (SMC), engaging parents and communities in the governance of schools as well as encouraging parents to provide a supportive home environment in which children can learn. Such community involvement also assures parents that their children – girls in particular – are safe in school.

Roles of community education committees vary, but may include responsibilities related to school calendar planning, absentee records of students and teachers, quality monitoring, and school repair. In general, community involvement helps in generating interest in education and supporting children in what they do in school.

Community-based Education Management Information Systems (C-EMIS) is implemented in **Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan** and **Nepal**. Data is collected at community level instead of being school-based, and is analysed and used at the point of collection for school improvement through community-school partnership. These projects have been developed through Government-NGO partnership, supported by Save the Children, with the aim to increase education ownership at the local level. The objective is to make all (school-age) children visible and create an education system capable of analysing and addressing causes of exclusion at different levels, linking these to quality responses in an inclusive child friendly learning environment.

The emergence and success of C-EMIS across South Asia is a reflection of the increasing recognition that if schools are to improve and be more responsive to the needs of local communities, they must be given greater autonomy to assess and resolve their own educational problems. The need for teachers and communities to forge stronger partnerships with each other and reach a better understanding of the various factors impacting on children's access and learning is an integral part of this process.

C-EMIS data is meant to complement national EMIS data. The result is improved quality data and local and national level planning and decision making. Parents, teachers, community volunteers and children collect the information at the local level. A particular feature of C-EMIS is the inclusion of data and indicators on in-school teaching practice and student learning achievement.

Source: Heijnen (2003).

3.6 Alternative and Non-formal Quality Programmes

Though the state remains the primary provider of basic education, the role of non-government organizations is significant. NGOs and community initiatives play an important role in education provision in South Asia because, at present, agreed targets cannot be reached through the state system alone. Non-formal programmes are an important alternative to formal schooling as they address gaps of formal

schools. Non-Formal (Primary) Education programmes need to collaborate with the government to achieve EFA goals by targeting areas of high poverty, girls, working children, children in geographically remote areas and other hard-to-reach groups.

NFE may need to be provided for girls who have been pushed or pulled out too early to have attained a sustainable level of literacy or who never enrolled. This needs to be an education which empowers them to live better lives and

enables them to participate in the development of their communities.

Many NGOs in, for example, Bangladesh and India have established schools for especially disadvantaged children – many of them child workers – with 'bridge courses' to support their transition into government schools and from primary into secondary education.

With many working children in the region, innovative approaches are

necessary to provide all children with sustainable literacy, numeracy and life skills. The Basic Education for Urban Working Children (Bangladesh) for example teaches reading, writing, mathematics and life skills to thousands of school-age working children, 60 per cent of them girls (UNICEF, 2005). To reach girls may require extra effort as their work is often hidden and unofficial in the form of household chores, domestic servitude, agricultural work and home-based work.

BRAC in **Bangladesh** has created opportunities for quality education for over a million children – two-thirds of them girls – responding to the needs of rural communities, addressing parents' concerns regarding relevance of education and safety for girls. Community involvement in BRAC schools is much higher than in traditional government schools.

BRAC schools cover the full government primary curriculum, but use more interactive teaching–learning methods, resulting in lower dropout rates and better student performance compared with government primary schools. The same teacher works with the same students through the primary cycle and class size is kept small. BRAC schools measure their success by their ability to serve as a bridge to the government education system. Over 80 per cent of students join the formal system.

Tuition and learning materials are free in BRAC schools, women teachers are recruited from the community and schools are supported and supervised regularly to maintain quality learning.

BRAC schools limit homework as it is recognized that illiterate parents can rarely assist their children. The use of continuous assessment is promoted to help teachers diagnose and support struggling children. BRAC has recently also extended its reach to ethnic minorities and children with disabilities.

Source: Herz and Sperling (2004).

AMAL-YES (Youth Empowerment Skills) is an organization working throughout **Pakistan** with non-formal education (NFE) for street children aged between 7 and 17 – boys and girls. The drop-in centres are located in working areas. NFE is complemented with training in vocational skills, child rights, life skills, HIV/AIDS awareness and sensitization, basic health and hygiene, social and cultural activities and development of community organizations. Participatory methodology is used while focusing on the three basic subjects: (1) reading and writing in Urdu and English; (2) mathematics; and (3) life skills-based peer education. Master peer educators or 'change agents' are supported with technical and financial assistance. They impart both peer training and non-formal education, earning a small honorarium. In Balochistan the Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) department provides space for the centres as well as educational materials. AMAL-YES was declared a model by UNFPA in Pakistan.

Source: UNESCO Bangkok (2004).

The success and sustainability of community-based and non-formal programmes tend to be vulnerable due to their dependence on funding from outside. Yet these transitional programmes are critical in enabling girls and other disadvantaged children to participate in education, especially in rural and under-served areas. Teachers

and communities may need more professional support in such programmes. Renewed advocacy is also needed to have NFE programmes formally recognized and to ensure that programmes complement each other. NFE schemes need to be integrated into the mainstream education system or dissolved when there is no further need for these programmes.

TOWARDS RIGHTS-BASED EDUCATION

4.1 A CRC Vision of Education

Every country in South Asia has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), making it a legal obligation to ensure compulsory quality education free of costs, based on the

principle of non-discrimination. In fact, where in the world Universal Primary Education (UPE) has been achieved, this mainly happened through state provision and rigorous monitoring of compulsory education. Gender parity is an integral part of UPE.

The CRC on the right to education for all:

Art. 28 All children have an equal right to education.

Art. 2 There shall be no discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, social group or any other grounds. The implication is that schools must also promote tolerance and understanding of difference and diversity.

The CRC on children as citizens:

Art. 12 Children have the right to have their views heard and respected and to participate in decision making on matters that affect their lives.

Art. 29 The purpose of education is to (1) develop children's full potential, (2) prepare them to take responsible roles in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples, (3) develop their respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The CRC on content and style of education:

Art. 31 Children have the right to leisure and play.

Art. 28 School discipline should be in conformity with the child's human dignity.

Art. 17 Children have the right to information on all matters that affect them, e.g. health education (Art. 24); drug and substance abuse (Art. 33).

Educational quality is often defined in terms of academic excellence. However, quality may be more elusive than can be measured in tests and exams. Nowadays, quality is given a much broader meaning, recognizing measurable and non-measurable outputs, as well as the process by which education takes place. This broader understanding includes acceptance of education as a human right and an enabling right, recognition of the indivisibility of rights, and acknowledgement of education as a place in which rights are honoured.

While article 28 protects the general right of all children to education, article 29 emphasizes the wider goals of education. Other articles stress children's rights to information relevant to their lives, to be respected and listened to, to participate in decisions affecting them, and not to be subjected to corporal punishment. Taken together, these define a *rights-based vision* of education, which is inclusive, child-centred, learning friendly, relevant, participatory and empowering.

There is no quality without equality, and equality without quality is not worth having. Both are complementary aspects of a rights-based vision – mutually supportive and enhancing. Equality in quality education does not mean that all children receive the same education, either in content or in form. Not all students have the same aspirations or need to know all the same things. Equality in quality occurs when such diversity is accepted, and when curriculum and teaching methods, to mention but two variables, are adapted to meet individual needs.

Recognizing the importance of ensuring an environment that overcomes the constraints preventing girls and other disadvantaged learners from accessing and staying in school, lessons from various experiences have led to the promotion of Child Friendly Schools (CFS)¹³ and Inclusive Learning Friendly Environments (ILFE) (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005). These are rights-based, holistic concepts translating the CRC into quality educational practice.

A **Child Friendly School (CFS)** is (1) a child-seeking school (actively identifying excluded children and providing them with access and learning opportunities) and (2) a child-centred school (acting in the best interest of the 'whole' child).

Child-friendly schools reflect an environment of good quality by being:

- inclusive and protective of all children;
- academically effective with all children (accepting, addressing and celebrating diversity);
- healthy for all children (physically and mentally);
- gender sensitive (access, process, outcomes);
- involved with families and communities.

An **Inclusive Learning Friendly Environment (ILFE)** is a formal or non-formal place for learning, where teachers and administrators seek out all available support for finding and teaching all children, while providing special support to children who are enrolled but excluded from participation and learning.

A 'learning friendly' environment is 'child friendly' and 'teacher friendly' and stresses the importance of students and teachers learning together as a learning community. It places children at the centre of learning and encourages their active participation in learning, while also fulfilling the needs and interests of teachers.

A rights-based approach (RBA) to education has implications for planning and practice, such as:

- attention for the entire childhood period, from birth to age 18, which means that governments must give more attention to ECCD/pre-primary as well as to education and learning opportunities beyond primary school age;
- reflecting and realizing equal rights and opportunities, and therefore more focus on marginalized and excluded learners, implying affirmative action on all factors that limit meaningful participation of out-of-school or hard-to-reach children – girls and boys;
- emphasis on children's rights to participate and to have a say in issues affecting them, which means changes in the educational culture in many settings;
- increased attention for child protection issues and the promotion (through teaching and practising) of peace, tolerance, and democratic citizenship in a free society;
- focus on the quality of education, on the nature of what children learn, how they learn and how well what they learn enables them to reach

adolescence and adulthood equipped to realize their maximum potential.

An emphasis on rights enhances the importance attached to human dignity. A commitment to embody children's rights in all aspects of education means that, in many cases, teacher preparation and teacher actions change, while educational materials and how they are used are also significantly different. Focus on the place of learning as an environment promoting children's rights means that it is safe and supportive of all learners, free from all forms of harassment, ridicule, bullying, discrimination, and physical violence – including corporal punishment.

Using children's human rights as the lens for assessing education necessitates challenging discrimination and asking what education is for. Apart from being a tool for cognitive learning, education must promote and implement human and social rights for children and equip them with the knowledge and skills they need in later life. A special challenge is education's role in addressing a child's right to *protection* from exploitation, violence and abuse.

Children throughout the world share an acute sense of justice. They are quick to say that something 'is not fair' when exposed to situations of inequality. Socio-cultural, economic and political factors in South Asia lead to many children being excluded in private and public arenas. These include girls,

In **Bhutan** teachers and teacher educators participated in a workshop on Child Rights linked to the use of corporal punishment in schools. One of the more effective classroom management techniques learned dealt with preventing 'discipline' problems by using active and joyful teaching methods such as Circle Time. Whilst Circle Time can have an important place in the curriculum as an opportunity to develop speaking and listening skills in children, it also fulfils a critical role in their moral development. Circle Time can provide a forum for discussion of important issues that affect children's lives such as relationships, non-discrimination, fairness, rights, tolerance, respect, cooperation and non-violent conflict solving, and as such may help to prevent behaviour and classroom management problems.

See also: www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/library/circlotime.

Source: Heijnen (2004).

children with disabilities, street children, child domestic workers, those living in severe poverty, and children from low caste families or from ethnic minorities. The CRC principle of non-discrimination is fundamental to child participation – also in school – and through participation, children themselves play important roles in bringing about social change.

Working for Better Life (WBL), an NGO in **Bangladesh**, believes in children's empowerment. School debate programmes are used as the main tool for children's empowerment. WBL organizes student debate programmes in lower and middle secondary schools on social issues. Children come up with issues they want to discuss themselves, and topics have varied from domestic violence, environmental health issues, school fees, gender-based violence to corporal punishment, poverty and climate change. Programmes within schools and between schools involve more than 600 secondary schools and madrassas across Bangladesh.

Source: www.workingforbetterlife.org.

4.2 What Learners Bring to the Learning Environment

Learners bring a diversity of experiences when they come to school, such as their language, ethnicity, religion and family background. Positive early childhood experiences are important for children's success in school. The experiences

children bring may, however, not always be positive; they may for example include experiences of severe poverty, personal abuse or domestic violence. Such social factors which affect learning cannot directly be altered, but understanding them enables a teacher to place a student's 'problem' in perspective and create a learning environment that reduces rather than increases its effects. Teachers in child friendly schools are ready to receive and work with all learners, whatever they bring to school.

The right to non-discrimination – the least disputed principle of the CRC – is a major challenge facing education systems in South Asia. The question of how schools can include all children from the communities they serve, and enable them to learn, is a pressing concern for anyone concerned with issues of equity and social justice in present and future society. Inclusion in education is based on a rights and responsibility analysis showing that national education systems and mainstream schools are responsible for all children – whatever their diversity or learning needs. It takes the EFA agenda forward by finding ways of enabling schools to serve all learners as part of a national education system that is inclusive and responsive.

Divya Disha, in Hyderabad, **India**, has been running a CRC programme in schools for many years. The complementary programme components are awareness raising and facilitating children's participation at school and policy level. Awareness of child rights is raised through assembly presentations, teachers' orientation programmes, parents' meetings, and teacher training institutes.

Facilitating children's participation at school level includes:

- Introducing a CRC Charter
- Organizing 'Open House' discussions
- Starting Child Rights Clubs in High Schools for pupils of Class 7 and above
- Establishing 'Child Rights Committees' with representation of parents, teachers, students and principals that meet every one or two months
- Having a 'Suggestion Box' in schools, which are also read by school inspectors.

Facilitating children's participation at policy level involves:

- A students' resource team of 15–20 students elected from Child Clubs who meet with government officials
- Training of school inspectors
- Consultation with schoolchildren on the syllabus.

The first two years were spent largely on demonstrating the benefits of children's participation, but Divya Disha is now focusing on policy issues in collaboration with the Women and Child Welfare Department so that efforts on children's participation can be institutionalized and systematized.

Source: O'Kane (2006).

In child friendly schools diversity is recognized as a positive and necessary element of education, enhancing mutual learning in the classroom. These schools are places for learning as well as places where children have the right to be healthy, to be loved, to be treated with respect, to be protected from violence and abuse, to express opinions, and to be supported in learning.

An effective support system is essential if schools are to become more responsive to different learning needs and give every learner the opportunity to be successful. 'Support' includes everything that enables children to learn. The most important forms of support are available to every school: children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents becoming partners in the education of their children and

DPEP-**India**: 'Classrooms are filled with young children eager to learn. There is no furniture to restrict the movement of children ... girls and boys sit in small circles ... and teachers are literally on their feet, moving from group to group and maintaining personal contact with the children ... In the multi-grade situation the teachers are catering for children of different needs ... The children too are comfortable pursuing their tasks in consulting with each other as opposed to being monitored by the teacher.

'The children's ability to keep themselves engaged is a function of group dynamics created in the class whereby mixed groups of children with different abilities often provide the incentive and space for facilitating peer learning ... Students have taken charge in assisting their peers in either solving a mathematical problem or teaching them to spell correctly. This change in classrooms reveals support for richer and more inquiry-based interactions among students and between teacher and students – called "joyful learning". The decentralized programme is rooted in the local community which allows for a sharper focus on the particular needs, characteristics and resources of different communities.'

Source: Singh (2003).

The MOE in the **Maldives** has embarked on a project supported by UNICEF to introduce child friendly classes in the primary schools. Starting in 2000, 22 under-served schools were targeted. However, subsequent to the Tsunami the project is targeting 105 schools in the country. Under the project teachers are trained to adopt a child-centred teaching methodology and the classrooms and schools are converted into a more conducive and child friendly environment to facilitate active learning.

To address the issues of gender, separate toilets and washing facilities are built in all schools, while also providing safe drinking water. Each school has at least one staff member employed to keep toilets, classrooms and the school compound clean and hygienic, or the community employs a person to do so.

Source: UNICEF (2004).

communities supporting their local schools.

Child friendly schools are learning environments that are accessible in terms of infrastructure, curriculum and methodology – including for children with disabilities. These are places where all children learn, where they have teaching-learning resources and where children are excited about their learning because of positive reinforcement from the teacher. In such environments children are not expected to learn the same things during the same time with the same results and they are respected for who they are, where they come from and what they can do.

While no single environmental factor will exclude or include all girls, safety and security are important. Improving the infrastructure and providing more female teachers will positively impact the quality of education experience for girls. But in order for quality and equality to be achieved, *all* schools need to become inclusive learning friendly environments, reaching out to children and supporting their learning. Teaching staff in such schools have found their job description in the CRC in its principles about non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, optimal child development and respecting the views of the child as these are all crucial ingredients in the conduct of quality educators. Hardly any profession is so important in realizing the idea of children's rights (Hammarberg, 1997).

4.3 Content, Learning Process and Outcomes

In the process towards rights-based education, the curriculum can be a major obstacle but at the same time an important tool for change. While there is a need for a standard curriculum, it must be constructed *flexibly* to allow not only for school-level adaptations and developments, but also for modifications to meet the individual needs of students. In some countries part of the curriculum is decided at the local level, allowing for more contextualized learning. The

nature of the curriculum at all phases of education involves various components, which are important in facilitating or undermining effective learning. Key components include the style and tempo of teaching and learning, the relevance of what is being taught, the way the classroom is managed and organized, and materials and equipment used in the teaching-learning process.

Teachers in child friendly schools know how to adjust standard curricula in such a way that it becomes relevant and learning friendly for different students. They have also learned that the process of *how* knowledge, skills and values are transmitted is as important a part of the curriculum as *what* about these is learned. Such curricula not only value academic learning, but also teach and model tolerance, non-violence and respect for diversity.

Textbooks and other learning materials in rights-based schools facilitate learning in ways that encourage active and equitable participation. This is based on the principle that textbook content and illustrations must promote non-discriminatory practices and represent girls and boys, as well as members of minority groups, in positive and empowering manners.

For many years Save the Children and the Commission of Afghani Refugees (CAR) have been helping Afghani girls and boys in refugee camps in **Pakistan** (NWFP) to form Child-to-Child groups. Through these groups children have learned about their rights, health, disability, social and community issues. They have begun to see themselves as protectors of their rights. Children have identified problems affecting them and their community and have moved to address them. Children have become monitors of child rights in their schools and communities, promoting the right to education by visiting families whose children were not going to school.

'Before this group was started there was no education for girls, now there is a girl's school. We used not to eat together with the girls and now we do. Girls were not allowed to play sports, but now this has changed. We have motivated street children to go to school. We have spread messages to drug addicts. Children with special needs are coming to school. We have learned about the risks of mines.' (Child-to-Child group, Islami Khidmatgar, Ghandi Khan Khel Camp)

Source: O'Kane (2006).

The relevance of education is enhanced if links are made to children's lives resulting in learners being able to read, use numbers and use life skills in real life situations. In child friendly schools this also includes knowledge about human rights, gender equality, health and nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace building. Quality content is appropriate to children's level of development and in languages that they understand. This and how it is delivered ultimately decide whether the education experience will be empowering and transformative.

Child friendly schools provide a significant 'space' to encourage girls and boys to work together with their peer

group, their teachers and the wider community to become productive and respected citizens. Such quality processes require well-trained teachers who are able to use child-centred and gender sensitive methods, while addressing issues of disparity and discrimination. Within the same classroom boys and girls, rich and poor, and children from various backgrounds or with different abilities have diverse learning experiences. Teachers must be aware of potential harassment, teasing and bullying linked to issues of difference and diversity, and address those. Positive teacher-student relations and classroom climate are also important factors influencing how children experience school.

The right to participation (CRC Art. 12) recognizes that children are agents of change, rather than passive recipients of services. Their capacity to fulfil this role, in keeping with their own growing maturity, depends on opportunities provided by schools. Education is one important context in which the capacity for self-expression and other skills and behaviours required for 'participation' are learned, which also includes a process of questioning assumptions, reflecting on one's own experience, and taking responsibility for one's own learning. At a more practical level participation in school systems may imply that children are involved in classroom management procedures, are represented in school boards or are involved in discussions related to changes in facilities or extra-curricular activities (Hammarberg, 1997).

Participation is the basis for democratic citizenship. Children and young people learn most about citizenship by *being* active citizens. Rights-based schools model the kind of society in which active citizenship is encouraged by providing students with opportunities to take on responsibilities and exercise choice. What children learn in school will have an impact on future society. Therefore education must have values and social skills at its heart and teach, model and practise those.

Although the formal education system's emphasis on discipline often raises

barriers against experiments to develop democratic school systems, the South Asia region provides some interesting examples of child friendly schools that encourage children's participation in the school system.

In the formal education sector, NGOs in Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have supported children to play an active role in Community-based Education Management Information Systems (C-EMIS), demonstrating their skills of information collection, analysis and critical thinking. Children have worked with adults to guarantee the school enrolment of all village children – including those who were involved in child labour activities – and to monitor attendance of both students and teachers. In different localities across the region children have addressed issues relating to school transport, infrastructure, water and sanitation and supply of books. In India, districts in Andhra Pradesh and Ladakh have developed partnerships with Child Clubs and Child Committees to discuss education issues, as adults have experienced that it is beneficial to involve children.

Children have discovered that it is strategic to convince influential adults such as religious leaders and community elders of the longer term benefits of sending children to school, as well as the necessity of improving the relevance and quality of education.

In Mazar (north **Afghanistan**) youth groups have been involved in a campaign to get children back to school. They have been using multi-media and advocacy tools. The youth went across the northern region to meet with children, parents, community leaders and the Ministry of Education (MoE) and discuss why and how children could be supported and brought (back) into school. The youth worked directly with school-age children and gathered much information. Using poetry, song and drama, they conveyed how children could get themselves and their peers back in school. Children and young people had a major role in this initiative.

Source: Save the Children (Afghanistan).

Learning outcomes link to teaching–learning processes. Rights-based schools focus on holistic and meaningful outcomes not limited to academic subjects. To assess the quality of education there must be defined learning achievement based on the wider rights-based concept of quality, using measurable indicators that are accessible and fair in terms of gender, language and other aspects of diversity. Monitoring learning means assessing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes or values learners have gained. These need to be contextualized and relevant to everyday life and not just to schooling. Child friendly schools are generating a shift from quality control in learning to quality assurance or *accountability*. While traditional approaches to instruction and assessment involve teaching certain material and working out who has and has not learned it, assessment *for* learning involves adjusting teaching as needed while the teaching and learning is still taking

place – a quality assurance approach. Such quality assurance also involves a change of attention from teaching to learning. The emphasis is on what students get out of the process rather than on what teachers are putting into it. It requires an approach to teaching that facilitates learning and where students do most of the work, rather than the teachers (Heijnen, 2006).

Developing student understanding, rather than simple factual knowledge, represents the foundation of quality education reform efforts in curriculum, teaching–learning processes and assessment of outcomes. Teachers in child friendly schools know that children build understanding not by memorizing texts and solutions, but by working through material and integrating it into existing knowledge structures. Because learning outcomes are complex and multidimensional, assessment must be performance-based, at least in part, so that students can demonstrate what they know and are able to do.

Child friendly or rights-based schools as a concept of quality education linked to the implementation of the CRC is still relatively new in South Asia. All countries in the region are, however, developing model schools and some have started to integrate the concept in pre-service teacher education programmes. Process and progress monitoring will be important to assess whether the model schools in the different countries meet the specific objectives and reflect a quality learning environment. A recent evaluation of existing programmes in the region revealed that the child friendly school concept is implemented in a rather fragmented manner, focusing on some but not all

its dimensions. As a rights-based concept, a child friendly school cannot be child friendly without also being inclusive, effective, gender sensitive, healthy and protective and involved with parents and communities (Keane, 2006). Regional sharing of experience and expertise, peer reviews, joining hands in teacher training incorporating CRC/CFS, documentation of best practice and regional networking are some ideas to further boost and scale up the development of rights-based schools. This can be seen as an integral part of Education for All (EFA), creating opportunities to improve the quality of education for all children while addressing their equal rights to, in and through education.

STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR CHANGE

The previous chapters describe national and international lessons from a diverse set of secondary resources used for this desk study. This chapter contains a number of recommendations, which are grouped together as strategies at regional, national and school level. They are replicable or can be adapted and contextualized, and focus on addressing quality issues related to learning environments, curricula, processes and outcomes for girls and other disadvantaged children. Interventions in these four areas – at policy and programme level – could best be taken up concurrently, as they reinforce each other. These recommendations may also promote further reflection and discussion among policy makers and practitioners and as such contribute to regional, national and local efforts to meet the international targets of quality education for all by 2015.

5.1 Regional Cooperation and Exchange

South Asian countries can strengthen existing bilateral networks and regional SAARC cooperation through joint research, peer reviews or capacity building.

1. Conduct a gender (and other diversity aspects) review of textbooks and other teaching–learning materials to identify the challenges still to be addressed. Develop a common set of analytical tools, recommendations for revision and cooperation in the development of new materials, involving researchers, authors, curriculum specialists and policy makers from different countries.
2. Undertake a joint impact study of incentive schemes such as stipends,

scholarships, school feeding programmes, and free textbooks especially at the individual level of learners (girls; other disadvantaged groups) in terms of behaviour, (e)quality of opportunities and (e)quality of outcomes.

3. Identify and develop teacher education cooperation networks between programmes and institutes with a special focus on developing child friendly or rights-based schools, sharing and benefiting from experience and expertise available within the region.
4. Conduct a regional baseline study on the child rights situation and CRC implementation in South Asia for different children, using the CRC implementation handbook and checklists (UNICEF, 2002).
5. Promote inter-regional cooperation in the area of mother tongue / bilingual education to achieve EFA based on equal rights to, in and through education.

5.2 National Policy and Education System Development

Developing inclusive and gender sensitive policies is an important step in improving the quality of education. Policies need to be developed in participation with stakeholders – men and women – at the district and school level. This increases ownership and enhances implementation.

The toolkit 'Advocacy kit for promoting multilingual education: Including the excluded' (UNESCO Bangkok, 2007) focuses on South-East Asia, South Asia and Central Asia and the Pacific. It is very clearly written and addresses the rights and needs of children who do not speak the language used in schools. It outlines arguments for multilingual education and describes what needs to be in place to deliver it. The kit consists of a set of 5 booklets: (1) Overview of the kit; (2) Language in education policy and practice in Asia and the Pacific; (3) Policy-makers' booklet; (4) Programme implementers' booklet; (5) Community members' booklet.

1. Use the existing CRC Implementation Handbook and checklists (UNICEF, 2002) to analyse the child rights situation in the country to improve educational planning, monitoring and evaluation. Develop policies and programmes that look more critically at quality and equality of education through the lens of rights-based and transformative change.
2. Abolish direct and indirect costs – as a matter of national policy – in primary education to be able to realize UPE, and also completion. Tuition costs, fees for parent-teacher associations or school development funds should be made illegal. School

uniforms can be eliminated or provided free and textbooks can be rented rather than bought. Reduce the current secondary level bias towards wealthier children by providing targeted scholarships or stipends based on needs, particularly for poorer girls and other disadvantaged learners.

3. Ensure the safety of school children – especially girls – by taking strong legal measures that outlaw gender-based violence and harassment in school and on the way to and from school, with clear procedures for dealing with violence. Adopt and implement prohibitions on the use of corporal punishment in school.
4. Review existing or develop new education policies, while raising issues of exclusion by asking what kind of diversity is acknowledged in education policies and practices (gender, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, disability, street children, working children, etc. explicitly mentioned). Create disaggregated data on disadvantaged groups, while incorporating qualitative analysis and monitoring mechanisms. Use information/from multiple sources (including Civil Society Organizations – CSO) for cross validation.
5. Acknowledge the rights of learners from linguistic minorities in education plans at different levels. Develop strategies that allow for mother tongue / bilingual education in policy and practice, strengthening students' learning skills, while the national language is taught as second language at upper primary level. Develop TLM and readers in local languages and train more teachers (and/or teaching assistants) from linguistic minority populations. Mechanisms for monitoring longer-term progress also need to be developed.
6. Promote girl friendly education by removing gender bias and discrimination from textbooks, teaching methods and classroom interactions at all levels of education and by training teachers, principals,

A 'Toolkit on Positive Discipline with particular emphasis on South and Central Asia' has been developed by Save the Children (Regional Working Group). Modules include 'Understanding child rights, concepts and child development' and 'Self-esteem, cultural context, positive behaviour management'. Clear tools and concrete activities help professionals, teachers, caregivers and parents to develop (self-)discipline in children without using physical or psychological punishment.

See: <http://sca.savethechildren.se/sca/Publications/Children-and-Violence/Physical-and-Humiliating-Punishment/>.

DEOs, and supervisors to be sensitive to gender and child rights.

7. Develop teaching–learning materials that make students aware of stereotypes and bias related to gender or other aspects of difference/diversity.
8. Develop condensed, accelerated programmes to facilitate re-entry in school of girls who have dropped out; provide transport, accommodation and extra tuition/help where needed;

develop in-school or after-school compensatory programmes that engage and retain excluded children, particularly girls, and boost their learning achievement.

Curriculum

1. Ensure wider consultation (both men and women) in curriculum/textbook review and development; especially facilitate participation by groups who may be marginalized because of language or social practice. Pose questions throughout the curriculum

The Media Awareness Network is a Canadian website with interesting lesson plans on gender (stereotyping and bias) and other diversity issues for different primary and secondary education grade levels that can be adapted to other contexts.

www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/index.cfm.

UNESCO is involved in an international initiative in schools called Living Values Education – www.livingvalues.net. Founded by a Hindu spiritual leader in the 1990s it is now operating in 66 countries in 4000 sites, many of which are schools. It has a **rights-based** approach to fostering positive self-development and social cooperation in children and young people. The programme provides activities, methodologies and materials for teachers and facilitators.

A resource for gender training and analysis in education (which can also easily be adapted to local context and learners) can be found on the UNESCO Bangkok website: www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=4634.

A Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education by the Gender in Education Network in Asia (GENIA) also includes guidance and tools to develop gender-responsive Education for All plans.

review/design process regarding what decisions mean for girls and boys and what particular sections of text and pictures mean to learners from particular backgrounds.

2. Enhance curriculum relevance by integrating life skills and education for citizenship. Include exercises that encourage critical thinking and problem solving skills. Equality in quality implies that the curriculum must be relevant for rural and urban learners, girls and boys, children from poor families and from different ethnic backgrounds.
3. Offer boys and girls the same opportunities for careers and professional guidance and training. Promote vocational and technical education as a valuable and certified secondary education option and promote greater female enrolment in such programmes.

Quality data

1. Improve accountability through improved data collection and

analysis, disaggregated by gender, income, region/district, urban/rural, public/private, formal/non-formal, social group and disabilities, so that inequities can be quantified and appropriate strategies devised to minimize imbalances.

Teacher education, deployment and career

1. *Teacher status*: improve remuneration and career opportunities. Provide performance incentives (e.g. official recognition; awards) and better conditions of service, making teaching an attractive profession.
2. *Pre-service and in-service teacher training*: improve quality of training, especially in participatory methodology that is gender- and diversity sensitive and engages boys and girls equally, while promoting gender- and social equity in the classroom. Develop 'reflective practice' in teachers. Teachers need to become less didactic and authoritarian and more participatory and inclusive in their teaching.

PRACTICAL TOOLS

'Gender in education' at: www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=40

'Gender in the classroom' at www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=4582

where also the following tools are available:

1. Guidelines for how to conduct classroom observation from a gender perspective
2. Gender lens for measuring the child-friendliness of school.

Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning Friendly Environments: www.unescobkk.org/ie. Click on 'resources' and find the 6 booklets of the toolkit.

The Toolkit offers a holistic approach, practical perspective and means of how schools and classrooms can become more inclusive, learning friendly and gender sensitive. The Toolkit is primarily meant for teachers and teacher trainers, but should also be of interest to others who care about education.

On the same website: Positive Discipline in the Inclusive Learning-Friendly Classroom – A guide for teachers and teacher educators.

3. *Female teachers*: appoint at least one female teacher per primary school; in the case of remote schools appoint teams of two. Provide residential facilities, transport and other additional incentives to attract qualified female teachers to schools – rural and remote schools in particular. Address the specific needs of female teachers when organizing in-service training, such as day-care centres for teachers with small children. Employ more female teachers at the secondary level.

Mobility support for female teachers in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) **Pakistan** is a simple intervention with a huge impact. It has been introduced by the NWFP Department of Education in 2003 and is supported by UNICEF, while teachers also contribute Rs. 200 per month. Schools – girls' schools in particular – were often forced to close due to unavailability of female teachers and/or absenteeism of teachers because of mobility problems. In less than three years, the intervention has made a great difference in the three districts where it has been established, and it has proved to be a solution to much more than just transportation problems. It has proved to be a safe and reliable way of moving between home and school for female teachers. The provided transportation support has resulted in re-opening of schools, increased enrolment and retention of girls and an increased number of female applicants for teaching positions.

See also: www.unicef.org/pakistan/reallives_2706.htm.

Source: Angers (2007).

Infrastructure

1. Construct (more) girl friendly primary and secondary schools within a reasonable distance of communities to prevent extensive travel or boarding and thus reduce concerns

To prevent or address school-based violence and school health issues the following resources may be useful:

1. *Creating an Environment for emotional and social well-being: an important responsibility of a health-promoting and child-friendly school* (including the Psycho-Social Environment (PSE) profile questionnaire as a useful school environment assessment tool).
2. *Violence prevention: an important element of a health-promoting school.*
3. *The Physical School Environment – An Essential Component of a Health Promoting School.*
4. *Family life, reproductive health, and population education: key elements of a health promoting school.*
5. *Improving health through schools: national and international strategies.*

To be downloaded from: www.who.int/school_youth_health/resources/information_series/en/.

about cost and safety. These schools must have separate latrines for boys/girls and male/female teachers, and also pay attention to personal hygiene issues of girls and female teachers.

5.3 School Level

Quality at the school level relates to how teachers teach and interact, the curriculum and the school infrastructure (all covered earlier). To make quality education an equal opportunity for girls, though, gender needs to be better understood and mainstreamed at the school level.

1. Integrate gender into all school policies and practices and increase knowledge on gender issues and gender-based violence among teachers and in the school curriculum. Conduct *school-based research* of safety and security of students. This can be undertaken by students, supported by adults, through questionnaires, involving boys and girls to identify what they experience as violence, e.g. violent and humiliating discipline, physical, emotional and sexual violence, harassment, bullying, etc. Formulate and enforce sexual harassment policies and fire teachers and administrators (or expel students) who violate these policies.

5.4 Research

Various interventions have been developed to enrol and retain girls and other disadvantaged children in school. Little research, however, has been undertaken to assess its impact on the quality of education in general and the learning experiences of girls in particular.

1. Conduct research – also involving students and parents – on various aspects of education and (e)quality to provide empirical data to inform policy formulation and decision making: e.g. on the transformational role of education; on girls' security in the school environment; on systematic barriers for different children – including on language barriers; on the classroom experience of girls; on the impact of female teachers; on different attitudes and expectations of male and female teachers regarding girls' abilities.
2. Carry out (case) studies to collect quality information on gender and ethnic minorities or social status related to gender disaggregated learning achievement linked to school-based and community-level factors.
3. Conduct research on improved quality teacher education and its impact on student learning outcomes.
4. Conduct tracer studies to analyse empowering and transformative effects of girls' education – both of mainstream schooling experiences and alternative or NFE programmes.
5. Document and monitor development of 'model' rights-based schools (child friendly schools / inclusive child-friendly learning environments). Share examples of good practice. Monitor child friendly school effects on quality of learning environments, teaching–learning processes and learning outcomes.

Education Watch (EW) Bangladesh

Education Watch (EW) Bangladesh is a group of educationists, researchers, development organizations and civil society representatives, concerned about educational development in the country. EW conducts periodic independent reviews of the state of primary and basic education through research, surveys and studies and publishes annually a report on the issues studied. Research findings are disseminated to all stakeholders at various levels in order to enhance public awareness about education and promote public participation in educational policy dialogue, while also engaging in advocacy for quality education for all in the country.

Source: www.campebd.org/content/about_EW.htm.

5.5 Awareness Raising and Campaigns

Creating opportunities for more children – especially girls and other children vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion – to access, participate in and benefit from education, needs to be supported by activities and campaigns that inform the wider public and make people aware of children's rights and needs.

1. Launch publicity campaigns using mass media and audio-visual aids to create a favourable environment for girls' education and positive images of women, while also engaging boys and men as advocates for gender

sensitive societal developments. In Pakistan, for example, boy scouts successfully advocated for girls' access to basic education. The Meena initiative in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal (UNICEF), a multimedia approach to raise the profile of girls, has been very successful in highlighting issues around child marriage, dowry system, gender-based violence and education for girls.

2. 'Back-to-school' campaigns have been successful in Afghanistan and India, for example targeting girls who have dropped out. Messages are delivered to parents and communities about the importance of education. In India this included a zero-rejection policy for disabled children and adolescent tutorial camps for girls. Such campaigns should, however, go hand-in-hand with improved relevance and quality of education.

3. Create video documentation of girls who have been successful in transforming their lives through education (primary, secondary, vocational), including examples of successful young women in careers that challenge gender stereotypes (for use in schools and for wider societal advocacy).

Skukno Ful Rangeen Ful is the highest rated programme on state-owned television in **Bangladesh**. The aim of this programme is to get working children into school. It is a dramatization about a teacher, students at a hard-to-reach learning centre, a young girl and her family. Each episode ends with a quiz based on the issues faced by the characters in the show.

Source: UNICEF (2005b).

The Welcome to School (WTS) campaign is implemented in several districts in **Nepal** to get more girls from Dalit and ethnic backgrounds enrolled and to improve teaching–learning environments so that girls complete the primary cycle (and transition to the secondary level).

This initiative involved activities such as:

- Development of a 25-module Quality Education Resource Package (QERP) for schools and communities to strengthen participation in WTS.
- Strong advocacy support – mobilizing a range of media at national, district and community levels to promote WTS.
- Civil society monitoring – encouraging the development of Education Watch Groups at district level.
- Data fine-tuning with respect to girls' participation – micro-planning at school and district level.
- Community mapping – School Management Committee members/teachers and others began to conduct school catchment area mapping to identify households where children were not enrolled, to also invite these children to school. In many schools, these children received notebooks and pencils as encouragement.
- Child Clubs – active in seeking out-of-school children.

Source: Government of Nepal/UNICEF/World Education [http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/fa2_nepal_welcome_to_school\(1\).doc](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/fa2_nepal_welcome_to_school(1).doc).

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted many complex issues related to quality and equality of education in general, and of girls in particular. What has been gained in increased enrolment of girls and other disadvantaged learners as a result of innovative incentive schemes and flexible programmes must now not be lost due to lack of quality in education.

Every country in South Asia has identified improving quality as one of its highest national priorities, focusing on the whole learning environment from physical conditions of schools to improved pedagogic strategies for equality, and from availability of textbooks and teaching materials to more community involvement. Existing quantitative goals are to be complemented with qualitative targets: for teachers, for programmes and for learning outcomes.

Qualitative goals need to relate to the purpose of education, acknowledging that schools should serve both the development of individuals and that of society at large, implying that it must meet the needs of a changing society and educate *all* children for the opportunities and responsibilities of adulthood in such a society. It acknowledges that education is more than schooling and that some aspects of quality education cannot be measured with tests and exams, such as how schools nurture the creative and emotional development of children and how values like cooperation, respect for diversity, human rights, non-violence and democracy are modelled and practised.

National education plans must prioritize to improve, support and monitor the quality of teaching and learning, especially in disadvantaged

communities and schools. As teachers are the key to ensure that children receive an education that is relevant, of good quality and meeting their learning and emotional needs, there is an urgent need to invest more in teachers while considering their training and ongoing professional support needs, workloads, status and motivation, remuneration and career options.

The development of child friendly or rights-based schools in South Asia is a positive step towards quality education. This can be a normative goal and thus a framework for programming and resource allocation. For individual schools it is both a goal and a tool for improving quality through self-assessment, school planning and management, and a way of mobilizing

the community around education and child rights. The model emphasizes the school as a place providing learning opportunities relevant to life and livelihood, in a healthy, safe and caring environment that is inclusive and protective, gender sensitive and involves the participation of children, families and communities.

In addition to the investments made in primary education, countries in the region must now make secondary education an equal priority. Achieving quality, gender equitable secondary education is what will ultimately lead to greater socio-economic returns, enabling young women (and men) to contribute to their communities beyond their own families and ultimately to the development of their countries, because:

*The human race is a two-winged bird:
One wing is female, the other is male.
Unless both wings are equally developed
The human race will not be able to fly!
(Author unknown)*

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- Family life, reproductive health and population education: key elements of a health-promoting school.
- Improving health through schools: national and international strategies.

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1. www.unescobkk.org/efamda – Government officials' meeting in New Delhi for EFA MDA South Asia workshop in December 2006.
2. See for example: UNESCO (2004); and UNICEF *Barriers to Girls' Education* www.unicef.org/teachers/girls_ed/barriers_02.htm.
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4. The Education Guarantee Scheme is a programme of the Government of Madhya Pradesh.
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9. Based on Benson (2005).
10. www.unicef.org/teachers/protection/violence.htm.
11. See also Annex 2: What makes a good teacher?
12. See also Annex 4: Policy changes to improve instructional outcomes.
13. See also Annex 3: Tool to assess child friendliness in the classroom.
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16. Developed and adapted by the author from different UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children papers.
17. Copied with permission from Abadzi (2006).

ANNEX 1

How Children Learn and Implications for School Practice¹⁴

***Learners concentrate most on tasks that are personally meaningful and essentially learn what they want to learn.** The search for meaning is an innate human characteristic and motivation for learning increases and persists when students investigate real problems, and when learning is presented and reported in new ways. Surprisingly, students respond better to sophisticated learning tasks than simple ones, as demonstrated in schools that successfully teach urban poor children, not simplistic remediation, but linking reading, writing and maths problem solving to complex issues in the students' community.

***There is no limit to the capacity of humans to learn more; educators must not underestimate what students can do.** We create limits and set goals based on the perception of whether something is challenging and achievable, whether we have the self-confidence to do it, and whether we have the needed support.

***Learning is developmental and follows pre-determined sequences. Education is more effective when developmental differences are taken into account.** Learners who know little about a topic approach it differently from those who know more about a topic. For example, maths operations are first explored by manipulating real objects and later explored using symbols for the concrete objects.

***Each individual learns differently, using unique strategies, approaches and capabilities that may result from differences in linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds.** People construct new knowledge by building on what they already know. Each brain is different in the way it is organized and there is no such thing as a single general intelligence. The brain has a rather messy, non-linear way of forming patterns to link all of this old and new information.

***Learning is fundamentally social and, therefore, learning is inseparable from engagement in the world.** Learning is influenced and motivated by social interactions and interpersonal relations. Teacher–student interactions should go beyond recitation, in which there is a correct answer the teacher expects to hear, and involve real discussion, in which students offer conjectures and respond to others' ideas.

***Feedback – information from outside regarding the accuracy and relevance of our thoughts and actions – is essential to learning.** Educators must try to make sure that learners receive accurate, useful and timely feedback. It involves interaction with other students and experts, and a structure for peers to give and receive feedback. It involves learning how to self-evaluate.

***Successful learning involves strategies and those strategies are learned.** Students can be taught this form of self-management by coaching them to think ahead, plan for time and tools, envision the steps, and monitor progress. Students can also learn how to organize their own learning from listening to others as they describe their strategies and processes.

***There is a strong relationship between emotions and learning.** Strong emotions enhance memory; people learn poorly in stressful environments. Our ability to think and to learn effectively is closely linked to our physical and emotional well-being. An appropriate emotional climate is indispensable to sound education.

ANNEX 2

What Makes a Good Teacher?¹⁵

1. Good teaching is about *motivating* students to learn, and showing them *how* to learn, and doing so in a manner that is relevant, meaningful and memorable.
2. Good teaching is about treating students as *owners* and *users* of knowledge. It is about doing your best as a teacher to keep on top of your field and on how to teach and model this. A good teacher not only has the knowledge, but goes a step further and makes the material *interesting* and *relevant* to the students by for example showing how it applies to their lives.
3. Good teaching is about *listening*, questioning, being *responsive*, and remembering that each student and class is different. It is about encouraging responses from the quiet students. It is about having high *expectations* of every student and believing that every student can learn. Good teachers know their students and are able to decide how to teach them *effectively*. If students are not learning, they do not blame or ridicule them: they try *alternative* approaches. Good teachers critically *reflect* on their own practice, and continue to learn throughout their career.
4. Good teaching is about not always having a rigid agenda, but being *flexible*, experimenting, and having the *confidence* to react and adjust to changing circumstances. It is about deviating from the syllabus or lecture schedule easily when there is more and better learning elsewhere. It is about planning and *management* rather than control. Good teachers have well thought through classroom routines, which are developed with, maintained and *understood* by the students.
5. Good teaching is about methods. It is *entertaining* without lacking in substance. Good teachers may see themselves as conductors and the class as the orchestra. All students play different instruments and at varying proficiencies.
6. Good teaching is – very importantly – about *humour*. It is about not taking yourself too seriously and making jokes, so that the ice breaks and students learn in a more *relaxed* atmosphere where you, like them, are human with your own share of faults and weaknesses.

7. Good teaching is about *caring* and developing minds and talents. It is about devoting time, often invisible, to every student.
8. Good teaching is supported by strong and *visionary leadership*, and institutional support. Good teaching is reinforced by the overall *vision* and purpose of education and is reflected in what is said, but more importantly by what is *practised*.
9. Good teaching is about teachers *supporting* each other, teamwork, and being recognized. As such quality teaching should be rewarded, and poor teaching remediated through training and development programmes.
10. Ultimately, good teaching is about enjoying teaching, experiencing intrinsic rewards, such as connecting with a student who previously did not connect or students understanding the subject after many difficult efforts.

ANNEX 3

Is Your Classroom Inclusive and Child Friendly?¹⁶

A self-assessment tool for teachers to use in their classrooms

Most of us look at classrooms as places for seriously learning and seldom as a place where students enjoy activities and have a say in what and how they need and want to learn.

Classrooms consist of students, who hopefully are interested in gaining new knowledge and skills, and teachers, who hopefully can facilitate optimal learning to all those different children. The most important part of teaching and learning is the **learning environment**, especially the ways in which teachers and students interact and how such an environment helps different children learn to their best ability.

An inclusive, child friendly learning environment is not just a place for formal learning, but also a place where children have rights: the right to be healthy, to be loved, to be treated with respect, the right to be protected from violence and abuse (including physical or mental punishment), and the right to express his or her opinion, and to be supported in education irrespective of learning needs.

What are the characteristics of an inclusive, child-friendly classroom?

1. An inclusive, child-friendly classroom does **not discriminate**, exclude or marginalize any child based on gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, abilities or disabilities, etc. *This means that:*
 - a. No child is refused enrolling and attending classes for whatever reason
 - b. Boys and girls have equal learning opportunities
 - c. Children are all treated the same: with respect.
2. An inclusive, child-friendly classroom is **effective** with children, facilitates and supports education of good quality and is child centred. *This means that:*
 - a. Teachers think about the best interest of each child when deciding on learning activities
 - b. Teachers try to adjust the standard curriculum to the learning needs of the students
 - c. Different teaching methods are used so that all children can learn – those who learn best by doing, by hearing, by seeing, by moving, etc.
 - d. Teaching–learning approaches are used that invite students to think and reason and express their opinions

- e. All children are supported to learn and master the basic skills of reading (and listening), writing and arithmetic
 - f. Children also learn by experiencing/and by working together
 - g. Teachers encourage children to express their feelings through arts and other forms.
3. An inclusive, child-friendly classroom is **healthy** for children. *This means that:*
- a. What happens in the classroom also promotes children's health
 - b. Classrooms/schools are clean, safe and have adequate water and sanitation facilities
 - c. There are written policies and regular practices that promote good health
 - d. Health education and life skills are integrated in the curriculum and in the teaching-learning activities.
4. An inclusive, child friendly classroom is caring and **protective** of all children. *This means that:*
- a. Children are secure and protected from harm and abuse
 - b. Children are encouraged to care for each other
 - c. No physical or mental punishment is used with children
 - d. There are clear guidelines for conduct between teachers and students and among students (and no bullying is allowed).
5. An inclusive, child-friendly classroom involves **families and communities**. *This means that:*
- a. Parents are invited and consulted about the learning of their children
 - b. Teachers and parents work together to help children learn better in school and at home
 - c. Teachers and parents together care about the children's health, nutrition and safety – also on the way to and from school
 - d. Parents and community members are invited for school-community project activities.

What are the objectives and goals of an inclusive, child friendly classroom?

- Goal 1: Encourage children's participation in school and community
- Goal 2: Enhance children's health and well-being
- Goal 3: Guarantee safe and protective environments for children
- Goal 4: Encourage optimal enrolment and completion
- Goal 5: Ensure children's optimal academic achievement and success
- Goal 6: Raise teachers' motivation and success
- Goal 7: Mobilize parent and community support for education.

What role can teachers and students play to reach these goals?

If all teachers and students work together and schools try to become inclusive, child friendly schools, many of these goals can be achieved as part of whole school development. If individual teachers try to make their classrooms more inclusive and child friendly, they may only reach parts of these goals, but these are **good first steps**. Individual teachers can make their classrooms more inclusive and child friendly by trying to implement some of the action points mentioned below.

Goal 1: PARTICIPATION

- I have made my classroom a welcoming place for all children, including those from very poor families, those with language difficulties, those with disabilities and those who learn slower than others.
- I involve my students in class meetings where we discuss and decide on matters that concern their well-being.
- I organize together with my students learning activities involving parents and community members, while also going out into the community for project learning activities.
- I organize with my students a classroom bulletin board or student opinion box, so students can express their ideas and views about school and community issues.
- I arrange different seating arrangements for my class to facilitate different ways of learning and participation. I encourage boys and girls to work together, listen to each other's views and respect each other.
- I especially make sure that students who are shy or who have learning difficulties are also participating and learning adequately.
- I encourage girls and boys to speak and contribute and I value the views of girls and boys equally.

Goal 2: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- I maintain and regularly update the health records of my students, and refer students with problems to health centres.
- I use simple assessment tools to find out whether students have hearing, vision or other problems.
- I teach (and role-model) proper waste disposal in my classroom and in the school.
- There are separate toilets for boys and girls and they are kept clean.

Goal 3: SAFETY AND PROTECTION

- My classroom has proper ventilation and lighting and enough space for all students.

- Classroom furniture is sufficient and sized to the age of my students.
- My classroom layout and furniture allow students to interact and do group work.
- My classroom has a bulletin board or a corner that displays helpful learning materials such as posters, illustrations, low-cost and self-made teaching-learning aids, newspaper and magazine clippings and my students' own work.
- My classroom is maintained and kept clean.
- I have together with my students developed classroom rules on how to respect and help each other and on how to behave.
- I have identified different learning needs and difficulties of my students and I provide additional support while also asking students to help each other.
- I use positive classroom and behaviour management methods.

Goal 4: ENROLMENT AND COMPLETION

- I try to find out whether there are children not coming to school and the reasons why. I encourage children who are not in school to come to school.
- I discuss with students and parents/community members the problem of non-enrolment and how to get all children of school age into school.
- I regularly check on attendance of my students and address problems concerning non-attendance.

Goal 5: ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- I know and implement my school's vision and mission.
- I am familiar with child-centred and child friendly teaching-learning approaches.
- I ask my students what they already know about a topic before I start teaching.
- I have sufficient books and teaching aids for my students' optimal learning.
- I plan and prepare lessons well, while keeping in mind that children have different learning needs and learning styles.
- I have interesting pictures, posters and student work on the wall of my classroom.
- I encourage and implement cooperative learning and discovery/learning ('learning by doing') with my students.
- I make topics more interesting and relevant to children's lives by inviting community members or parents to the classroom or by going out of the classroom or by using locally available resources as teaching-learning aids.
- I discuss text and pictures with my students and make them aware of positive, non-stereotyping messages versus bias and prejudice based on gender or other kinds of differences. As a teacher I promote and model tolerance and respect for diversity.
- I use formative assessment to make sure children are learning and I adjust my teaching methods and contents when needed.
- I observe and listen to my students and document their learning process and progress.

- I often ask open-ended questions to find out how my students think and reason.
- I encourage girls and boys to make subject choices that challenge gender and other stereotyping.
- I do not punish my students for giving the wrong answer or solution, but treat mistakes as new opportunities for learning.

Goal 6: MOTIVATION OF TEACHERS

- I try to find ways to further develop professionally through reading about education, more training or in-service workshops.
- I am professionally supported by the head of school, and he or she encourages me to work together with other teachers and to support each other.
- The head of school treats male and female teachers with the same respect.
- I ask the head of school to monitor my performance and identify my areas of strengths (to be shared with other teachers) and weakness (for further professional development).

Goal 7: COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- I invite parents or community members to my classroom to show what is happening in the classroom or for project presentations by the students.
- I meet and discuss with parents and community members matters of concern such as safety when going to and from school; violence and abuse risks; allowing children with 'special needs' into the school and supporting them; irregular attendance; etc.
- I organize literacy classes for illiterate parents.
- I encourage parents and communities to be equally supportive of boys and girls and ask them to contribute to the learning of their children in different ways, while my students can also contribute to community needs with special projects.

ANNEX 4

Policy Changes to Improve Instructional Outcomes¹⁷

CURRENT POLICIES	PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES	RATIONALE
Early Reading Fluency		
Little or no attention to how much students learn early on; reading is considered a low-level issue.	Focus on reading fluency; shift resources to grades 1–2.	Early fluent reading is critical for future performance; inability to read increases repetition costs and dropout.
Grade 1–2 students have the same or less time and resources in schools and may have the poorer teachers.	Extra resources for lower grades to catch up, read, and calculate fluently; better teachers; frequent support and supervision.	Prevent dropout with illiteracy; enable multi-grade students to read fluently.
Donor reliance on sample-based learning assessment to monitor progress, focus on later grades.	Use rapid school surveys to monitor the skills of grade 1–2 for high-risk areas.	Learning assessments take place years after inefficient instruction; governments rarely use the data.
If many students fail, automatic promotion may be recommended.	It is better to remedy rather than promote automatically.	Students are unlikely to learn simple material in a higher-level class.
If classes have more than 60 students, multi-shifts are often established.	Very large classes may be preferable to limited instruction.	Opportunity to learn is all-important. Large classes might be managed through different grouping techniques.
Textbooks for classroom use; some textbook loan schemes.	Textbooks for all students to take home.	More practice, ability to recall complex material.
Textbooks for primary students only. No textbooks for secondary schools or teacher training institutes.	Textbooks for all levels to take home. Find means to get savings, loan schemes, and parental participation to get textbooks for the post primary levels.	Without textbooks, practice is limited in the lower grades, and content is forgotten or never learned in higher grades. Teachers' time usually costs more than books.

Mother-tongue Instruction		
Deference to national policies and national or English language of instruction for all grades in many countries.	Convincing countries and financing mother-tongue instruction at least for the lower grades; phase out in higher grades.	Students may need 5–7 years to catch up with native speakers, particularly if foreign language has complex spelling.
Experimental programmes in some countries carried out for decades.	Formalize and extend the experimental programmes. Sensitize communities.	Phonetically spelled native languages help achieve literacy quickly.
Educator Training		
Almost any training scheme for educational staff is acceptable to the donor community.	Reform of teacher training based on learning principles highly pertinent to their work.	Teachers may practice in classroom little of what they are exposed to in training.
Lecturing about teaching.	Correcting dysfunctional modelling behaviours, instilling effective behaviours (partly through videos).	Much teaching behaviour is learned through modelling rather than higher order instruction.
Supervision and Management		
Principals have limited supervisory authority over teachers and accountability for school performance.	School-based management. Knowledgeable principals encouraging teachers and providing frequent classroom feedback.	Increasing the intrinsic motivational rewards that result from signalling a job well done and giving corrective feedback.
Rare supervisions from district offices.	Strengthen the supervisory and supportive chain and frequent teacher/classroom visitation.	Teachers need someone to praise them, must work towards that goal.
Limited interest in inspectors' and supervisors' reports	Retrain supervisory staff to submit reports on a limited number of instructionally significant variables.	If higher authorities are actually interested in the reports and can do something about improving conditions, this may constitute an incentive for staff to supervise.

Community Involvement

Usually few systematic attempts to change parental perceptions on school-related issues.

A communications strategy involving mass media to convince parents about the value of bilingual education, teacher monitoring, school involvement, etc.

Erroneous parental perceptions on instructional interventions may drive governments to reject valuable solutions for educating the poor.

Community associations often ineffective in school supervision.

Search for ways to improve participation. Impart performance standards they must check for.

Communities are present and interested, even if they do not know how schools must be run.

School Health and Nutrition

Education projects rarely include school health or nutrition.

Health and nutrition critical for information processing.

Education and health ministries must learn to collaborate more closely.

Usually no school feeding

Offer of food that does not require preparation, such as special high-nutrition cookies or milk.

Food may keep children in school and is modestly related to performance; empower communities to deal with corruption.

Early childhood education and development programmes limited in scope.

Improve effectiveness, engage communities (e.g. through community-driven development).

More-developed brains are better able to learn basic skills.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Els Heijnen-Maathuis holds a degree in Mother and Child Health (The Netherlands) and a post-graduate degree in education from the University of Queensland (Australia) specializing in inclusive education. As an education specialist she has lived and worked in various South Asian countries for the past 20 years. Els has written extensively about inclusive and rights-based education, focusing on children vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. She has worked in formal and non-formal education, with both national and international organizations, and was for the last three years chief technical advisor for the government's teacher education programme in Bhutan. Els is co-founder of the Enabling Education Network (EENET) in Asia and joint editor of its regional newsletter. Her special areas of interest are non-discrimination and social inclusion, teacher education, child participation and action research in education. She now lives in Nepal.

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