



### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:*

- (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*
- (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education*
- (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means. Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;*
- (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates. (Article 28)*

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education. (Article 10)*

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

*Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training. (Section L4)*

## **The Right to Education and the Girl Child**

Education is the right of every girl everywhere and key to transforming her life and the life of her community. Without education, girls are denied the opportunity to develop their full potential and to play a productive and equal role in their families, their societies, their country and their world.

Increased education is one of the most important tools available to empower women within the family and within society. Furthermore, educating girls has cascading benefits. Educated women are less likely to die in childbirth; more likely to have smaller, healthier and better educated families; and better able to protect their families and themselves from HIV/AIDS, trafficking and other forms of violence.

Unfortunately, girls continue to be locked out of school and locked into inequality. The obstacles, both cultural and societal, girls face are huge. Barriers to quality education include poverty, poor quality education, child labour, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS, remote geographic location, inadequate infrastructure, discrimination, mother's lack of education, civil conflict, natural disasters, and violence.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has clearly identified girls' education as an urgent development priority for the entire UN system:

*If we are to succeed in our efforts to build a healthier, more peaceful and equitable world, classrooms must be full of girls as well as boys. By educating girls, we will help raise economic productivity and reduce both maternal and infant mortality. By educating girls, we will improve nutrition, promote health, and fight HIV/AIDS. By educating girls, we will trigger a transformation of society as a whole—social, economic and political. (Video message to the Conference on Gender Parity in Education, Washington, D.C., 2 March 2005.)*

### **Facts to Consider**

- On 1 January 2006, the world missed the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) deadlines—gender parity in primary and secondary education; 86 countries are at risk of not achieving gender parity even by 2015.
- None of the MDGs will likely be met unless significant progress is made in girls' education.
- Approximately 100 million children are still not enrolled in primary school, 55% of them are girls.
- 65 million girls in the global south do not go to school at all.
- Women and girls are less literate than men; worldwide, only 88 adult women are considered literate for every 100 men.
- The most effective way to ensure quality education for all children is to eliminate the barriers for girls.

## **A World Fit for Children**

*Promote innovative programmes that encourage schools and communities to search more actively for children who have dropped out or are excluded from school and from learning, especially girls and working children, children with special needs and children with disabilities, and help them enroll, attend, and successfully complete their education, involving governments as well as families, communities and non-governmental organizations as partners in the educational process. (Declaration 3, 40, 2)*

### **MDGS**

**Goal 2:** *Achieve universal primary education.*

**Goal 3:** *Promote gender equality and empower women. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005.*

### **WGG Education Group**

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### **More Information**

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- While education for both boys and girls leads to increased income for individuals and for nations, the education of girls leads to greater gains; for every year of school, wages for women increase by 10-20 percent.
- Education of girls may be the single most effective weapon to prevent HIV/AIDS.
- Total aid to basic education accounts for only 2.6% of all official development assistance.

### **Actions to Ensure Girls' Right to Education**

- Undertake the systemic reform of education systems including creating gender sensitive curricula, infrastructure, and pedagogy and ensuring safety for girls.
- Mobilize the political will necessary to ensure quality education for all girls:
  - Create a national and international ethos that clearly identifies the importance and value of educating girls as well as boys;
  - Make the education of girls a priority recognizing the key role it plays in the accomplishment of all the promises of the Millennium Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action.
- Develop comprehensive national education strategies and include education in all development plans and poverty reduction strategies.
- Mobilize national and international resources for education.
  - Encourage developing nations to increase national funding for basic education to at least 3% of Gross Domestic Product.
  - Insist that donor nations demonstrate their political and financial commitment to "Education for All," as well as, the "United Nation's Girls Education Initiative" and the World Bank's "Fast Track Initiative" by canceling the onerous debt of impoverished countries and increasing donor aid for basic education to at least US\$7 billion per year.
  - Support non-governmental organizations' efforts to educate civil society about the importance of girls' education and to fight those cultural taboos and traditional practices that keep girls from exercising their right to education.

### **Sources and Resources**

- UNICEF, *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Gender Parity and Primary Education 2* (April 2005).
- Secretary-General's video message for Conference on Gender Parity in Education-Washington, D.C., 2 March 2005.
- *State of the World's Children 2004: Girls, Education and Development*, (NY: UNICEF, 2003).
- *Girls Can't Wait: Why Girls' Education Matters, and How to Make it Happen* (Brussels, Belgium: Global Campaign for Education, 2005)
- UNICEF, *The GAP Report: Gender Achievement and Prospects in Education*, <www.ungei.org/gap>.

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