



Soroptimist
International

Soroptimist  International

Educate to Lead

a global voice
for women

2010 Global Impact Report:



FOCUS ON

AWARENESS RAISING

SOROPTIMISTS SPEAK OUT

In 2010, Soroptimist International, for the first time in its 89 year history, opened a worldwide vote for members to participate in setting SI's international focus leading up to and beyond our centenary celebration in 2021. Members worldwide overwhelmingly voted education and leadership for women and girls as the issue on which they wish to concentrate for the foreseeable future. This was the culmination of a long, strategic process and we are extremely proud of the

work and the progress that has been achieved to get us to this point. From this decision this global impact report was born – the first of what will be an annual publication, intended for internal and external audiences alike, to show how Soroptimists are changing the lives of women and girls for the better. We also highlight the most pressing challenges and solutions in accessing education and leadership.



Young women students at a Soroptimist sponsored school in Colombo, Sri Lanka

why education?

"Investing in adolescent girls is precisely the catalyst poor countries need to break intergenerational poverty and to create a better distribution of income. Investing in them is not only fair; it is a smart economic move." (Robert B. Zoellick, World Bank President)

Education is a catalyst for change that sets off a lifelong course – a course can be positive or negative. Good quality education is an underlying determinant of a wide array of other social, economic, and even political outcomes. It is also a basic human right which has been underscored in legally binding international treaties since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Decades ago campaigns began to ensure that boys and girls were given equal opportunities to learn. While progress has been slow, the prospects for a young girl today are significantly improved from those several decades ago. But we face **new sets of challenges** every day, and despite moving forward we still live in a world where many women and girls lack basic literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills which are necessary to achieve their fullest potential.

Although women and girls, men and boys, all have a right to education in and of itself, education also contributes to many other development goals, such as:

- **Smaller families.** According to the World Bank, four additional years of education for a woman decreases her fertility by approximately 1 birth (Klassen,

1999) Furthermore, an educated girl is less likely to marry and to have children whilst she is still a child herself. (Plan UK)

- **Decreased child mortality.** Research consistently shows that children of women with secondary education are more likely to survive than children born to women who have not been afforded an education. In Sub-Saharan Africa, if all mothers had secondary education, it is estimated that 1.8 million child deaths would be avoided. (UNESCO, 2011, Herz and Sperling, 2004)
- **More educated children.** An educated woman is much more likely to ensure her children have an education (Herz and Sperling, 2004) and is more likely to reinvest her income back into her family, community and country. (Plan UK)
- **Better health.** *"Girls who are educated are less likely to be exploited, less likely to fall victim to trafficking, and less likely to be infected with HIV."* (Plan, 2008) Educated mothers are also less likely to pass the HIV infection onto their babies. (Herz and Sperling, 2004)

- Reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Achieving the other development goals is dependent on having a trained cadre of workers in areas such as education, health, and environment. Educating women to take on these roles will benefit societies as a whole and lead to further progress towards development

The positive impact of educating women and girls is felt even further afield than development goals. Studies now show an important relationship between educating women and girls and a **reduction in incidents of violence** across societies.

- Educated women are more likely to resist violence and leave abusive relationships. (Herz and Sperling, 2004)
- Educated women are more likely to oppose female genital cutting for themselves, their daughters, and their granddaughters. (Herz and Sperling, 2004)

What is empowerment?

"The core of empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her own destiny. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as are provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions). And to exercise agency, women must live without the fear of coercion and violence." (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)

This is where the SI E³ framework comes into play – we empower women by ensuring access to skills and confidence, while concurrently working within the larger community to ensure opportunities to utilise newly acquired skills and confidence.

If improved development outcomes and reduced incidents of violence are not convincing enough, educating women and girls is actually **profitable**. We now see a multitude of positive macro and micro economic gains as a direct result of increasing the numbers of educated women and girls, such as:

- **Higher wages.** Providing girls one extra year of education (above the average) increases their wages 10-20%. Overall returns on female secondary education could be as high as 25%. (Schultz, 2001)
- **Nationwide economic growth.** A World Bank study showed that increasing access to secondary education for women by just 1% can increase annual per capita income growth by 0.3% (Klassen, 1999)

- **Future economic growth.**

Tomorrow's labour force will be made of today's adolescents; future economic growth and productivity is dependent on training this generation of adolescent girls. (Levine, et al., 2009)

Not only does educating women and girls have an economic benefit, but new research shows that **failing to educate women and girls has a significant economic cost**. The World Bank and UNESCO now estimate that the economic cost to 65 low and middle income countries and transitional countries of failing to educate girls equally with boys could be as high as USD\$92 billion each year (Plan, 2008). Considering that the international target for closing the gender gap in education, globally, is USD\$16 billion

It doesn't stop there.

(UNESCO, 2011), educating women and girls could, literally, be a profitable industry – USD\$76 billion profit on education alone!

How education leads to leadership

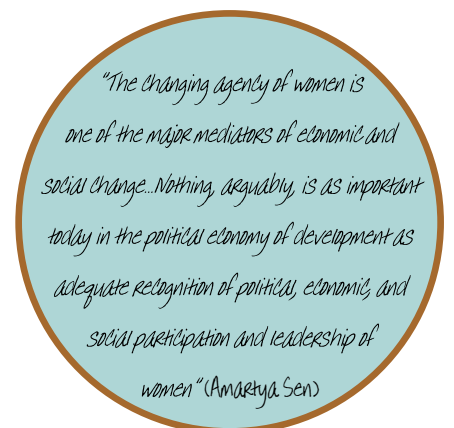
At Soroptimist International, there is an emerging theme – “**educate to lead**”. We believe that educating women and girls today will allow them to be the leaders of tomorrow. All women and girls, regardless of their educational attainment, are entitled to have their voices heard and to take on leadership roles in their families, communities, and beyond. But having a strong educational foundation on which to stand will

amplify their voice and increase their opportunities.

There is little empirical research linking education to leadership outcomes, but we do know some key facts.

Studies are beginning to provide evidence of the positive impact of women's education on **democracy**; educated women are more likely to participate in politics and decision-making. (Herz and Sperling, 2004)

- Improved **governance** and properly functioning societies depend on active and engaged citizens; citizens are more active and more engaged when they are educated. With 50%+ of the population female, educating girls and young women is critical to society as a whole (Levine, et al., 2009)
- Education empowers women and empowered women are more likely to attain **positions** of leadership and to be successful in those positions.



"Achieving virtually all of the development goals related to economic growth and poverty reduction requires improving the opportunities afforded to girls to participate in economic activity, preparing girls for all the roles they will play as adults, and enhancing girls' health and protecting them from harm" (Levine, et al., 2009)

According to the TASK FORCE FOR MDG3, political participation is crucial to achieving gender equality because "countries where women's share of seats in political bodies is less than 30 per cent are less inclusive, less egalitarian, and less democratic. Equality of opportunity in politics is a human right. Evidence also suggests that women's interests often differ from men's and that women who participate directly in decision making bodies press for different priorities than those emphasised by men. Finally, women's participation in political decision making bodies improves the quality of governance." (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)

Why women's leadership is important

Leaders make decisions every day that affect other individuals. Having a gender balance in leadership positions that reflects the society or group of individuals affected by those decisions is the most

responsible, accountable, and successful way to develop policies and changes. Having voices from different gendered perspectives feed into decision-making leads to improved outcomes for all.

This was recognised many years ago in the Beijing Platform for Action. To overcome traditionally male-dominated formal leadership, the BPfA recommended that governments set a target of 30% of seats for women in national parliaments. Increasing the number of women in politics is one of the indicators used to

track progress towards MDG3 (gender equality).

Again, research in this area is not abundant, but we can point to empirical evidence which shows positive outcomes from increasing female representation in decision-making bodies.

- Evidence shows that women in politics are more likely to advocate for laws which **benefit women, children, and families.** (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)

- There is an emerging correlation between women's participation in government and better governance. Three studies have found that increased female political participation is associated with **decreased levels of corruption.** (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)

- Research also shows that increasing women's participation in **local government** can have immediate and significant impact as women can exercise greater decision making power (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)

- Fortune 500 companies with better gender balances have **higher economic returns** and perform better overall. (Beijing at Ten and Beyond, 2005)

- Achieving gender balances in leadership is about all sectors – government, civil service, private sector, political parties, trade unions, the judiciary, employers' organisations, academic institutions, and, really, **any other collective which can influence lives.** (Beijing at Ten and Beyond, 2005)

Where we are today: education

Given the importance of education and leadership for women and girls and the linkages between the two, we now turn to a brief overview of just where we are, globally, in working to achieve gender balances in educational attainment and leadership positions.

Primary school

Primary school enrolment increased dramatically from 1999-2008 but has since stagnated (UNESCO, 2011). Enrolment rates have generally improved more for girls than for boys (overcoming historically large gaps) (The World's Women, 2010). Unfortunately, the **stagnation in increases in enrolment** combined with population growth indicates that there could be more children out of school in 2015 than there are now (UNESCO, 2011)

Gender parity in primary school enrolment has increased in the regions that started with the greatest gaps (UNESCO, 2011). Worldwide, the gender parity index for primary school was 0.97 in 2007, compared to 0.93 in 1993. (The World's Women, 2010) However, in 52 countries the gender parity index is currently 0.95 or less, and in 26 countries the index is less than 0.90. This means that for every 10 boys in school, there are only 9 girls. Across populations, this indicates a huge number of girls who are not enrolled in primary school.

Looking beyond enrolment rates, the real global crisis we now face is the critically high number of children, particularly girls, who **drop out** of school or experience **persistent absenteeism**.

- Worldwide, for every 100 boys out-of-school there are 122 girls. (World Bank)
- Though statistics differ, anywhere from 40 million to 60 million girls aged 6-11 worldwide are out of school (Herz and Sperling, 2004, World Bank, The World's Women, 2010)

Girls drop out of school for many of the same reasons that block enrolment. **Poverty** is one of the primary reasons – many families cannot afford school fees, uniforms, and the other costs associated with being in school. Furthermore, many rely on their daughters to contribute to household work or to work for money outside the home. **Physical environments** contribute as well – schools without proper facilities see higher drop-out rates. To ensure that girls enrol in, and stay in, school – the conditions that prevent them from attending school must be addressed. (World Bank Gender and Development Group, 2003)

- Girls often contribute significantly to household and agricultural **work** – which is lost when they attend school. With limited resources, families often have to make difficult decisions, which often result in pulling daughters out of school. (Levine, et al., 2009)

- Poverty and/or living in rural areas compels many young girls to work in the informal sector, as their life choices are so limited. (Levine, et al., 2009) **School is not an option.**
- Concerns about **safety** often keep girls away from schools.
- Research shows that girls' attendance at school is more sensitive than boys to school quality and specific factors such as **female teaching staff**, sex-segregated schools and facilities (e.g. toilets), and safe transport to and from school.
- One girl in every seven marries before she is 15. **Married** "women" do not attend school (Levine, et al., 2009, Population Council)
- Unwanted or early **pregnancies** also lead to drop-outs all over the world (Levine, et al., 2009)

Secondary school and beyond

The picture at secondary school is even less promising, where far fewer girls are enrolled, or girls of secondary school age are enrolled in primary school. (The World's Women, 2010). Worldwide, the gender parity index for secondary school was 0.96 in 2007, compared to 0.92 in 1999 (The World's Women, 2010). We also know that looking at the global picture masks regional disparities. The situation is much worse if we look only at African, Asian, and Arab countries.

- Generally, in many areas of the world, girls' enrolment in secondary education lags far behind that of boys.
- Only **one out of every three countries** has as many girls as boys at secondary school (Plan, 2008)
- Girls participate even less in vocational education (The World's Women, 2010).

Quality of education is now being exposed as extremely poor in some areas of the world; while we are increasing the number of children, particularly girls, enrolled in school, we are not necessarily increasing their skills to expected levels. (UNESCO, 2011) Deficiencies in infrastructures and staffing are two of the primary challenges to providing good quality education, shown to affect girls more than boys.

There is a statistical correlation between the presence of female teachers in primary school with the enrolment rate of girls continuing onto secondary school. (UNESCO, 2010) Although globally women share a higher proportion of primary school teaching positions than men, regional disparities are striking. In areas where girls' educational attainment is less, there tend to be far fewer female teachers (The World's Women, 2010). Women's share of teaching position drops significantly at higher levels. (The World's Women, 2010)

Until 2007, the International Monetary Fund placed conditionalities on lending which mandated ceilings on public sector wages, including teachers. This meant that many low and middle income countries, dependent on aid, were unable to hire enough trained teachers and instead hired under-qualified (i.e. cheaper) teachers. Although the IMF argues that this enforced ceiling did not affect teacher recruitment or hiring, reports by civil society watchdogs showed otherwise. In September 2007, the IMF conceded and committed to moving away from this conditionality, and indeed has changed overall strategic direction for the future. But damage has been done and many countries are still suffering the fallout. (Global Campaign for Education, 2009) These neo-liberal policies continue to have a striking negative impact on countries' ability to educate women and girls.

Literacy – what do we mean?

UNESCO defines a literate person as one who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his (her) everyday life, and an illiterate person as one who cannot with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his (her) everyday life.

One alternative and broader definition of literacy, functional literacy – used in some countries that have already attained universal literacy – emphasizes the use of literacy. A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of his (her) group and community and also for enabling him (her) to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his (her) own and the community's development. Generally, literacy also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.



Soroptimists distribute books in India

Literacy

Adult literacy is often referred to as the overlooked goal in education, particularly for women. **Nearly two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate adults are women.** (UNESCO, 2011)

- Adult literacy rates are generally much lower in rural areas (The World's Women, 2010)

- Without programmes targeting adult illiterate women, it is likely that they will remain illiterate throughout their lifetimes (The World's Women, 2010)
- We are overlooking marginalised and vulnerable adults lacking in basic literacy skills
- The majority of illiterate adults live in just ten countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, China, India

Investment

It is true that providing good quality education calls for economic investment; but, as seen earlier, the returns on this investment can be very high. Globally, government spending on education is not enough to achieve internationally set goals and targets, and pales in comparison to spending in other sectors.

- The world needs **USD\$16 billion** in external aid to close the gender gap in education in low income countries (DFID)
- Total global military expenditure in 2009 is estimated to have been \$1531 billion (yes, that's over a thousand billion). This represents an increase of 6 per cent since 2008, and 49 per cent since 2000. (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)
- Global military spending is thus approximately USD\$4.5 billion a day – **just 3.5 days of military spending annually could close the education gender gap in low income countries.** With 5 days, we could increase development aid enough to meet all of our education goals.

- The IMF estimates that the cost of the recent global financial crisis was USD\$2.3 trillion. Just imagine what those dollars could have done for education and other development goals.



Rwandan village supported by Soroptimists

Where we are today: leadership

"Forget China, India, and the internet: economic growth is driven by women" (The Economist)

Before we even begin to discuss women in positions of leadership, we must note that there are still countries which **restrict women's right to vote**.

- In Lebanon, women are only allowed to vote if they have elementary education – this condition is not applied to men (CNN factbook)
- In the United Arab Emirates, elections were held for the first time in 2011. Only a select number were allowed to vote, however, chosen by each emirate's ruler. This meant that only 18% of those chosen to vote were women. (Aljazeera News)
- Women are not allowed to vote in the Vatican City and the Holy See; both independent states. The Holy See holds permanent observer status at the UN.

Measuring women's achievements in leadership is difficult at best, considering the vast array of ways in which women can lead – both formal and non-formal. However, as a proxy for society at large, there are some sectors that we can examine to learn about women's ability to reach decision-making positions.

There has been a slow and steady increase in women's representation in **national parliaments** worldwide in the past decade. (The World's Women, 2010) Interestingly, many post-conflict countries rank relatively high with regard to women's participation in parliaments. (The World's Women, 2010) The chance to "start from scratch" has given many women opportunities to participate in decision-making and government in ways that were not available before.

"In particular, the barriers to the political participation of women at the local level may be related to lack of community support, lack of family co-responsibility within households to release women from unpaid household work, little recognition and legitimacy awarded to their contribution within public power spheres, and the lack of economic resources to pursue a candidature"
(The World's Women, 2010)

In many locations, the low proportion of women elected directly relates to **low numbers of candidates**; in other words, it's not that there are loads of women running for office and losing (though women are, statistically, slightly less likely to be elected than men), but that there is a dearth in the numbers of women running for office in the first instance. (The World's Women, 2010) Only four countries in the 2009 elections reported a gender balance in the number of parliamentary candidates (Belgium, Costa Rica, Iceland, and Rwanda). Media plays an important role – a key issue affecting women candidates in the 2010 elections was the **lack of media coverage** or public appearances by women candidates. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011)

- As of 31st March, 2011, 19.2% of the world's parliamentarians were women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011)
 - o 19.3% in single or lower houses
 - o 18.3% in upper houses or senates
- Countries with more family friendly laws and policies see a higher proportion of leadership roles held by women – as much as 7% increase in national legislatures. (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)
- The highest ranking countries for women in national parliaments are, in order: (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011)

- Rwanda
- Sweden
- South Africa
- Cuba
- Iceland
- Finland
- Norway
- Belgium
- Netherlands
- Mozambique
- Angola
- Costa Rica

- Many countries in the Arab world have 0% female representation in national parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011); however, this region was starting to show progress. Given the recent unrest in the region, outcomes are precarious at best.

- 43 chambers worldwide have met the 30% female representation target. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011)
- Very few women are elected as heads of state. In 2009, only seven out of 150 elected Heads of State in the world were women. (The World's Women, 2010)
- Worldwide, on average, only one in six cabinet members is a woman. (The World's Women, 2010) However, this represents a significant improvement (nearly 10%) since 1998. (The World's Women, 2010)

Local government is just as important as national, as the decisions made there are more likely to impact on daily life for women and girls. (The World's Women, 2010)

- Regional percentages of women represented in local government range from 8% (Northern Africa) to 30% (Sub-Saharan Africa).
- Latin America, North America, and Europe range from 24-29%.
- Women in positions of top leadership in local government are less – in 73 countries, women comprise no more than 1/5 of all mayoral positions.
- Interestingly, Mauritius ranks as one of the highest proportion of female mayors, coming in at 40%. See the Soroptimist Spotlight section in this report on the work being done to train women as leaders in Mauritius.

The **judiciary** is another area where women are still behind, with the exception of Eastern Europe. (The World's Women, 2010) Again, data collection is difficult, but the information that is available also indicates that women are under-represented in decision making positions in **civil service**. (The World's Women, 2010) Finally, the **private sector** shows similar statistics – the higher up the ladder, the fewer women we see.

The challenges we face

So now we know why education and leadership for women and girls is so important and where we are in today's world in striving to achieve a gender balance in these areas. Our next question is: what is holding us back from perfect gender parity in educational attainment? Why, given the strides that have been made over the past decades, do we still live in a world where girls' and boys' and women's and men's voices are not heard equally?

Below we present the **ten biggest challenges** to achieving gender balances in education and leadership, worldwide:

- 1. Unsuitable and/or unsafe physical environments.** Girls living in rural areas face even more difficulties as the journey to and from school is often seen as being too dangerous. (Levine, et al., 2009)
- 2. Costs.** Not just school fees but uniforms, books, stationery, loss of income or work at home, and other associated costs – it all adds up and sometimes forces families to make very difficult decisions.
- 3. Lack of infrastructure/not enough teachers,** particularly female teachers. In some cultures, girls can only be taught by women in girl-only schools, making it much more difficult to provide the needed number of facilities. (Levine, et al., 2009) Teachers are expected to do much more now than they were in the past – teach subjects outside their core competencies, improving student's learning outcomes with little or no training, managing classrooms with pupil to teacher ratios as high as 78:1, and dealing with lower pay

and less employment stability. (Global Campaign for Education, 2009)

- 4. A historical focus on enrolment** which overlooked quality of education, retention, and transition from one level of education to the next and, eventually, to work. These previously 'hidden' areas are now some of our biggest challenges. There is an emerging mismatch between skills taught and skills needed to secure stable employment.
- 5. Lack of attention paid to adult women/second chance educational opportunities,** particularly in basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- 6. Not enough focus on the specific needs of adolescent girls.** They are at a critical point in their lives, but seen as "too challenging" for many policy-makers. Due to past high fertility rates, this is now the largest segment of the population in many countries.
- 7. Lack of 'girl friendly' spaces** for non-formal education. For example, youth centres generally do not offer girl-only activities (Levine, et al., 2009), and many girls are thus unable to participate in this kind of critical non-formal learning and skill-building which is important for taking on leadership.
- 8. Demands on time.** For a family of six, collecting enough water for drinking, cooking and basic hygiene may mean hauling heavy water containers from a distant source for an average of three hours a day. Women and girls are mainly responsible for fetching the water that their families need for drinking, bathing, cooking and other household

uses. (WHO/UNICEF, 2005) That's three hours a day when they could be learning. In more rural agrarian societies, girls sometimes spend up to eight hours a day fetching water. (Levine, et al., 2009) Statistics show a similar situation for women and girls collecting traditional bio fuels. (Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005)

- 9. Financing and government commitment.** The global economic crisis has put basic services at great risk of cutbacks. A recent survey of 18 low income countries showed that seven had cutback education spending in 2009. International aid has stagnated alongside enrolment rates. (UNESCO, 2011) Political neglect particularly affects adult literacy programmes. (UNESCO, 2011)
- 10. Training and exposure for potential women leaders.** Ensuring that women have the skills and confidence necessary to take on decision-making roles is just as important as ensuring that those doors are opened through quota-type policies. Many women candidates do not receive the same level of exposure as male candidates; women with the skills necessary for appointments must be made as known to decision-makers as are their male counterparts. (Beijing at Ten and Beyond, 2005) *"Given that many women have had little experience with running for political office, it is of utmost importance that training be made readily available to allow women to develop and fine-tune their political skills. Once in office, women may also benefit from leadership training and mentoring to increase efficiency and ensure sustainability."* (UN Expert group on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, 2005)



Soroptimists in India and the UK provide clean drinking water in schools

References

- Abu-Ghaida and Klassen, 2004. *The Economic and Human Development Costs of Missing the Millennium Development Goal on Gender Equity*. World Bank. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/MDG_Gender_Equity.pdf (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Beijing at Ten and Beyond, 2005. *Women in Power and Decision-Making*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingat10/> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Birdsall, Levine, and Ibrahim, 2005. *Towards universal primary education: investments, incentives, and institutions*. UN Millennium Project, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. Available at: <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/education-complete.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- CAMPE, UNGEI, UNICEF, 2010. *Gender Equality in Education: Beyond Numbers Workshop Report*. Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 2010.
- DFID (UK Department for International Development), work on education. Available at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/>
- Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2007. *Women in Leadership Roles, Report of online discussion*. November 19 – December 15, 2007.
- Education for all – Fast Track Initiative. *Fast-tracking Girls' Education: A Progress Report by the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative*. Available at: www.educationfasttrack.org/...report/1-FastTrackEd-Girls-education-report-full.pdf (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Global Campaign for Education, 2009. *Education on the brink. Will the IMF's new lease on life ease or block progress towards education goals?* Global Campaign for Education. Available at: http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/resource-center/gce_reports/ (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Herz and Sperling, 2004. *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World*. Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: <http://www.cfr.org/education/works-girls-education/p6947> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011. Available at: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Klassen, Stephan, 1999. Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development? Evidence from Cross-Country Regressions, *Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, The World Bank, Working Paper Series, No. 7*.
- Levine, Lloyd, Greene, and Grown, 2009. *Girls Count. A Global Investment & Action Agenda*. Center for Global Development, Population Council, ICRW. Available at: <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/15154> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Plan UK, *Because I am a Girl*. Available at: <http://www.plan-uk.org/what-we-do/campaigns/because-i-am-a-girl/> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Plan, 2008. *Children in Focus: Paying the Price. The economic cost of failing to educate girls*. Plan International Headquarters. Available at: <http://plan-international.org/girls/resources/paying-the-price.php> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Population Council. *Adolescence/Transition to Adulthood*. Available at: <http://www.popcouncil.org/topics/youth.asp> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- Schultz, 2001. *Why Governments Should Invest More to Educate Girls*. Yale University.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2010. *Yearbook, Chapter 5*. Available at: <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2010/05>
- The World's Women 2010*. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW_full%20report_color.pdf (accessed June 15, 2011).
- UN Expert group on equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, 2005. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/index.html>.
- UNESCO, 2005. *Education and Training of Women and the Girl-Child: Online Discussion for the Review of Beijing +10*. January 10-February 4, 2005.
- UNESCO, 2010. *Global Education Digest 2010: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Available at: http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/GED_2010_EN.pdf (accessed June 15, 2011).
- UNESCO, 2011. *The hidden crisis: Armed Conflict and Education (Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011)*. UNESCO. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- UNICEF, 2005. *Gender Achievements and Prospects in Education: The Gap Report Part One*. UNICEF. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/GAP_Report_part1_final_14_Nov.pdf (accessed June 15, 2011).
- United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, 2011. *Education for all Global Monitoring Report: A Gender Review*. Available at: http://www.ungei.org/files/UNGEI_2011_GMR_Gender_Review.pdf (accessed June 15, 2011).
- WHO/UNICEF, 2005. *Water for life: making it happen*. Available at: http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp2005/en/index.html (accessed June 15, 2011).
- World Bank Gender and Development Group, 2003. *Gender Equality & The Millennium Development Goals*. Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Publications/20169280/gendermdg.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2011).
- World Bank, 2006. *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan*. World Bank. Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/GAPNov2.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2011).

For the purposes of this report, SI has analysed the worldwide situation and SI work and presence in each region to develop a focus area for each region. Focus areas are based on international best practice and priority setting, aimed at addressing the most challenging barriers to education and leadership for women and girls set within the socio-economic context of the region.

africa

Statistics at a glance...

Gender Parity Index - primary school enrolment	0.91	Pupil: teacher ratio - primary	45:1
Gender Parity Index - secondary school enrolment	0.79	% female teachers - primary school	43%
Gender Parity Index - tertiary enrolment	0.66	% female teachers - secondary school	29%
Gender Parity Index school life expectancy primary and secondary school	0.87	% female teachers - tertiary	20%
Gender Parity Index adult literacy	0.75	% female parliamentarians (houses combined)	19.8 %

The SI focus for Africa is **keeping girls in school, particularly in secondary school.**

- In sub-Saharan Africa, 54% of girls do not complete primary school and only 17% continue onto secondary school.
- Africa shows some of the highest gender gaps in educational attainment.
- In middle and western Africa, less than 60% girls of primary school age attend school.

The statistics above show a marked decreased in the gender parity index over their life course.

Conditions in schools in Africa make it difficult for girls to stay in school, and drop-out rates and persistent absenteeism are high. Some of these statistics may also hide the fact that girls of secondary school age are enrolled in primary school classes.

Drawing upon earlier sections in this report, we know that the school environment and wider infrastructure have a significant impact on girls' ability to both complete schooling and transition onto the next level.

[Excerpt from UNICEF – Gender-appropriate sanitation facilities and safe transport to and from school:](#)

“Learning can be tough for a child facing a daily reality of dirty drinking water and broken, squalid toilets. Across the world, a lack of access to safe water and sanitation has a disastrous impact on children. Diarrhoea and strength-sapping intestinal worms thrive in unsanitary environments and cause over a billion episodes of illness every year. 1.6 million children die annually from these diseases every year and millions more are left malnourished, weak and unable to learn.

Children in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the most deprived. Only 57 per cent of children in sub-Saharan Africa are drinking safe water and only 35 per cent of children in South Asia have access to even a

basic toilet. These regions also have the lowest school enrolment rates and the highest numbers of girls out of school.

The situation is particularly critical for girls, who make up most of the 115 million children currently out of school. Many are denied their rightful place in the classroom by lack of access to separate and decent toilets at school, or else the daily chore of walking miles to collect water for the family.

Education for girls can be supported and fostered by something as basic as a girls-only toilet. Parents are more likely to allow their daughters to attend school if they believe that girls' safety and dignity will be protected. And fewer girls will drop out once they reach adolescence. One study...indicated that a separate toilet could increase the number of girls in school by as much as 15 per cent.”

asia pacific

Statistics at a glance...

	Central Asia	East Asia & the Pacific	South & West Asia
Gender Parity Index - primary school enrolment	0.98	1.01	0.96
Gender Parity Index - secondary school	0.98	1.04	0.87
Gender Parity Index - tertiary enrolment	1.1	1.01	0.76
Gender Parity Index school life expectancy primary& secondary	0.98	1.02	0.92
Gender Parity Index adult literacy	1	0.94	0.7
Pupil : teacher ratio - primary	17:1	19:1	39:1
% female teachers - primary school	88%	60%	46%
% female teachers - secondary school	70%	47%	35%
% female teachers - tertiary	52%	39%	35%
	Asia	Pacific	
% female parliamentarians (houses combined)	18%	15%	

The focus for this region is on **adult female literacy**. As the statistics above show, the gender parity index for adult literacy in areas other than Central Asia is strikingly low – 0.94 in East Asia and the Pacific and 0.70 in South and West Asia.

We know that at least 1/3 of girls completing primary school cannot effectively read or write. Males are more likely to be literate in almost all

countries in this region. This compares quite negatively to other regions of the world.

We also now know that adult literacy, especially for women, is a largely overlooked issue under the banner of education and leadership. Progress towards literacy for adult females is slow at best, yet no less important than the other areas of education which garner more international attention. ‘Second chance’ programmes are life changing for some women, opening doors to opportunities that have previously been out of reach.

[Excerpt from UNESCO – Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011. Regional overviews](#)

“Literacy opens doors to better livelihoods, improved health and expanded opportunity. It empowers people to take an active role in their communities and to build more secure futures for their families. [This region] is unlikely to reach the literacy target set for 2015. It will take decisive action by governments in the region to raise its literacy profile, particularly for women.

South and West Asia:

The number of illiterate adults continues to rise. In 2008, more than 412 million adults were illiterate in South and West Asia – 38% of the region’s adult population. While the average adult literacy rate increased from 47% in 1985–1994 to 62% in 2005–2008, it rose too slowly to counteract the effects of population growth. The upshot is that the absolute number of adults lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills increased by almost 4%. In India, despite an increase in the literacy rate, the number of illiterate adults rose by 10.9 million between 2001 and 2006.

The regional adult literacy average masks important disparities between countries. The Maldives has an adult literacy rate of 98%,

and that of Sri Lanka is 91%. By contrast, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Pakistan have adult literacy rates between 53% and 55%.

Gender disparities in adult literacy are still very marked in South and West Asia. On average in 2008, the literacy rate for women was 51% while that for men was 73%. In Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan, women’s literacy rates were less than two-thirds as high as men’s.

East Asia and the Pacific:

Gender disparities in adult literacy still exist in the region. The regional literacy rate for women in 2008 was 91%, compared with 96% for men. However, in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, women’s literacy rate was nineteen percentage points lower than for men. Patterns of literacy are also strongly related to wealth and household location, with poor rural women being the most marginalized.

Effective and affordable policies and programmes exist. The experiences of China and Indonesia show that literacy policies can be effective: both countries increased their adult literacy rates by over ten percentage points in the past fifteen to twenty years. Effective literacy programmes tend to combine strong leadership with clear targets backed by financial commitments, and teach relevant skills using appropriate methods and language of instruction.”

EUROPE

Statistics at a glance...	Central & Eastern Europe	North America & Western Europe
Gender Parity Index - primary school enrolment	0.99	1
Gender Parity Index - secondary school	0.96	1
Gender Parity Index - tertiary enrolment	1.28	1.32
Gender Parity Index school life expectancy primary and secondary school	0.97	1
Gender Parity Index adult literacy	0.97	1
Pupil : teacher ratio - primary	18:1	14:1
% female teachers - primary school	82%	83%
% female teachers - secondary school	73%	60%
% female teachers - tertiary	50%	42%
	Nordic countries	Rest of Europe
% female parliamentarians (houses combined)	42%	20%

The SI focus for this region is **women's access to decision-making positions**, stable and secure employment (including 'second chance programmes'), and increasing the percentage of national and local government seats held by women

through appropriate training and skills development. While quotas are generally held as being effective, Soroptimists believe in training women to take on leadership positions as a more effective way to reach our goal.

[Excerpt from the European Commission: Women and Men in decision-making 2011-06-01](#)

"National parliaments:

The gender balance in national parliaments around the EU is unchanged at 24% women and 76% men. In the only national election to take place over the period, the share of women members in the Senate of the Czech Republic increased by one percentage point to 19% in October 2010 after one more woman was elected.

Two changes amongst those nominated to lead their respective houses of parliament (single, lower or upper houses) resulted in the share of women presidents/speakers in the EU rising from 20% to 25%.

Governments:

Women account for 26% of senior ministers (those with a seat on the cabinet) in governments across the EU-27 countries, 22% of junior ministers and 24% overall. Apart from minor fluctuations, the share of women in government has changed little over the past four years.

A number of government reshuffles took place:

- In Ireland the cabinet was smaller than usual at the time of data collection due to a number of ministerial

resignations. Of the remaining seven senior ministers, two were women (29% from 20% previously).

- The overall share of women in the Latvian government increased slightly from 26% to 30%, following an increase in the number of junior ministers.
- In the Netherlands, the proportion of women in government fell from one in three (36%) to just one in five (20%) after new junior ministerial positions were given to men.
- In both Spain and France the number of senior ministers has been reduced slightly and the share of women has fallen in both cases, from 50% to 44% in Spain and from 34% to 32% in France.

Regions:

Regional elections took place in seven countries; Hungary, Sweden, Poland, Greece, Spain (Catalunya region), Austria (Vienna and Steiermark regions), and in the Czech Republic (Prague region). Women now account for 31% of the members of regional assemblies and 32% of regional executives though only 15% of assemblies and 11% of executives are led by women. Across the EU as a whole, the gender balance in regional assemblies has hardly changed since 2004."

Latin America & the Caribbean

Statistics at a glance...

Gender Parity Index - primary school enrolment	0.97
Gender Parity Index - secondary school	1.08
Gender Parity Index - tertiary enrolment	1.25
Gender Parity Index school life expectancy primary and secondary school	1.02
Gender Parity Index adult literacy	0.98
Pupil : teacher ratio - primary	23:1
% female teachers - primary school	78%
% female teachers - secondary school	60%
% female teachers - tertiary	39%
	The Americas (as a whole)
% female parliamentarians (houses combined)	22.5%

The focus for this region is **addressing internal disparities within countries** and reaching out to particularly vulnerable women and girls. This region appears to have reached, for all intents and purposes, equality for girls in education. Higher education and school life expectancy now, at regional level, favour girls over boys. But this meta-data masks the barriers this region

faces in the intra-country disparities which mean that there are significant barriers to accessing education for some groups of girls and young women from minority or poor backgrounds. Additionally, persistent gender disparities also mean that equal work does not mean equal pay. The wage differential in this region remains quite wide.

[Excerpts from UNGEI: Gender Achievements and Prospects in Education](#)

The difficulty of pinpointing obstacles in the region results from a tunnel vision that believes gender parity in education equates to more girls in school. It is further complicated by the denial that gender disparity affects girls and young women. There are parallel truths about education in this region. Unlike most of the world, in most countries gender disparity favours girls rather than boys. But it is also true that there are pockets where girls are being denied their right to an education, particularly within indigenous populations and in rural areas. There are multiple layers of barriers in this region that correspond to each reality.

Although the failure to have female educational attainment equal female empowerment is universal, ethnicity, race and language as barriers to education are nowhere more apparent than in Latin America and the Caribbean. The focus on educational disparity that favours girls can overshadow the hidden crisis of illiteracy and under schooling among girls from indigenous groups. Bolivia, for instance, reports more girls in school than boys. Yet, more than half of indigenous girls drop out of school before reaching age 14.

Interventions

Recognizing that girls' education has not yet evolved into equality, Nicaragua is recognizing schools as places to confront

social issues such as machismo, domestic violence and single-parent households. Girls and boys participate together in classes and in extracurricular activities to help anchor gender equality. Gobiernos Estudiantiles ('student governments') have evolved, where girls and boys learn about their right to be educated, to be protected from corporal punishment and to be heard. A student-led project is the child-to-child census, which has identified children who are not in school.

Through coordination between the Instituto Para el Desarrollo de Democracia (The Institute for the Development of Democracy) and the Nicaragua Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, schools are being transformed through a bottom-up approach. Initially change is taking place at the school level and is spreading among municipalities across the country. Communities determine how their schools can be more inclusive and accessible. Some schools put a greater emphasis on providing meals and are creating kitchens to enhance World Food Programme initiatives. Other schools are focusing on improving water and sanitation, because safe water and good sanitation are lacking. Still others are concentrating on birth registration drives, outreach to children with disabilities or school transportation. The goal is for all schools to be child-friendly, with individual communities focusing on the missing ingredients.

middle east

Statistics at a glance...

Gender Parity Index - primary school enrolment	0.92
Gender Parity Index - secondary school	0.92
Gender Parity Index - tertiary enrolment	0.97
Gender Parity Index school life expectancy primary and secondary school	0.9
Gender Parity Index adult literacy	0.78
Pupil : teacher ratio - primary	22:1
% female teachers - primary school	56%
% female teachers - secondary school	47%
% female teachers - tertiary	31%
% female parliamentarians (houses combined)	10.7%

The focus for this region is **getting girls into primary school**. Gender parity indices are below what they should be. We also know that these statistics also mask the common practice of sending boys abroad for education as early as

primary school. The actual picture is likely to be more inequitable.

Deeply rooted gender inequalities are quite prevalent in the region, particularly in the family structure. Barriers to getting girls into primary school are high, but not insurmountable.

Successful Interventions

[AMAL: Approaches and Methods for Advanced Learning](#)

“The AMAL project expanded access to and enhanced the quality of education in Djibouti, Egypt, and Yemen. Project objectives included

1. Delivering in-service teacher training that made the teaching-learning process interactive, gender-sensitive, and student-centred; and
3. Increasing community participation in support of expanded access, improved quality, and greater accountability.

The project designed and delivered in-service teacher training and low cost materials based on the following principles

- An interactive teaching approach
- A gender-sensitive teaching methodology and educational materials
- An equitable school and classroom
- A problem-solving teaching process
- A relevant and practical teaching/learning process
- A needs and context-driven teaching/learning process”

[World Food Programme, Food for Education in Djibouti](#)

“The joint WFP and government emergency food security assessment in 2006 identified seasonal vulnerability and food insecurity by livelihood zones, and recommended that school feeding continue in rural areas of Djibouti. A WFP programme review conducted in 2007 also recommended a focus on school feeding. In line with these recommendations, a school feeding project has been formulated that incorporates the results of the school feeding evaluation undertaken in November 2007.

The project has the objectives to:

- increase enrolment, attendance, and completion and
- improve enrolment, attendance, and completion rates for girls to reduce the gender gap.

The project will provide a morning snack and a hot lunch for all school children in all rural primary schools, encouraging parents to send their children to school.

The project will further provide take-home rations for all girls in grades 3 to 5 who attend at least 80 percent of school days.”

Statistics at a glance...		
Gender Parity Index - primary school enrolment		1
Gender Parity Index - secondary school		1
Gender Parity Index - tertiary enrolment		1.32
Gender Parity Index school life expectancy primary and secondary school		1
Gender Parity Index adult literacy		1
Pupil : teacher ratio - primary		14:1
%female teachers - primary school		83%
% female teachers - secondary school		60%
% female teachers - tertiary		42%
		The Americas (as a whole)
% female parliamentarians (houses combined)		22.5%

The focus for this region is **women's leadership in professional areas**. Most international statistics look at women's leadership in government and as CEOs of corporations, but we know that women can be leaders in many other ways and in many other areas. In North America, gender parity in education has, for the most part, been achieved. However, we do not see as many

women leaders in professional fields as we would expect based on the number of women with qualifications.

Empowering women with the necessary skills and confidence necessary to take on leadership roles in their professions is becoming just as important as getting women into jobs in the first place.

[Excerpt from research from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University](#)

Beyond the Classroom: Women in Education Leadership, by Miki Litmanovitz

"Despite the fact that women make up nearly 60 percent of college graduates, they comprise only 16 percent of corporate executives. The non-profit sector isn't much better, with only 20 percent of nonprofits being run by women.

But perhaps the most shocking gender gap of all is in the education sector, a field that is supposedly dominated by women. While women are 76 percent of teachers in the United States, they are only 50 percent of school principals; just twelve out of the fifty largest school districts have women superintendents; there are a mere seventeen women state superintendents or commissioners of education across the country; and there have only been two female U.S. secretaries of education.

Why the Gender Gap in Education?

1. Lack of role models. June Atkinson, the state superintendent for North Carolina, says education has a tradition of "women being teachers and administrators being men." As a result of the historical roles that men and women have played, there are few female role models in administration positions for women interested in education leadership to look up to.

2. Leadership stereotypes. Since men have dominated leadership positions for centuries, "society's views of the characteristics of effective leaders" often align with characteristics of men, explained Deborah Delisle, the superintendent of public instruction for the Ohio Department of Education. This is a two-way problem. First, officials do not associate character traits that are mostly possessed by women with strong leadership ability and therefore do not push them to pursue leadership opportunities. Second, Delisle explained that women who might make great leaders "may not even see themselves in a particular role" and won't pursue leadership positions.

3. Lack of a pipeline for teachers. Related to the first two problems is one that Wendy Kopp, founder and CEO of Teach For America, attributes to the large gender gap. She says our current education hiring system does not have a "leadership pipeline approach to leadership development." That is, we

do not systematically identify and train exceptional teachers to become principals—or, for that matter, identify and train exceptional principals to become district officials. If a system like that were to be put in place, Kopp argues, it would go a long way toward increasing diversity in education leadership roles.

4. Work-life balance. Atkinson contends that women are less willing to make the sacrifices required of leaders than are their male counterparts. Though traditional gender roles have shifted dramatically as more women are going to school and working, it is still the case that most women feel that if someone is going to have to be a stay-at-home parent, it should be them and not their husbands. And for women who leave the workforce for several years to have children but eventually chose to go back to work, it can be difficult to compete with men who now have those extra years of experience. Still, this latter problem is mitigated in education: teaching does not have the same kind of ladder in place that many other professions do, which makes it easy for women to transition back into the job, points out Michelle Rhee, founder and CEO of Students First and former chancellor of D.C. Public Schools.

5. Different reasons for entering education. Lillian Lowery, the Secretary of Education in Delaware, posits that women may enter the field of education because of their desire to work with children, and they never even consider going into school administration. To some, Lowery explains, "leadership beyond the realm of teaching [is] not a desire."

Why Do Some Women Make It?

A number of women have been able to break through the barriers in education and attain high-level positions. The women leaders I interviewed cited several factors to explain their ability to succeed in a male-dominated world.

1. Mentorship. Many women saw having a mentor—especially a female—who encouraged them to and pushed her to pursue higher leadership positions as critical. Brenda Cassellius, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education, says that if her mentor, Cheryl Johnson, had not been there to push and motivate her, she would have had no one to look up to. Lowery agrees, saying that having a mentor to push her provided her with "avenues for upward mobility" she may not

have had otherwise. Lowery also cites formal programmes, like the Broad Academy for Urban Superintendents, as something that enabled her to climb through the ranks.

2. Support at home. For Kopp, having a supportive husband was "without a doubt the number one factor" in her ability to focus on her work. For Cassellius, her mother's assistance was integral in her early career, as she tried to balance raising young children with advancing her career.

3. Role models. Like men, women need signals that achieving high levels of power, though challenging, is not impossible. For Atkinson, having a family member in "a leadership role once viewed as 'for men only'" helped her realise that she too could beat the odds.

4. Personal wherewithal. Hufstedler says success takes "persistence, education, talent and time." This is amply demonstrated by Hufstedler's experience: she worked since she was 14, was one of only a handful of women to attend Stanford Law School when most law schools did not admit women, and excelled in public service and on the judiciary before being selected to be the first Secretary of Education.

What Should Be Done?

The women who have been able to persevere despite the odds suggest the problems behind the gender gap in education leadership are not permanent. While finding policy solutions to address this problem is difficult, the women I interviewed identified a number of strategies that they thought would go a long way toward closing the gender gap.

One strategy that could be used is to institute formal mentorship programmes that would target young, promising female teachers and pair them with a woman in a position of power in education to serve as a guide.

Another would be to develop leadership training opportunities for women to fix any perceived or real imbalance in leadership preparedness. Because men were historically leaders in education (as elsewhere), women may need specific training to help them overcome misperceptions regarding their ability to lead—for instance, that they would be "too soft" when tough decisions need to be made. Atkinson explains that women need to develop strong leadership skills and learn how to "sell" their core competence" as leaders."