



Chapter 5:



Regional Overview

Soroptimists in the UK at Awards Ceremony/Soroptimists in Israel learning about issues facing refugee women

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 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.”



The African Soroptimist countries are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Zimbabwe

SI WORK

Total projects	39	Average number of leadership projects per club	0.13
Women & girl beneficiaries	11,821	Beneficiary : Club ratio	129.90
Funds raised	\$73,367	Average raised per club	\$806.23
Education projects	27	Total number of members	1,851
Education beneficiaries	7,721	Beneficiary : Member ratio	6.39
Leadership projects	12	Average raised per member	\$39.64
Leadership beneficiaries	4,100	Average cost of projects	\$1,881.21
Total number of clubs	91	Average spend per beneficiary	\$6.21
Average number of education projects per club	0.30		

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."



Asia Pacific Soroptimist countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, Guam, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand

SI WORK

Total projects	696	Average number of leadership projects per club	0.31
Women & girl beneficiaries	12,488	Beneficiary : Club ratio	14.92
Funds raised	\$543,267	Average raised per club	\$649.06
Education projects	437	Total number of members	20,422
Education beneficiaries	9,701	Beneficiary : Member ratio	0.61
Leadership projects	259	Average raised per member	\$26.60
Leadership beneficiaries	2,787	Average cost of projects	\$780.56
Total number of clubs	837	Average spend per beneficiary	\$43.50
Average number of education projects per club	0.52		

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:

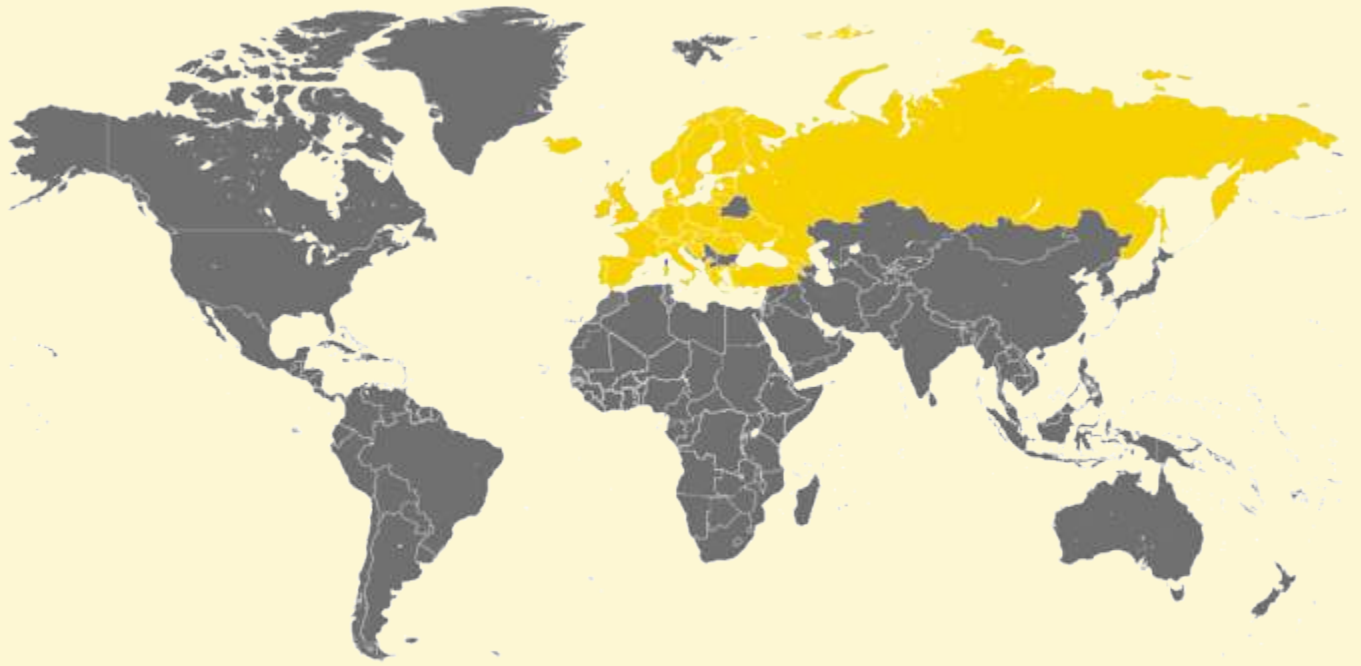
- In Ireland the cabinet was smaller than usual at the time of data collection due to a number of ministerial

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."



European Soroptimist countries: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom

SI WORK

Total projects	547	Average number of leadership projects per club	0.10
Women & girl beneficiaries	54,980	Beneficiary : Club ratio	38.61
Funds raised	\$867,004	Average raised per club	\$608.85
Education projects	405	Total number of members	40,878
Education beneficiaries	39,842	Beneficiary : Member ratio	1.34
Leadership projects	144	Average raised per member	\$21.21
Leadership beneficiaries	15,140	Average cost of projects	\$1,585.02
Total number of clubs	1,424	Average spend per beneficiary	\$15.77
Average number of education projects per club	0.28		

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.



Latin America and the Caribbean Soroptimist countries: Anguilla, Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos, Venezuela

SI WORK

Total projects	127	Average number of leadership projects per club	0.61
Women & girl beneficiaries	961	Beneficiary : Club ratio	10.92
Funds raised	\$54,700	Average raised per club	\$621.59
Education projects	73	Total number of members	1,972
Education beneficiaries	171	Beneficiary : Member ratio	0.49
Leadership projects	54	Average raised per member	\$27.74
Leadership beneficiaries	790	Average cost of projects	\$430.71
Total number of clubs	88	Average spend per beneficiary	\$56.92
Average number of education projects per club	0.83		

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](#)

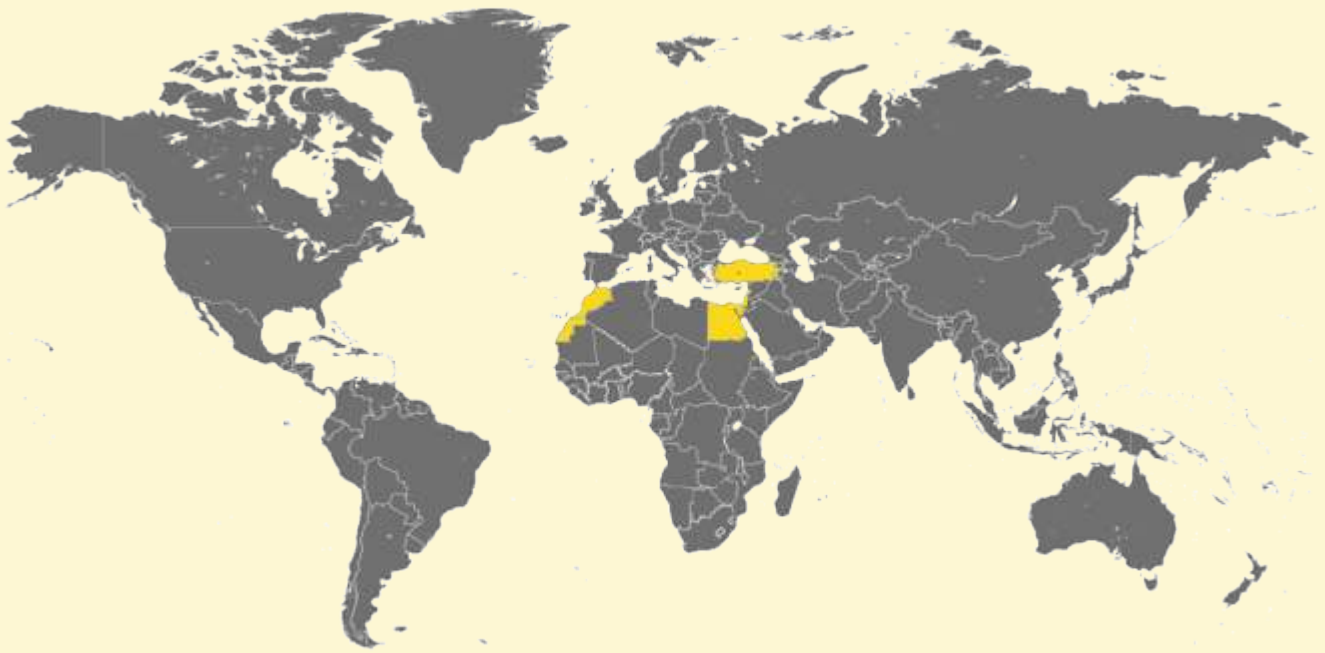
"The joint WFP and government emergency food security assessment in 2006 identified seasonal vulnerability and food insecurity by livelihood zones, and recommended that school feeding continue in rural areas of Djibouti. A WFP programme review conducted in 2007 also recommended a focus on school feeding. 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."



Middle East Soroptimist countries: Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey

SI WORK

Total projects	107	Average number of leadership projects per club	0.19
Women & girl beneficiaries	8,489	Beneficiary : Club ratio	157.20
Funds raised	\$71,890	Average raised per club	\$1,331.30
Education projects	97	Total number of members	1,241
Education beneficiaries	8,153	Beneficiary : Member ratio	6.84
Leadership projects	10	Average raised per member	\$57.93
Leadership beneficiaries	336	Average cost of projects	\$671.87
Total number of clubs	54	Average spend per beneficiary	\$8.47
Average number of education projects per club	1.80		

north america

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.

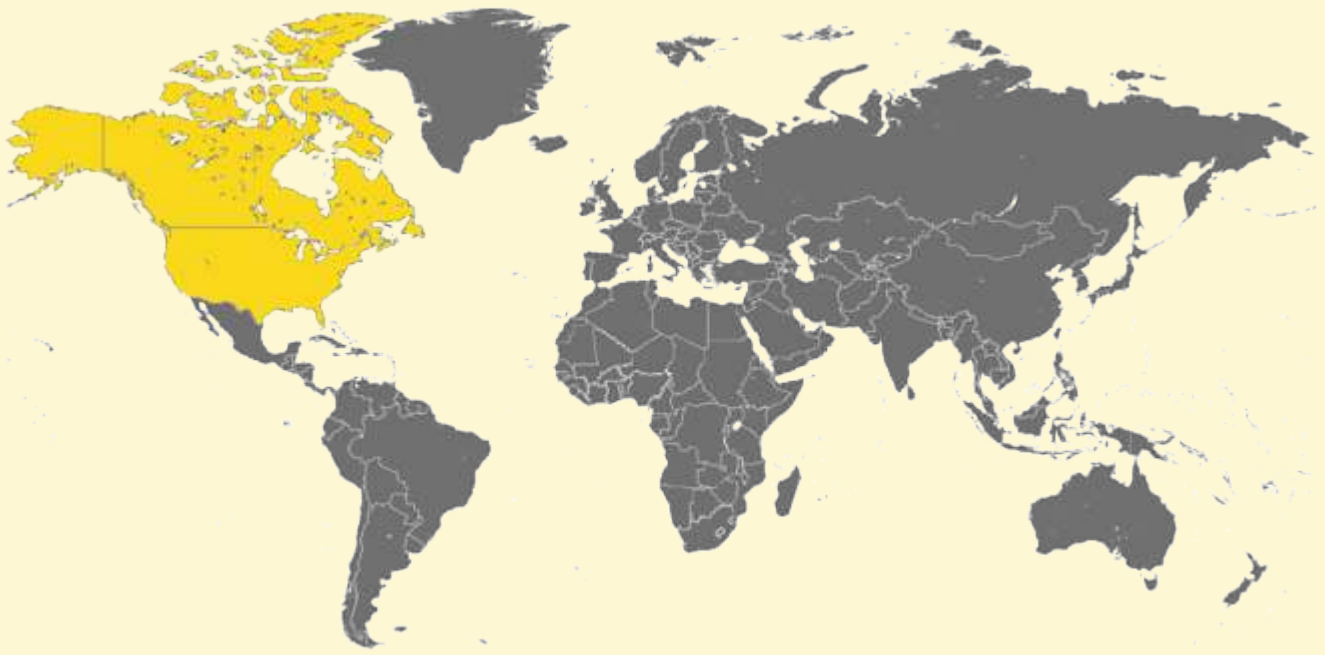
2. Support at home. For Kopp, having a supportive husband was "without a doubt the number one factor" in her ability to focus on her work. For Cassellius, her mother's assistance was integral in her early career, as she tried to balance raising young children with advancing her career.
3. Role models. 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. Hufstедler says success takes "persistence, education, talent and time." This is amply demonstrated by Hufstедler'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."



North American SI countries: Canada, USA

SI WORK

Total projects	1,113	Average number of leadership projects per club	0.73
Women & girl beneficiaries	1,350	Beneficiary : Club ratio	2.03
Funds raised	\$1,433,997	Average raised per club	\$2,156.39
Education projects	625	Total number of members	19,799
Education beneficiaries	790	Beneficiary : Member ratio	0.07
Leadership projects	488	Average raised per member	\$72.43
Leadership beneficiaries	560	Average cost of projects	\$1,288.41
Total number of clubs	665	Average spend per beneficiary	\$1,062.22
Average number of education projects per club	0.94		