Keeping the Promise:

5 Benefits of Girls' Secondary Education

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Keeping the Promise: 5 Benefits of Secondary Education for Girls

I- Few Statistics that Capture the State of Education

Countries around the world have achieved huge gains in primary education, reaching a world average of 83.8 percent in net primary enrollment. However, large numbers of students still do not complete primary education, and even fewer continue on to secondary school. Since so few children complete primary school, those who do must be able to continue their schooling. It is the only way for students and society to reap the full benefits of their initial investment in a literate, educated population. Currently, 83.8 percent of children worldwide attend primary school, but the rate drops to 59.3 percent for secondary school. In sub-Saharan Africa, **only 17 percent of the girls are enrolled in secondary school**. Girls and boys have the right to an education that guarantees their full participation in society and the economy. It is clear that in addition to the large investments being made in primary education, the world must make secondary education an equal priority, particularly for girls who are most often denied that right. A renewed push to ensure that girls have access worldwide to primary and secondary education is essential now if the multitude of investments – girls, their communities, and their countries - made to date are to pay off. The purpose of this paper is to illuminate — through research and analysis of the benefits of improved girls' secondary education — the need for greater investment in girls' secondary education and more strategic action to make it happen.

II- Barriers and Challenges: Why Fewer Girls?

Girls often have higher dropout rates than boys for many reasons: household responsibilities; child labor; higher opportunity cost to the family; long distances to schools from girls' homes; early marriage and/or pregnancy; the threat of sexual harassment and violence in school and en route to school; lack of girl-friendly facilities (no latrines, no running water), a particularly serious problem during menstruation; gender discriminatory teaching and learning methods; and parents and

communities who are not aware of the value of education for girls. Following are the five main barriers to girls' secondary education:

A. Girls suffer more from the effects of poverty since it costs more to educate a girl than a boy – it is the cost of tuition plus the "opportunity cost" or the cost to the family of the loss of her labor within the household, in the field, and at the market place. The "opportunity cost" for boys is not as high.

The "economics of enrollment" are the primary determinant of whether a child, and particularly a girl, will be educated. In most developing countries, girls are expected to work more than boys, and as girls are the ones who look after younger siblings, care for the household, work in agricultural fields, and sell goods at the market, the costs for educating them are actually more than the costs for educating boys. Parents recognize that the cost of educating a girl is not just the cost of tuition; it is also the cost of the loss of her labor. Poverty, then, is clearly interrelated with child labor; therefore, one of the most common reasons for children, especially girls, not to attend school is that their families need them to work. With the growing inflation in many developing countries, poor families are forced to involve all members in income-generating activities, including children, to cope and manage their daily lives. "In Pakistan, in cases of extreme poverty, children may contribute up to 40 percent of family income for their survival. When there is matter of contribution towards family income, the rights of children are equally violated. There are certain activities for girls and boys separately, through which they contribute to family's economy. Girls in most parts of rural Pakistan are mainly involved in agricultural-related activities, taking meals to working elders in the field and looking after their younger siblings in case their mothers are also busy in agriculture work.[1] Families, therefore, are more likely to view the education of a girl not as an investment, but as a loss or, at best, an investment in someone else's family.

[1] Pirzado, Parvez, and Saeed Nasim. "Developing Leaders of Education in Thar Desert Area, Pakistan." Paper presented at 8th Global Leadership Forum, Istanbul, Turkey. The Agha Khan University, Institute for Educational Development, June 2006

In Africa and other developing nations, women marry into and then care for their new family, while men are expected to care for and support their own parents and immediate family.

B. The number of schools drops drastically at the secondary level, increasing travel time for both boys and girls. Economic and safety concerns make parents reluctant to send girls to boarding schools or let them walk long distances to day schools. Inadequate school infrastructure, such as lack of latrines, also contribute to girls dropping out.

Location and accessibility of schools also play a significant role in a child's ability to attend school. For many children, particularly throughout Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, the picture is bleak and worsens as students advance from the primary to the secondary level. Economic and safety concerns make parents reluctant to send girls to boarding schools or let them walk long distances to day schools. Parents may be forced to pay for transportation for a girl for safety reasons in cases where they would feel comfortable allowing their son to walk to school. In certain countries it is not as acceptable for a girl to ride a bicycle to school as it is for a boy. The distance between home and the secondary school becomes even more of a problem for girls, especially in rural areas, where middle and upper secondary schools are more likely to be distant from small villages. Because schooling is less common for girls, they are more likely to be walking to school alone or in smaller groups than boys who may have a wider peer network. While walking long distances, often through remote fields and forests away from the main thoroughfares, girls are more susceptible to sexual harassment and other forms of violence than boys, making parents cautious. In many cases, it is often deemed appropriate for girls to be accompanied by a parent or relative if the school is far from the village. In a family where this resource is not available because all adults are needed to work, this may pose an additional challenge, and this challenge is likely to increase with AIDS taking its toll on adults in Africa and Asia. Distance to lower and upper secondary school is one of the major deterrents for girls' attendance, survival, and completion of the secondary cycle in the rural areas of countries such as Egypt, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, and Yemen.

C. Many families that cannot afford to educate all their children only allow the best-performing children to continue. If girls are tired from chores or walking, they struggle to perform well.

In countries where schooling is not mandatory and where beginning with the first grade carries significant financial costs, the inclination to continue to send a child to school is at least partially fueled by the child's ongoing performance. In families that cannot afford to educate all their children, the one or two children most likely to succeed at school or the best-performing children are the only ones allowed to continue. When girls must walk to distant schools after doing house chores, while boys can ride, their performance often suffers due to frequent absences or lateness, hunger, fatigue, or bad weather.

D. Girls face inequities in the classroom and often lack female teachers as role models.

Boys and girls may suffer from low learning if the quality and relevance of education and teaching is poor, but girls tend to suffer more because of an ingrained gender bias. Whether or not girls are exposed to female teachers who can serve as role models is one of the greatest indicators. Female teachers are less likely to have gender biases against girls and are far less likely to sexually harass or otherwise demean their female students. Parents also may not be comfortable having their child taught by a man in certain traditional rural regions. The lack of female teachers in a school is a missed opportunity to provide meaningful professional female role models to young women and men on a daily basis. Countries that need substantially more female teachers at the secondary level include Bangladesh, Egypt, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Pakistan, and Yemen.

E. Corruption in the classroom may include, in addition to extracting unnecessary fees and expenses from parents, pulling girls from class to assist with cooking for school functions, getting breakfast or lunch for teachers, running errands, cleaning the school yard, etc.

One form of corruption in certain schools is an inappropriate and inequitable form of child labor among students in order to perform work at school that the school cannot otherwise afford. A report on school corruption explains:

> In extremely under-funded environments, school children may be exploited as unpaid labor to compensate for teachers´ or administrators' meager income, or as a direct contribution to the school's budget.[2]

Often, the most exploited in these situations are girls because social and cultural norms allocate the distribution of domestic chores—cooking, cleaning, gardening, etc.—to girls. Further, because girls' presence in the classroom is not honored as a "right" or the norm in many school environments, it is often girls who will be pulled from class to assist with cooking for school functions, getting breakfast or lunch for teachers, running errands, and cleaning the school yard. Such practices in the schools not only shortens the time of girls in the classroom but also affects their morale, as the message sent is that they are more valued as servants than as students. It also makes them vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse when students attend to teachers at home.

III. The five main benefits of girls' secondary education

Given the key importance of the benefits of girls' secondary education and despite the barriers listed above, it is clear that the world must make secondary education a priority, particularly for girls who are most often denied that right. A renewed push to ensure that girls have access worldwide to secondary — as well as primary — education is necessary now if the investments made in primary to date are to pay off — for girls, their communities, their countries, and the world.

A. A commitment to educating girls at the secondary level will pressure communities and countries to build more secondary schools for girls. Existence of secondary schools increases

[2] Meier, Bettina, and Michael Griffin. "Stealing the Future: Corruption in the Classroom: Ten Real World Experiences." Transparency International, 2005. Last accessed 19 May 2006. http://www.pambazuka.org/index.php?id=31091.

primary enrollment and quality. Ensuring that all students are within a reasonable distance of a middle school and that it is affordable will increase parental commitment to schooling. Their involvement leads to higher quality education.

Parents often do not require students to demonstrate knowledge of basic skills and aptitudes at home, particularly if they are from poor families and perhaps illiterate or do not use those skills in their daily lives. If, however, parents know that their children could pursue education to a point where it would have greater economic and social rewards, not only for the individual student but also for their families—and perhaps even their parents — they are more likely to take an active role in ensuring that their child's performance is good. Further, because much or all of the educational system in many developing countries is exam based, with basic skills and academic ability required to pass from one phase of schooling to the next, parents are more likely to track their children's progress and demand that they keep up in class, and invest in tutors if they can afford to when success on an exam is likely to mean entrance into secondary school. In a situation in which lower and secondary schools exist not far away from the village or town, parents are more likely to become active in their children's school progress at the primary level. They tend to review their children's report cards and exams, insist upon study time, and make supplies and materials available in the hopes that achievement at and completion of the primary level will lead to their children moving on to middle school.

B. Girls' secondary education results in social benefits to the whole society – Secondary education equips students with critical thinking enabling civic participation and democratic change. As students pursue their education, they are less likely to engage in or become a victim of crime and youth violence. In addition, secondary education reduces the risk of human trafficking by increasing economic opportunities and making children less vulnerable.

As indicated by these findings, secondary education for girls improves women's support for and participation in civil society. Quality secondary education allows the additional dimension of empowerment whereby an individual, woman or man, can make the leap from being just a member of an extended family, clan, or village to an independent individual with a voice and the confidence to

participate in governance. As students pursue their education to higher levels they are less likely to engage in or become a victim to crime and youth violence. Students who can see better opportunities for regular employment ahead and children who are in school instead of on the streets are more likely to be positive agents than negative ones.

Child trafficking, especially trafficking of girls for labor and sexual exploitation, is an egregious violation of human rights that affects the majority of countries in the world. Whereas there are numerous root causes of why children are trafficked — poverty and the desire to earn a living, the need to support one's family, enormous financial gains to the traffickers, political conflict and natural disasters that devastate local economies and displace people from their homes, cultural attitudes toward children and girls in particular, and inadequate national laws and regulations — it is important to note that the lack of education, specifically secondary education, fosters a conducive environment for child trafficking.

C. Girls are a valuable health resource – Perhaps the most important benefits are in the health field where girls and women are uniquely positioned to address some of the most significant health challenges facing developing countries. Girls' secondary education reduces infant mortality, increases childhood immunization and nutrition, reduces children's stunting, and lowers fertility rates and unwanted pregnancies.

Some of the most important benefits of educated mothers are in health. Reduced infant mortality is a striking example, showing how deeply a mother's literacy affects the care she is able to provide to her children. When mothers are educated, rates of infant chronic illness and mortality decrease in families. One Yale economist estimates that an extra year of girls' education cuts infant mortality by 5-10 percent.[3] When parents understand that their daughters' education yields such important family benefits, they are more likely to send them to school.

[3] Schultz, T. Paul. "Investments in the Schooling and Health of Women and Men: Quantities and Returns." Journal of Human Resources, Vol. 28, No. 4, Special Issue: Symposium on Investments in Women's Human Capital and Development, Autumn, 1993.

Early marriage remains a significant constraint to girls' and women's education and health and a violation of international conventions on children's and women's rights. Research has shown that rates of early marriage decline as girls gain an education. One study found that girls' secondary education was one of the critical factors in increasing the marriage age of young girls in Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan.[4]

Numerous studies also show that girls' education reduces the risk of domestic violence and dramatically affects fertility rates. A World Bank 100-country study found that for every four years of education that girls attain, fertility rates drop by roughly one birth.[5] According to the 2000 Demographic and Health Survey, 34 percent of Egyptian mothers with no education received postnatal care, compared with 75 percent of those with a high school or college degree.[6] Multi-country data has also shown that educated mothers are about 50 percent more likely to immunize their children than uneducated mothers.[7]

D. Girls' secondary education can mitigate HIV and AIDS – Half of the more than 40 million people living with HIV and AIDS are women and girls. Secondary school is a valuable window of opportunity since it catches girls when they are most vulnerable, when they can and must learn healthy behaviors. AIDS spreads twice as fast among uneducated girls compared to uneducated girls in Zambia, for example.

One of the major human resource-related impacts of AIDS is its effect on teachers, whose HIV incidence is reflected in projections of increases in teacher absenteeism and mortality rates in the countries worst-affected by AIDS. For example, more than 30 percent of teachers in parts of Malawi and Uganda are HIV positive. In Zambia, the estimated number of school teachers in active service who died

[4] Greene, Malhotra, and Sanyukta Mathur. "Too Young To Wed," International Center for Research on Women, Washington, DC, 2003.
[5] Klasen, Stephan. "Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development—Evidence from Cross-Country Regressions." PRR Gender and Development Working Paper Series No. 7. World Bank, Washington, DC, 1999. Last accessed 14 June 2006. http://www.worldbank.org/gender/prr/wp7.pdf.
[6] El-Zanaty, F. and Ann Way. "Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2000." Ministry of Health and Population, National Population Council, and ORC Macro, January 2001.
[7] Gage, Sommerfelt, and Andrea L. Piani. "Household Structure and Childhood Immunization in Niger and Nigeria," Demography, Vol. 34, No. 2, May 1997.

from AIDS in 1999 was 840, equivalent to 46 percent of all teachers trained that year.[8] Both teacher mortality and increased teacher absenteeism due to illness negatively affect the quality of education.[9] The gravity of high HIV infection rates among teachers is further underlined by the phenomenon of sexual harassment against girls in school, increasing the direct risk to school-aged girls of contracting HIV. In addition to losing a parent, children are affected when a parent becomes ill, their family takes in orphans, they are discriminated against because they have an HIV-positive family member, or they are HIV-positive themselves.[10] As family members become sick or die, girls often will drop out of school to care for them or for other family members, including younger siblings who may be able to remain in school. When the quality of education is poor or when it drops, parents stop seeing the benefits of continuing to send their daughters to school, and the economic and social constraints, such as the opportunity costs, become more important than an education with poor quality.[11]

In Africa and Asia the primary modes of HIV transmission are through sexual contact and injecting drug use.[12] Largely as a result of this epidemiology, young adults aged 15-24 now account for half of all new HIV cases, and women and girls account for 62 percent of new infections.[13] The risk of becoming infected during unprotected sex is two to four times greater for women than for men and is even higher when sex is forced.[14] Gender inequality makes women disproportionately vulnerable, yet this is preventable through education. The heightened vulnerabilities of girls to HIV, coupled with the

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[8] Grassly, Pegurri, Sikazwe, Malambo, Siamatowe, Bundy, and Kemal Desai. "The Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS on the Education Sector in Zambia." Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and the Partnership for Child Development, Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College, London, UK, 2003.
[9] World Bank. "Education and HIV/AIDS: A Window of Hope," April 2002
[10] UNICEF. "Children on the Brink 2004: A Joint Report of New Orphan Estimates and a Framework for Action," July 2004.
[11] Kjell Enge. "Coming to Grips with the Crisis: Findings from Recent Studies." AED, SAGE, Colloquium on HIV/AIDS and Girls' Education, U.S. Agency for International Development, Washington, DC, 2000.
[12] UNAIDS. "AIDS Epidemic Update," December 2005.
[13] UNICEF. "Unite for Children: Unite Against AIDS: Why Children and AIDS?" Last Accessed 12 June 2006. http://www.unicef.org/uniteforchildren/knowmore/knowmore_28763.htm.
[14] For young girls the risk can be higher as an immature genital tract can tear easily during sex, especially if it is forced or violent. UNAIDS, 2004.

intensified impact of AIDS on adolescent girls, make secondary education for girls a particularly important tool in combating this pandemic. While information on HIV and AIDS can and should be introduced at the primary level, girls who continue onto secondary school develop two critical assets for translating information into practice: self-confidence and self-esteem. Secondary school empowers girls with the analytical skills to begin to understand complicated social and medical crises like HIV and AIDS and their role in addressing them. Secondary school is an essential window of opportunity for HIV prevention education since it catches girls and boys during their point of highest vulnerability, when it is most important to address HIV prevention, healthy behaviors to prevent HIV, and ways to counteract the likely daily cues that promote unhealthy behavior. Furthermore, if girls and boys are in secondary schools, they are spending less time in the field, in the market, and in the streets, where the likelihood of encountering "sugar daddies" and other temptations for risky behavior are greater.

Girls and young women with a secondary education are more likely to be able to support themselves rather than depending on a sexual partner or husband. If families are convinced that secondary education is relevant and will increase their daughters' chances for income generation in the future, they may also be willing to postpone her marriage so that she can finish her education. Finally, the confidence and self-esteem that girls gain in secondary school are valuable tools in equipping girls to negotiate with their parents to delay marriage or to resist voluntary yet risky relationships with older men. Girls' secondary education might help them transform their understanding of the concept of survival by stretching that concept from surviving in the present to surviving in the present and in the future.

E. Girls' secondary education is a tool for poverty alleviation – Primary and secondary education produce high returns in terms of wage growth. Increasing the share of women with secondary education by 1 percentage point boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points on average, according to a 100-country study by the World Bank.

At the secondary level more specifically, research has demonstrated that "primary and secondary education produce high returns in terms of wage growth, whether for men or for women. The returns to primary education have long been established, but more recent research has shown substantial benefits to secondary education as well, particularly as economies advance and modernize."[15]

As many countries in Africa and Asia develop further, as they have begun to do with the advent of technology, the Internet, business growth, better infrastructure, etc., the benefits for women educated at the secondary level will continue to increase, just as the lost opportunity of not educating them will have a growing detrimental impact on their ability to be self-sufficient and thrive. According to the World Bank, "Sub-Saharan Africa's low level of education among women is particularly detrimental to achieving: (i) overall economic growth, given the positive impact of women's education on, e.g., agricultural productivity; (ii) a pro-poor distribution of this growth, since women are among the poorest and education is the poor's most important asset; and (iii) improved health and nutrition standards, HIV and AIDS prevention, and reduced fertility levels."[16]

Finally, "Access to and successful completion of secondary education shapes the skills mix of the labor force, influencing international competitiveness, foreign investment, and prospects for sustained growth."[17] Looking to women to help lift their nations out of poverty, it is clear that the greater the access to education and to higher levels of education for women, the greater their potential to help foster the economic growth of their countries. Further, the more women, and by extension their families, are cut off from access to these increasing levels of education, the more disenfranchised they will become as their male schoolmates forge these pathways without them.

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[15] Herz, Barbara and Gene Sperling. "What Works in Girls' Education." Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 2004.
[16] World Bank. "Education." Last accessed 12 May 2006. http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0,,contentMDK:20264715~menuPK:535759~pagePK:146736~piPK:226340~theSitePK:258644,00.html.
[17] Bregman, Jacob, and Karen Bryner. "Quality of Secondary Education in Africa (SEIA)." Association for the Development of Education in Africa. 2003. Last accessed 12 May 2006.

IV. Strategies for promoting girls' secondary education

Many conditions are necessary to increase girls' enrollment, retention in, and completion of secondary school. Among them, two are key: political will and community involvement. Political will at all levels includes the willingness to build and sustain a strong commitment to ensuring that a high percentage of girls complete the primary cycle and transition to middle school. This political will must be translated into relevant action to create opportunities for girls to complete their secondary level education, thus taking them one step closer to fulfilling their potential. In addition to political will, community involvement is necessary to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainability of interventions. Community members, including parents, teachers, religious leaders, and students themselves, must be involved in the identification of barriers and solutions, as well as in the planning and implementation of strategies that advance girls' secondary education.

A. Increasing access and retention–

a- Building secondary schools within a reasonable distance of every community

Building more secondary schools and providing access that does not require extensive travel or boarding would dramatically reduce concerns about cost and safety. While the intervention may be targeted at girls, boys would benefit as well. Avoiding high transportation costs or boarding fees makes attending secondary school less expensive and more cost effective for everyone, from those paying fees to the communities that lose revenue and consumers when much of their school-age population disappears to larger cities and towns to attend secondary school. Schools are also far more likely to enjoy more parental and community support and involvement when they are located closer to students' parents, thereby enhancing quality and accountability.

b- Latrines increase enrollment and retention for girls, as well as female teachers

Another infrastructure issue is the frequent lack of functional, clean, and separate toilets or latrines for girls and female teachers to use throughout the school day. Particularly during menstruation, this

becomes a significant deterrent to girls' attendance at school, as well as leading to a loss of female teachers. Lack of separate, secure latrines also raises safety concerns for girls when they are forced to share these facilities with male teachers or students. In Ethiopia, *The New York Times* reports:

> Fatimah is facing the onset of puberty, and with it the realities of menstruation in a school where there is no latrine, no water, no hope of privacy other than the shadow of a bush, and no girlfriends with whom to commiserate. Fatimah is the only girl of the 23 students in her class. In fact, she is one of only three girls in the school who have made it past third grade. Even the school's female teachers say they have no choice but to use the thorny scrub, in plain sight of the classrooms, as a toilet. 'It is really too difficult,' said Azeb Beyene, who arrived here in September to teach fifth grade. 'I decided right then I would leave.'[18]

The impact of safe, clean, accessible latrines in schools has been documented. UNICEF reports that from 1997 to 2002, enrollment rates for girls jumped 17 percent after improvements in school sanitation, and the dropout rate among girls fell by an even greater percentage.[19] In northeastern Nigeria, schools showed significant gains after funders built thousands of latrines, trained teachers, and established school health clubs.[20]

c- Creating a safe environment

For female students to feel safe in the school environment it is not only necessary for the community to acknowledge a harassment problem, it is also necessary to set up channels of reporting for students. Teachers also must be empowered to report such behavior and feel confident that appropriate action will be taken. Perpetrators must feel, from the community at large, that such behavior is socially unacceptable. One potential intervention is to train "safe teachers" to serve as resource persons to whom students can bring issues of harassment, verbal or physical abuse, or problems with the learning/school

[18] LaFraniere, Sharon. "For girls in Africa, education is an uphill fight." The New York Times. 23 December 2005. Last accessed 15 June 2006. http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/12/22/ news/ethiopia.php.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

environment. Training can be provided for teachers, parents, students, and school administrators in the establishment of school counsels that act on reports of harassment, abuse, and environmental hazards that negatively affect student learning without jeopardizing the school's standing or reputation of the reporting student. An important part of this training is the establishment of codes of conduct for schools and accompanying enforcement policies.

B. Improving equity/relevance/quality –

Once girls gain access to secondary school education, a major challenge for school completion is the quality and relevance of the education students are receiving. Girls often become discouraged or drop out of school not only for financial reasons, but out of frustration with a school environment where gender inequities prevail, classes are not participatory, teachers and teaching examples are biased towards males, and the curriculum is not relevant to their lives. For secondary educational quality and relevance to improve, governments, international donors, and communities must invest in gender responsive educational reform which incorporates curriculum reform; teacher training reform, a student-centered learning process and inquiry-based teaching, school management reform, gender equity in the classroom and school, and a gender-based violence-free school environment.

Another important strategy is to train teachers in participatory methods of learning. Such methods not only increases students' learning abilities but also increases their involvement in improving their own knowledge and likelihood of staying in school. As teachers learn to engage female students, students are more likely to feel that there is a purpose to continuing in school. Communities and schools can promote student centered methods of learning by organizing workshops for teachers and school directors on strategies of teaching (group/team work, students' presentation, group research, or individual research) that encourage classroom participation, as well as regular follow-up to ensure that teachers are effectively integrating new tools and ensuring the full participation of every student in the classroom.

In addition, secondary school offers a key opportunity for providing HIV prevention and AIDS mitigation education to girls and boys. Not only is repeated exposure to healthy behavior messages important, but this is a key age for students to receive reinforcement and guidance in translating that information into action. Through the Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program, AED's 37 local implementing partners have adopted a variety of approaches to HIV prevention education, ranging from peer education, theater, school-based AIDS clubs, open discussions during mentoring sessions, and inviting community members living with HIV to speak to scholarship recipients about their experiences. Family Health International recently published a working paper highlighting the common characteristics of effective HIV education programs, based on a study of 83 evaluations of such programs. Among other attributes, effective curricula, "created a safe environment for youth, focused on clear goals of preventing HIV/STI and/or pregnancy, focused on specific behaviors leading to these health goals, and gave a clear message about those behaviors."[21]

In terms of curriculum content, investment in gender-sensitive life skills materials, based on a 4th R in education, *responsible behavior*, must be a part of any educational reform efforts. Life skills learning materials should address local conditions and teach girls and boys responsible behavior, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-management, and interpersonal skills to allow them to acquire valuable knowledge and make positive decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities. Many schools are designing life skills programs that not only attract girls, but also keep them until they complete their studies. At Taibah Primary and Secondary School in Uganda, the school "has a personal development curriculum which teaches self-awareness and communication skills and covers matters of sex, AIDS, infatuation, and use of contraceptives," says Education Director Mariam Luyombo. "As a

[21] Kirby, Laris, and Lori Roller. "Youth Research Working Paper No. 2: Impact of Sex and HIV Education Programs on Sexual Behaviors of Youth in Developing and Developed Countries." FamilyHealth International, 2005.

result, we hardly have any girl who doesn't complete school."[22] AED's life skills lessons in Mali were welcomed by teachers, principals, and parents alike. Many parents expressed increased willingness to send their girls and boys to school and keep them in school as a result of the introduction of the life skills educational materials into the classrooms because of their relevance to the daily lives of the Malian communities. Life skills materials teach health, hygiene, HIV/AIDS, agricultural, environmental, and economic topics that are fully relevant to the priority needs of the communities, and promote practical skills and behavior change among students. These practical lessons skills also can used to assist parents and community members outside of school.

C. Enhancing motivation and payoff – To truly value their education, students, especially girls, need to see that it will lead to a job and an income. Additional training and strong female role models can help.

The lack of access to employment opportunities after graduation is a significant long-term barrier to the survival and completion of secondary school by girls. Many girls in their final year of secondary school, especially African and South Asian girls, believe that if they cannot find a job and earn an income, their education was useless. Employment opportunities in many countries are often severely limited, even for secondary school graduates. Men are given job preference either by employers or by self-selection based on perceptions about traditional male- or female-appropriate jobs. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reports that: "Youth unemployment rates are high—56 percent in South Africa, 34 percent in Jamaica—and almost everywhere at least double the adult average. In many developing countries, gender discrimination in education and job opportunities results in higher unemployment among young women."[23]

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[22] Kirungi, Fred. "Uganda Tackling School Bottlenecks." Africa Recovery Online: A United Nations Publication." Last accessed 15 June 2006. http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol14no2/uganda.htm.

[23] UNFPA. "State of the World Population 2003: Overview of adolescent life: education and unemployment." United Nations Population Fund. 2003. Last accessed 15 June 2006. http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2003/english/ch1/page5.htm.

This lack of education limits many young people's employment prospects, especially women's, to poorly paid and often unsafe work as domestic servants, agricultural laborers, or factory workers. In 2005, UNFPA reported that: "When they are employed, substantially more women than men work in the informal sector, which tends to offer lower wages, with less regulation, safety, and security. Women represent about two-thirds of self-employed entrepreneurs in the informal sector."[24] Since these jobs do not require extensive education, they do not motivate investments in education at the individual, familial, or community level. More skilled, advanced job opportunities—often thought of as "non-traditional" for women—must be provided to encourage and motivate girls' education at the advanced levels where it becomes more challenging and rigorous, financially and intellectually. The inability to directly translate secondary education into a consistent economic return represents perhaps the biggest barrier to secondary education for girls.

One approach to addressing this challenge is to provide additional guidance to girls outside of school hours on specific academic topics to ensure their success and to maintain their motivation to stay in school. In addition to tutoring, meetings could include training in job-related skills for upper secondary school girls and presentations by well-known community members, such as women leaders, on the importance of education. Participation in such clubs also could serve to encourage parents to see that the cost of sending their girls to school is worthwhile because the community is committed to providing opportunities to girls.

To address the lack of career role models for girls in many developing countries, AED designed women's role model calendars in Guinea (2002 and 2003),[25] Afghanistan (2005)97,[26] and Burundi,

[24] UNFPA. "State of the World Population 2005: Strategic investments: the equality dividend." United Nations Population Fund. 2005. Last accessed 15 June 2006. http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/english/ch2/chap2_page1.htm.
[25] Through the SAGE Guinea project, implemented by AED and funded by USAID.
[26] Through the Afghanistan Teacher Training Program, implemented by AED and funded by the American Red Cross/America's Fund for Afghan Children.

Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Uganda (2006).[27] In Afghanistan, 12 inspirational women were chosen for the calendar from the education, health, culture, and community development sectors. The 12 women in the calendar are intended to serve as role models for Afghan girl students who hope to remain in school, pursue a higher education, and become involved in the community. They also have the potential to serve as role models to encourage male students to respect and value women. Local implementing partners selected the 12 role models from different sectors in each of the five countries noted. The resulting calendars will be used as teaching materials by mentors and teachers, creating a forum to discuss the common challenges faced by young women in pursuing their education, and encouraging scholarship recipients to remain committed to completing their studies.

Currently, girls are the exception rather than the rule in secondary classrooms. Adopting the suggestions in this report to increase access and improve survival and completion rates, make classrooms more gender equitable, and increase expectations for girls' independence and success will result in an environment that empowers girls for the benefit of themselves, their families, and their societies. With girls more frequently shut out of secondary school, they are cut off from the positive pressure of a secondary schooling and are left to face alone the risks, from pressure to marry early to pressure to have sex with "sugar daddies" in order to meet their basic needs and the needs of their families.

For young women in Africa, in South Asia, and certain Middle Eastern countries, the push to make secondary education an accessible reality could provide that impetus for change that today seems so incomprehensible to the many girls who sit in primary classrooms feeling incapable of transitioning to secondary schools and disconnected from this empowering potential, or to those who can only wonder and dream about the learning that is going on inside a secondary classroom.

[27] Through the USAID-funded AED's Ambassadors' Girls' Scholarship Program.