

## "Hands up for Girls' Education"

The worldwide numbers reveal shocking levels of inequality in education between girls and boys: 860 million adults cannot read or write, two-thirds of these are women says the Global Campaign for Education<sup>1</sup>, an advocacy coalition of teachers and development workers seeking to ensure that the promise made by governments at the United Nations Millennium Summit to get equal numbers of girls and boys in school by the year 2005 is kept.

There is no doubt that closing the education gap between females and males by educating women and girls has direct developmental benefits and plays a key part in reducing poverty. With women making up half of the world's population, contributing two-thirds of all work hours and raising almost all of the world's children, the coalition's "Hands Up for Girls Education" slogan is right on track.

Research over the past 20 years has shown that education is an absolute prerequisite for progress on all fronts. Education is seen as one of the single most influential investments that the developing world can make. Providing women and girls,

boys and men from especially poor families with appropriate and relevant primary, secondary and tertiary education has a multiplier effect. For example, women with more education delay their first sexual encounter, marry later than other women their age without education, want smaller families and are more likely to use contraception and other health care services.

Women without schooling are likely to bear twice as many children as women with 10 or more years of education do. The education equation looks like this:

**GIRLS + EDUCATION =  
POVERTY REDUCTION =  
IMPROVED HEALTH =  
INCREASED LIFE EXPECTANCY =  
MONEY WELL SPENT.**

*"To educate girls is to reduce poverty. That is the lesson that unites us today. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health."-- Kofi Annan, Secretary General – United Nations.*

### Balancing the Books: Bearing Responsibility for Education in Zimbabwe

Education provision is mainly the responsibility of two separate ministries. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture ensures that there is primary and secondary schooling while the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education is responsible for tertiary, technical college and university level education.

On average, girls and boys in Zimbabwe enrol for their first year of school at the age of five. Primary school spans some seven years and secondary school lasts

approximately four years for those who leave after completion of Ordinary level (O'Level) examinations. Those able to put in the further two years required for the Advanced (A' Level) spend a total of six years in high school. Entry into tertiary institutions can be from the age of about 16 onwards. Zimbabwe's average literacy rates for 1999 were 84% for females and 91.7% for males<sup>2</sup>. Literacy levels decrease with an increase in age and level of education becoming lower for females than for males.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.campaignforeducation.org>

<sup>2</sup> CSO Education statistics report 2001

# Education History

At Independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited an education system that was characterized by racial inequalities. White children of wealthy families predominantly enjoyed the most excellent academic, sporting and recreational facilities that opened their lives up to a future of advantaged choice. Segregation was also evident in the subjects taught, with schools designated for black and predominately poor children with poor facilities and a different curriculum altogether. Total expenditure on education for the black children was set at approximately 42% in a situation where there were only 56 000 Asian and white pupils compared to about 800 000 black pupils.

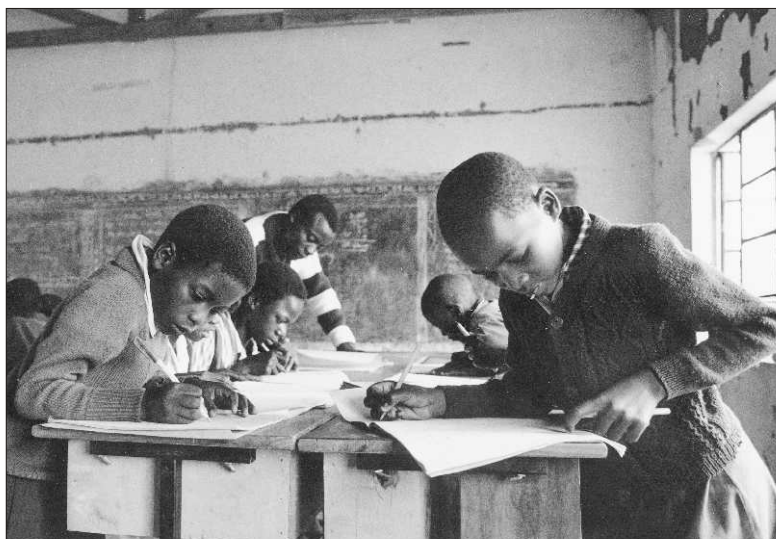
Government expenditure on the European child was thus 20 times as much as that for the black child. During this pre-independence period, there was a deliberate policy of ensuring that a very small percentage (12.5%) of those black children who managed to complete the primary school cycle had access to academic education at secondary level; 37.5% was to receive practically oriented secondary education while the remaining 50% were left with no access to education. Although the available statistics are not disaggregated by sex, fewer girls enrolled for primary and secondary education whilst a greater proportion of the 50% without access to education were girls because of the preference given to the education of the boy child due to socialization. Boys were then expected to find work as farm labourers and other menial jobs whilst girls were married off at very tender ages. Very few blacks let alone black girls could thus access skills training at the established skills training centres like Harare Polytechnic and even fewer could access university education.

This had created a legacy of double discrimination for black girls, particularly those from poor families i.e. discrimination on the basis of sex and discrimination on the basis of colour. The requirement to pay school fees meant that preference was given to the boys to attend school due to social and traditional practices that define women's roles as tied to domestic work and women being regarded as inferior to men especially in rural settings. Lobola (payment of cash or cattle as compensation to the father of the bride) is still a common practice which results in early marriages so that parents (the father) can acquire cash or cattle.

After independence, the government of Zimbabwe introduced free education for all children of primary school-going age. The right to education was offered as a fundamental basic human right and was seen as an attempt to correct the scales that had been racially tipped in favour of non-black children prior to independence. "Education for all by the year 2000" became the buzz phrase of Zimbabwe's post independence era. To achieve this goal, government built schools in remote and disadvantaged areas and tried to shrink the walking distances between home and school to ensure that girls and boys, unable to attend class previously because of the long distance, could now go to school.

The free education for all policy scored high marks. The Government of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s initiated a reconstruction exercise that saw the establishment of several primary and secondary schools in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. The number of primary schools increased from 2401 in 1979 to 4234 by 1985 and 4723 in 1999. At Secondary level, the number of schools went up from 177 in 1979 to 1215 in 1985 and to 1548 in 1999. There was a sharp increase in school enrolment at both primary and secondary levels for girls and boys. The Education Statistics Report of July 1998 produced by the Central Statistics Office, shows that about 3 million people aged 5 to 20 were enrolled in the primary and secondary schools alone in 1990. By 1994 the figure had risen to 3.16 million. The statistics are not disaggregated by sex to show how this increase reflects the different enrolments of girls and boys.

The enrolment levels for boys and girls over the period 1990 to 2000 have increased steadily with very small



School facilities before independence were very poor (Photograph from ZWRN Archives)

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differences between female and male enrolments and almost reaching parity in 2000 at both primary and secondary level. Part of the increase in enrolments can also be attributed to the overall increase in the population. It is very interesting that the percentages for the primary and secondary are similar, as in most countries there will be a better gender balance at primary than secondary school.

Education for all might seem to be a straightforward goal but it has met its challenges that made it difficult to be achieved. The introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) had a significant negative impact on enrolments with less girls enrolling between 1992 and 1994 and fewer boys also enrolling during the same period. Most households could not afford to send their children to school during government's cost recovery programme. Girls were affected more than boys. At secondary level the gender gap that had been partially closed in 2000 when parity was almost achieved is widening again due to the current economic hardships being faced by the country.

Under ESAP, cost recovery was introduced in urban areas while in rural areas development levies were raised. Cost recovery meant that parents had to pay small amounts of school fees for administrative purposes and development levies are amounts of money paid for the development of the school. Although expenditure on education as proportion of the gross national product (GNP) increased from 2% in 1980 to 7% in 1990 and slightly fell to 6.3% (education statistics July 1998), the introduction of cost recovery had negative impact on school enrolment.

According to the 1992 census report, 17% of the school going age population had never been to school, 49% had left school and 34% were still at school. Of those that had never been to school 60% were female and 40% male and of those who had left school 51% were females. However in rural areas there is an even bigger discrepancy as 53% of the population in schools are males versus a 47% for females. If these figures are extrapolated to the present years the situation is the same in both rural and urban areas. In the light of the above, government policy must be directed towards addressing the gender gaps that

Member states are obliged to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure equal rights with men in the field of education on a basis of equality between women and men by providing conditions that allow equal access to vocational training, same curricula, adult literacy programmes, reduction in female drop out rates and equal access to sports and physical education, says the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) signed by Zimbabwe in 1991 but not yet domesticated into national law.

## Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Budget Allocation

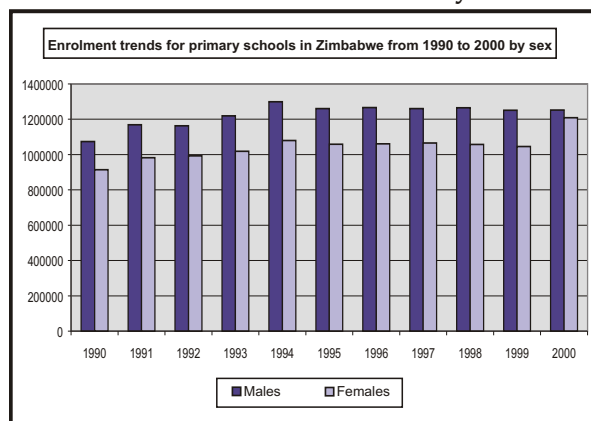
Since 1980 the Ministries of Education have been getting the lion's share of public resources through budget allocations towards primary and secondary education. Although the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture continues to get the highest vote allocation in the national budget, in real terms the sector budget has been declining since 1990. Salaries still absorb the greater part of the budget - 99% in 2003/2004 budgets. Financial constraints have also undermined infrastructure expansion of the education system and the training of teachers as well as staff retention. According to UNICEF (2002) only 108 new primary schools and 16 new secondary schools were built between 1995 and 2000.

The mission of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture is to provide high quality and relevant primary and secondary and non-formal education and to facilitate access to and participation in sports recreation and culture in order to enrich the lives of other people of Zimbabwe.

The Millennium Development Goals that Zimbabwe made a commitment to achieve the Beijing Declaration's goal of eliminating by 2005 all gender disparities in primary and secondary education, and to achieve by 2015 full gender equality in education".

Before looking at the budgetary allocations to the education sector and assessing whether the budget is in line with the mission of the Ministry, it is imperative to look at the enrolments. This will help to give a picture of whom the budget is expected to assist. The enrolments in the different levels of the education sector are as follows:

**Chart 1. Enrolment Trends in Primary Schools**

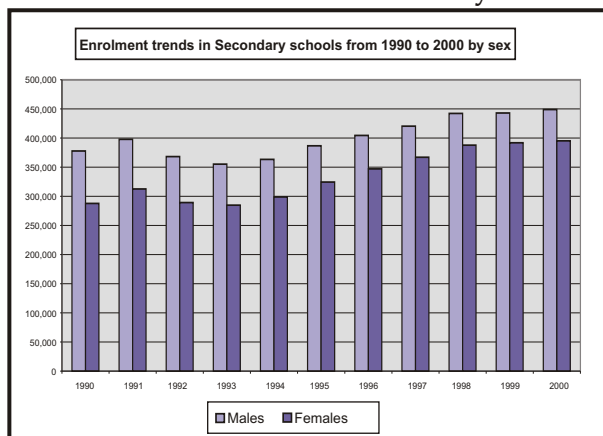


Source- Central Statistics Office- Education Statistics report 2001

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From the above table, it can be seen that at the primary school level, total enrolments of both boys and girls have been on a steady increase over the 10 years almost reaching parity in 2000. The gender disparity is just about 5% point in the year 2000. There have been higher chances of boys enrolling in school than girls since 1980 when the government embarked on the reconstruction exercise. The major challenge is then to keep these enrolled children in class, especially girls and work towards closing the gender gaps that inhibit more girls from enrolling in schools.

**Chart 2. Enrolment trends in Secondary schools**



Source: Central Statistics Office- Education Statistics report 2001

At the secondary school level, the enrolments show that over the 10 years 1990 - 2000, the total enrolment has not reached one million yet when the primary level enrolments are over 1 million. There are far less girls enrolling in secondary school than boys. The gender gap is higher at secondary level than at primary school level. This trend reveals that a significant number of girls are out of formal school in the higher grades. Being out of school will leave the girls more vulnerable to HIV infection, early pregnancy and child labour and child sexual abuse.

**Table (I) Teacher Colleges Enrolments: 2000-2003**

| YEAR | MALE  | FEMALE | TOTAL  |
|------|-------|--------|--------|
| 2000 | 8 204 | 16 113 | 24 317 |
| 2001 | 8 121 | 9 328  | 17 449 |
| 2002 | 9 166 | 11 944 | 21 110 |
| 2003 | 8 244 | 9 371  | 17 615 |

Source: Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education 2003

Enrolments in teachers colleges show that there are more females training to be teachers than males. This can be attributed to the traditional role assigned of women as being mothers and caregivers. It can thus be assumed that the budget allocated to Teacher Education will therefore benefit the females compared to male students. There is also a tendency to push women towards careers that are perceived to be less challenging.

**Table (II) Technical And Vocational Colleges**

| Year | Male   | Female | Total  |
|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2000 | 12 492 | 5 021  | 17 513 |
| 2001 | 14 297 | 6 705  | 21 002 |
| 2002 | 11 131 | 6 123  | 16 254 |
| 2003 | 11 090 | 5 048  | 16 138 |

Source: Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education 2003

Looking at the enrolments for the technical and vocational institutions, it is clear that the females are still not accessing the training offered in these institutions at the same rate as their male counterparts. This can be attributed to the fact that females are not taking technical subjects at the secondary level. One of the strategies to overcome the problem of girls not accessing technical subjects is outlined in the National Gender Policy as the need to promote girls to take up Science subjects in school.



Girls from the rural areas of Zimbabwe during Information and Communication Technology training session at ZWRN. Low numbers of girls enroll for technical subjects in school. Alternative ways of ensuring that more girls take to subjects such as computer sciences need to be found. (ZWRN Photo by Themble Phute)

**Table (III) Universities**

| Year | Male   | Female | Total  |
|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 2000 | 19 960 | 4 298  | 14 258 |
| 2001 | 9 615  | 4 539  | 14 154 |
| 2002 | 14 178 | 6 717  | 20 895 |
| 2003 | 14 662 | 7 108  | 21 770 |

Source: Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education 2003

NB: Figures exclude Zimbabwe Open University enrolments

At the university level, enrolments for females are half that of men. The trend actually starts at secondary level where there are less girls enrolling in secondary school than boys. The larger number of the girls completing secondary school is enrolling in teacher training institutions as shown by the tables on enrolments above with the rest hidden in the other sectors of the economy but mainly the informal sector. The burden of care, societal attitudes and beliefs disadvantage girls from competing with boys hence there are more girls dropping out of school than boys at secondary school level resulting in many boys being enrolled in tertiary institutions than girls.

# The 2003/2004 Vote Allocations for Education

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture received 25% of the total Budget allocation for 2004 whilst the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education received 9,24% of the total Budget allocation. The following analysis will focus on the Education, Sports and Culture vote allocation. The total vote allocation for Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture was Z\$529 704 372 000.

The Education Sports and Culture budget is split into four sections namely the general administration of the ministry, the education service centre, allocations for primary and secondary schools. It must be noted that primary education received most of the budget allocations under this ministry followed by secondary education. Primary Education received 60% of the total Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture budget in 2004, Secondary Education got 35% in 2004 whilst 5% went to sports and cultural promotions.

**Table (IV): Primary Education Allocation**

| Year | Allocation to Primary Education | Salaries | School Service | Furniture & Equipment |
|------|---------------------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 2000 | 62%                             | 97%      | 1.68%          | 0.036%                |
| 2001 | 62%                             | 96%      | 2.33%          | 0.031%                |
| 2002 | 61%                             | 98%      | 1.05%          | 0.02%                 |
| 2003 | 61%                             | 96%      | 2.34%          | 0.015%                |
| 2004 | 60%                             | 99%      | 0.45%          | 0.011%                |

Source: Budget Estimates 2000-2004

**Table (V): Secondary Education Allocation**

| Year | Allocation to Secondary Education | Salaries | School Services | Furniture & Equipment |
|------|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 2000 | 32%                               | 94.2%    | 4.31%           | 0.153%                |
| 2001 | 31%                               | 93.9%    | 4.94%           | 0.244%                |
| 2002 | 33%                               | 96.5%    | 2.67%           | 0.18%                 |
| 2003 | 33%                               | 93.4%    | 4.5%            | 0.096%                |
| 2004 | 35%                               | 98.5%    | 0.74%           | 0.066%                |

Source: Budget Estimates 2000-2004

# Services/Operations Costs

School services refer to the schools running costs such as tuition materials, sport expenses, and grants to private registered schools and to furniture and equipment. From the secondary education budget trends 2000- 2004, school services accounted for an average of 3.3% with 2004 getting the least percentage of 0.74%. Even though Primary enrolments are higher than secondary school enrolments according to 2003 net enrolment rates, school services in primary school has been getting far less than secondary schools at an average of 1.57% with 2004 receiving 0.74%. There are more girls enrolled in Primary school in 2003 compared to girls enrolled in secondary school in the same year. The government should have allocated more resources towards school services in primary school where there are more girls whilst still adding more resources to school services, if government is serious about meeting the Millennium Development goal of eliminating gender disparities at primary and secondary levels by 2005. It can be argued that at secondary school level more tuition materials are needed than at Primary level, but if time is taken to critically analyse the vote allocation for school services at both primary and secondary education a simple calculation will reveal the following:

Using the 2003 total enrolment figure in primary school of 2 606 468 children and a total vote allocation of Z\$4.105.000.000, each child in primary school will get Z\$1 574.00 for tuition material in the year 2004.

A quotation below acquired from Kingstons bookshop indicate that a Shona textbook alone will cost Z\$ 48 215.00. Schools will definitely not manage to buy any books or provide any school services in 2004. Parents will have to subsidize the education of their children.

**Table (VI)**

| Item                          | Unit cost Z\$  | Total Z\$     |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Exercise book 6 per term      | 1000           | 6000          |
| Ruler                         | 1150           | 1150          |
| Pen                           | 750            | 750           |
| Pencil                        | 330            | 330           |
| Plastic Cover                 | 1700           | 1700          |
| Khaki cover                   | 1650           | 1650          |
| Gore Rechipiri                | 48 215         | 48 215        |
| Step in Environmental Science | 50 017         | 50 017        |
| Primary Home Economics        | 33 550         | 33 550        |
| New Primary English           | 42 815         | 42 815        |
| Talk Maths                    | 44105          | 44105         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>230 282</b> | <b>230282</b> |

Source: ZWRN compilation based on Kingstons bookstores limited, Harare 22 January 2004

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Holding other things constant<sup>3</sup>, stationery alone for one child will cost Z\$ 230 282,00 for first term and assuming that the \$200 000 per month tax free income band announced by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development in the 2003/2004 Budget is the minimum wage, then all those earning the minimum wage in Zimbabwe will not afford to buy stationery for their children to get good education.

For those parents who have girl children, the list of items to be bought for a girl child has more items than the list prepared for a boy. Boys will never miss school because they do not have underwear but the biological make up of girls requires them to wear panties.

“Girls in Mola<sup>4</sup> cannot even afford decent under wear let alone sanitary wear. The cost of sanitary wear has forced many girls and young women in Zimbabwe to resort to the use of unsafe alternatives. Young girls are using newspapers and unhygienic cloth; they cannot even afford soap to wash their cloth. Girls in Mola for example have been forced to use old cloths and bark. Most girls are testifying that they have had to miss school each time they are menstruating because they cannot afford sanitary wear and they do not have decent panties. If any girl has to miss school at an average of five days she is menstruating every month, she misses 15 to 20 days of schooling per term. By the end of the year it is 60 days (two full months). For the four years of basic schooling this young girl loses 240 days.” says Angeline Mugwendere Director of CAMA an association for the campaign for female education.

These are real challenges that should be addressed by the national budget.

## Furniture and Equipment

If we are to take the vote allocation for furniture for secondary schools as an example using the 2002 figure for the total number of secondary schools in Zimbabwe and the 2004 allocation of Z\$100 million for furniture and equipment each school will get Z\$63 694,00. This implies that a school will not even be able to purchase a desk or a chair in 2004. A desk as at 30 January 2004 was costing Z\$150 000,00<sup>5</sup>. When there is a shortage of furniture, it is boys who use the furniture whilst

girls will have to sit on the floor due to the way boys and girls are socialized to behave.

Even though Primary schools (4734 schools) are more than secondary schools (1570), they got the same allocation of Z\$100 million. There are more children in primary than in secondary school and there are more girls than boys in secondary schools who were going to benefit from more resources allocation for furniture and equipment hence there should be a difference in allocation of resources for primary and secondary schools taking enrolments into consideration.

Parents are then left with very few options, either to get the boy and girl child in school and buy half the stationery required which they may afford or buy stationery for one child which is likely to be the boy child. Where the parents are failing to raise money to buy basics food, then surely, the education of the children will be a secondary issue and the last option would be to pull out the children especially the girl child from school.

## Salaries

Though the education ministries receive the most resources, on average salaries of teachers and non -teaching staff within the ministry account for about 91.4% of the total education budget since 1994. In 2004, 99% and 99,8% went to salaries in primary schools and secondary schools respectively. As at first term 2003 there were more female teachers (32717) than male teachers in primary school (31977) and more male teachers at secondary level (20721) than female teachers (13456)<sup>6</sup>. On the surface of it, it may appear as if more women (female teachers) are benefiting from the salaries but given the number of school heads who are mostly men and who get much more than teachers, then one would safely say that the allocation for salaries would benefit male teachers and headmasters more than female teachers. It becomes prudent to take one of the recommendations in the National Gender Policy of appointing more competent women in decision-making positions in the education sector so that there is equity in the distribution of resources in terms of salaries and gender sensitive legislation in Ministry.

<sup>3</sup> Without considering expenses like clothing, food, uniforms and school fees.

<sup>4</sup> Mola is a district in Binga where CAMA is working in.

<sup>5</sup> Office Mart Zimbabwe

<sup>6</sup> Source: Ministry Of Education Sports and Culture, Statistics Unit Education Management Information systems 2003

## Adult Literacy Programme

This refers to a type of learning such as study groups, evening classes and correspondence. However, non-formal education can lead to formal qualifications at different levels of education. Even though the literacy rate for Zimbabwe is 80%, males have a higher literacy rate of 86% compared to females at 75%. The population statistics indicate that women constitute 52% of the population but they are not benefiting more as expected from the education system in Zimbabwe. Males benefit at the expense of the females as most females dropout of school earlier or missed school altogether due to limited resources, early pregnancy, the caring role at home due to HIV and AIDS related illnesses, house hold chores and for other social and cultural reasons. As a result there are more women enrolling for basic literacy classes than men. From the year 1996 to year 2000 there was a total of 41 337 women attending adult literacy classes compared to 10 849 men (CSO). In any case this programme is classified under incidentals in the education budget and received ZW\$1.6bn from a total budget allocation of the education budget of Z\$529 704 372 000, this represents 0.3% going into adult literacy where women are the largest consumers of the service.

If the government is serious about achieving full gender equality in education by 2015 then this commitment must be shown through adequate resource allocation in areas that seek to redress gender imbalances like adult literacy programmes. UNICEF actually estimates that the target group of adult literacy is likely to become larger than smaller due to AIDS as more children especially girls find it difficult to stay in the formal system.

Education is the foundation of economic and social development says Zimbabwe's National Gender Policy. The policy recognizes the importance of incorporating gender issues in all curricula at all levels of education and amend all relevant education and legal instruments that promote gender inequality.

## Commitments made by Zimbabwe on reducing gender equalities in Education

Zimbabwe is starting to witness the erosion of the gains that had been made after the Education for all campaign by the year 2000. Through the Beijing Platform of Action the world governments including the Zimbabwean government expressed their commitment to "accelerate action and strengthen political commitment to close the gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and ensure free, compulsory and universal primary education for both girls and boys by 2015." The question then will be 2005 is only next year and people are getting paid a minimum wage that is not enough to buy stationery for the child let alone fees, food, rent and clothing.

2015 might also seem to be very far but we have a declining graph instead of an ascending graph as we move towards 2015 in terms of the gains made so far in education.

The Millennium Development Goals that Zimbabwe made a commitment to achieve reiterate the Beijing Declaration's position: to eliminate by 2005 all gender disparity in primary and secondary education, and to achieve by 2015 full gender equality in education". In 2000 Zimbabwe reached gender parity but the trend has been decreasing over the past 3 years and urgent action need to be taken to rescue the education sector and the education of girls in Zimbabwe.



Schoolgirls from Shurugwi going to school early in the morning. The dryness of the area indicates that there is drought and these children might be going to school without food. Education is now only for those who can afford to buy school uniforms. (ZWRCN Photo by Thembile Phute, September 2003)

## Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)

The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is a social safety net administered through the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. This comes in the form of grant allocations through the ministry to cater for schools fees and examination fees, and school levies for both primary and secondary schools. The primary objectives of BEAM are to reduce the number of children dropping out of school and to assist those children who have never been to school due to economic hardships.

# Eligibility Criteria

A child is eligible for this programme if there is a school record of previous failure to pay fees and levies due to poverty, or if the child is an orphan, the source of income and health status of the breadwinner is also quizzed. In year 2001 as of 30<sup>th</sup> September, the programme had spent \$200m and for year 2002, \$380m has been budgeted. In 2003 \$1 billion had been allocated for BEAM and 683 356 (statistics not disaggregated by sex) less privileged children had their school fees paid during the third term of 2003 (Herald 25 September 2003), children in satellite schools are said to have also benefited from the BEAM allocation. Within the assistance to secondary schools the programme insists that at least 50% of the pupils to benefit from schools fees assistance must be female. The implementation of this policy is difficult to monitor because statistics on children who benefit from BEAM are not disaggregated by sex.

In a research carried out by ZWRCN in 2002 on the accessibility of the National AIDS Trust Fund by women and men, girls and boys, assistance from BEAM came out as one of the main issues of discussion. Most women and men interviewed applauded the introduction of BEAM but indicated that they could not afford to buy school uniform or stationery for their children hence BEAM partially

solved the problems faced by school children. The beneficiaries interviewed complained about the late disbursement of BEAM funds resulting in most schools having to run their operational costs without adequate funding.

According to the National Federation of Women's Institute of Zimbabwe<sup>7</sup> under the rural schools project, some school children in Zimbabwe cannot even afford to buy a pencil. Often up to ten children share one pencil between them and in some cases children just cannot write or participate in lessons because of the lack of stationery. Girls are affected more by lack of adequate resources in school due to their social backgrounds and many responsibilities they have at home.

If BEAM is to become a social safety net for the vulnerable then the gender dimensions of education should be explored. As the policy rightly says on paper "at least 50% of the girls benefiting from these programmes should be girls in secondary schools." Monitoring of the implementation of BEAM is required and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture should continue providing sex disaggregated statistics to allow effective monitoring and give girls a chance to learn and close the gender gaps inherent in the country.

## Girls in the newly resettled farming areas

Although schools were in short supply in commercial farming areas compared to communal and urban areas, access for farm workers and their families improved in the 1990s. The disruptions and evictions associated with the land reform programme resulted in those farms that ran schools encountering problems where the farm owner was served with an eviction order and left. When school maintenance ceases and the teaching staff is no longer paid, the school often closes. Thus one direct effect of the land reform has been to undermine the basic but fragile services, which were beginning to serve an increasing number of farm workers' children (Sachikonye 2003).

In the newly resettled farming areas, children are reported to walk 60km to the nearest school in

most cases on an empty stomach due to the current drought and economic hardships. This has meant girls dropping out of school, as parents fear that their children will be sexually abused along the way to school. Girls in the new farming areas have not been spared from the shortage of books and stationery, burden of HIV and AIDS that their counterparts are facing in urban and communal areas, only that the magnitude of their problem is greater because there is no infrastructure in the new farms.

This has fuelled worries that some of the children who have dropped out of school may drift into delinquency or commercial sex work making them more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Having dropped out of school, girls may be forced to marry early or get pregnant.

<sup>7</sup> National Federation of Women's Institutes of Zimbabwe (NFWIZ) August 18, 2002

# The impact of HIV and AIDS on the education sector

At the current infection rates, around one third of the investment in education is being lost through infection and the premature death of learners during or after schooling. Teachers are also not spared from the pandemic. Approximately one in four teachers were infected with HIV in 2001 (UNICEF 2002). As shown in Table 1, there are more female teachers compared to male teachers and statistics indicate that women are more vulnerable to HIV infection than men. A study in Manicaland found that 19% of male teachers and almost 29% of female teachers were infected with HIV (UNICEF 2002), hence all the investment made in terms of training teachers where females tend to benefit more is being eroded by HIV and AIDS.

Schools especially in rural areas have reported erratic school attendance by children especially girls who are often pulled out of school to take care of the sick, or have dropped out to look after their siblings in the event of losing parents. UNICEF estimates that there are 780 000 HIV and AIDS orphans under the age of 15 in Zimbabwe with 240 000 children in the age range 0-15 living with HIV and AIDS. The majority of the so-called "child headed" families are actually girl-headed families which takes away the girls time from attending school and burdening them with household responsibilities. Young girls have been driven into transactional sex in order to fend for the siblings in the belief that "better to die of AIDS tomorrow than hunger today". Men have also taken advantage of the young girls' vulnerability by turning to these young girls for sex as they perceive them to be safe, some in the belief that they will cure themselves of the HIV virus through having sex with virgins.



Putting girls' needs at the forefront of education ensures that they not only go to school, but also stay in school. (ZWRCN photo by Isabella Matambanadzo)

# Disabled girls in Schools

While commendable efforts are being made in the whole region to reduce illiteracy among girls and women not much has been done to cater for the disabled girls.

**Table (IX): Zimbabwe all Primary Schools enrolment by impairment and sex- 2002**

| Impairment     | Female enrolments | Male enrolments | Total        |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Hearing        | 1126              | 1248            | 2374         |
| Mental         | 1032              | 1541            | 2573         |
| Multi-Handicap | 362               | 445             | 807          |
| Physical       | 982               | 1282            | 2264         |
| Speech         | 502               | 990             | 1492         |
| Visual         | 1849              | 2132            | 3981         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>5853</b>       | <b>7638</b>     | <b>13491</b> |

Source: Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture-Primary and Secondary statistics reports 2002

The statistics above show that there are more disabled boys enrolling in school than girls. In Zimbabwe special education is the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Education where it is administered as a separate department, Special Education Section. Many children with special educational needs begin their school career later than their peers. This is due to late identification of development problems/ impairment or parents' ignorance of educational opportunities for disabled children. The disabled girl-child needs special attention as she is in a more difficult situation than able-bodied girls. She suffers two kinds of discrimination - the one she shares with all other girls because of her sex and discrimination because of disability. There have been many reports of disabled girls being sexually abused, making them vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and AIDS.

Despite the fact that the disabled girl-child deserves special attention, no country in the SADC has given the matter specific attention. Disabled children need more attention in terms of resource allocation and the disabled girls need even more resources than boys. It is evident in the whole SADC region that the education system is generally still biased against girls and dropout rates are still high though efforts have been made to redress the situation.

## Affirmative Action

Zimbabwe has done well in addressing the imbalances that have sidelined girls for a long time. The government has introduced several policies that seek to increase enrolment and retention of girls in the education system of the country.

Affirmative action was introduced in Zimbabwe in 1995 with the objective of promoting the enrolment of females and other under represented groups such as the disabled, minorities and the elderly.

Affirmative action has however brought its own problems, not only in Zimbabwe but the SADC region as a whole. Often, teachers and lecturers and male students marginalize female students who acquired places at various institutions of learning through affirmative action.

Their male counterparts view them as a "weaker sex" that needs to be assisted to make it into institutions of higher learning.

Governments should also pay attention to performance gaps that exist as a result of household duties that occupy girls at home while boys have all the time to do their home work and study.

Teaching material and curricula, which are biased against girls, have also contributed to these performance gaps and therefore should be reviewed.

## Pregnant girls in school

Zimbabweans received the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture's Policy Circular number 35 of 2001, which allows pregnant schoolgirls to go back to school after delivery with mixed feelings. Some parents are of the opinion that allowing the girls back to school after delivery could have a bad influence on other girls. The policy has been in place for two years and there are a lot of gaps in the implementation of the policy with some parents pushing headmasters/ headmistresses not to take back any girl who falls pregnant. Some parents also prefer to send their daughters to a different school after delivery because of fear of stigmatization by fellow pupils.

Some women's organizations highlighted that even though most parents believe that allowing the girls back to school will send wrong messages, girls have always fallen pregnant before the policy was put in place and allowing them back to school will give them a chance to complete school and possibly get a job and look after the baby. Some female lecturers are also in support of the policy and argued that every child has a right to education whatever their moral standing.

There is therefore need for sensitization on the policy and the benefits it has not only to girls but also to society as a whole. The policy on pregnant girls in school is a step toward addressing the gender gaps in education in line with the Beijing Platform of Action that stresses the need to address inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training and persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child and should receive due support.

## Child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse has been identified as one of the major threats to girls' welfare, and a serious impediment to their retention in school. There is lack of knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse and its impact on the individual girl hence in the rural areas that CAMFED works in very gender insensitive punishments/ penalties for abusers have been designed. According to the people in Mola, an abuser ceases to be an abuser the moment he accepts responsibility for the pregnancy if the sexual abuse resulted in it. If the girl never got pregnant it was not abuse. If he married the girl, even if she was as young as fourteen or fifteen, there was nothing to call the police for. This is a very sensitive and hidden issue, and requires deep trust with communities in order to address it CAMFED has realised that there is need for strong partnerships with our communities, and our experience as young rural women, to bring these issues to the surface and explore ways to tackle them through a united community effort which links everyone, from the traditional leadership and all family members hinging the approach to the needs and the welfare of the individual girl. Sensitisation on the existence of the Sexual Offences Act is another approach that CAMFED can use after gaining trust from the families we are working with.

By Angeline Mugwendere, Director - CAMA under the Campaign for female Education (CAMFED).

# Economics Made Easy

## Prices

The forces of demand and supply will determine prices on the market. The interactions of supply and demand will result in an equilibrium market price.

There can be distortion in the market, which will affect prices. The state can control prices of basic goods and services in the economy to cushion the low-income group. Women who are mostly in the low-income group can benefit from price controls.

Experience has shown that price controls result in shortages and usually gives birth to what are popularly known as black markets or parallel markets.

Producers will produce fewer goods because it will not be profitable for them to sell their goods at the controlled price. Producers can also produce low quality products, which will enable them to make a profit. Sanitary wear is not available in Zimbabwe because of price controls. Sugar is not available in supermarkets but available on the black market because of price controls.

Price controls therefore will leave the poor and vulnerable especially women worse off because for them to access basic commodities they have to buy from the black market which can only be afforded by very few individuals who are mostly men. Players in the black market are now repackaging commodities into smaller quantities, for example sugar is now being sold in cups, and this allows the low-income earners who are mostly women responsible for

preparing food for the family to have access to these scarce commodities.

The state usually controls the price of basic commodities such as bread, salt, sugar, cooking oil, paraffin, petrol and diesel, which are specific needs for women to run their homes everyday.

## Markets

A market is a place where buyers and sellers meet and exchange goods for money. Women are very active players in some markets as consumers and in other markets as sellers only. Examples of markets can take the following forms:

### *Perfect Competition*

This is a situation where there are many buyers and sellers who produce and demand similar products, examples of such markets are Mbare Musika, Jaunda, and Mukoba where women and men bring tomatoes and sell to consumers

### *Monopoly*

A situation where one player with no close substitute dominates the market for the products examples are ZESA. There is no other provider for electricity in Zimbabwe, so it means there is only one price for it, which most women cannot afford in Zimbabwe. Some women actually refuse to have electricity in their homes because they will not be able to pay. At the end of the day there is an increased burden of household chores, as women have to fetch for an alternative source of fuel.

### *Monopolistic Competition*

This entails a situation where there are many buyers and sellers who sell different products, which serve the same purpose, for example soap industry. This allows women and men to make choices according to their incomes.

### *Oligopoly*

A situation where there are a few large producers like producers in the dairy industry. This limits choices especially for women who do not have enough income given that prices charged by these large producers will be generally high.

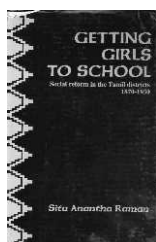


Resources allocated in the national budget should cater for the different needs of girls and boys in school and strive to retain more girls in school. (ZWRN Photo 2004 by Thembile Phute)

# Resources on Gender and Education available from the ZWRCN Documentation Centre

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## About ZWRCN

Founded in 1990, the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network is a non-governmental gender and development organisation which aims to enhance the position and status of women in Zimbabwe in various aspects of their lives.

The Vision of the ZWRCN is to see women enjoying the benefits of actualising their full potential in the political, economic, social, public and private spheres of their lives.

The Mission of the ZWRCN is to enable women to make informed decisions about selected aspects of their lives (political, economic, social, public and private spheres) and act accordingly.

Information is at the heart of ZWRCN's activities. The organisation actively collects data in a gender-responsive manner, and disseminates this information so as to lobby for women's empowerment.

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