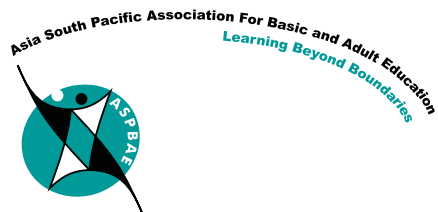




GENDER, EQUALITY & EDUCATION

A Report Card on South Asia



GENDER, EQUALITY & EDUCATION

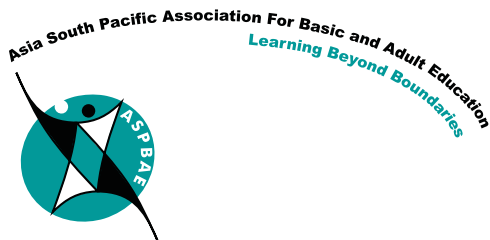
A Report Card on South Asia

Research Team

Swati Narayan – Lead Researcher and Writer

Nitya Rao

Maria Lourdes A. Khan



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Cover design: Avelino Cielo, Manila, Philippines

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For further information and copies, please contact

ASPBAE Secretariat

C/o MAAPL

9th Floor, Eucharistic Congress Building No. 3

5, Convent Street, Colaba

Mumbai 400 039 India

Email: aspbae@vsnl.com

Designed and processed by Digiscan Pre-press Pvt. Ltd
Printed in Kathmandu, Nepal

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FOREWORD

Despite a constant focus on women's education as a priority in global discussions of human rights and quality of life, women still lag well behind men in many countries of the world, even at the level of basic literacy. This illuminating report analyzes the gender gap in the nations of South Asia, showing that, despite a good deal of progress in some nations, educational disadvantages continue to be a major aspect of women's unequal empowerment.

Why should we think that education matters deeply? Let us consider the connections between a basic level of education and other capabilities (substantial freedoms or opportunities) for which women are striving all over the world. The nature of the world economy is such that illiteracy condemns a woman (or man) to a small number of low-skilled types of employment. With limited employment opportunities, a woman is also limited in her options to leave a bad or abusive marriage. And she has a low bargaining position in the family for basic resources such as food and medical care. Where women have decent employment options outside the home, the sex ratio typically reflects a higher evaluation of the worth of female life.

Because literacy is connected in general with the ability to move outside the home and to stand on one's own outside of it, it is also connected to the ability of women to meet and collaborate with other women, a great source of social and political empowerment.

More generally, women's access to the political process is very much enhanced by literacy. We can see this very clearly in the history of the *panchayats* in India. In 1992, India adopted the 72nd and 73rd Amendments to the Constitution, giving women a mandatory 33% reservation in the

panchayats, or local village councils. A seat is designated as a woman's seat, and the woman's seat shifts from cycle to cycle. This move, of course, had intrinsic significance. Increasing women's literacy by itself would not have produced anything like a 33% result, as we can see from the United States, where women still hold only 13% of seats in Congress. But in order for this result to be truly effective, making women dignified and independent equals of males, literacy has to enter the picture. According to recent studies of the *panchayat* system, women are persistently mocked and devalued in the *panchayats* if they are illiterate. When a seat is no longer reserved (the rotation has passed on), and the woman seeks to contest a non-reserved seat (sometimes running against her own husband), her chances are clearly enhanced if she can move as a fully independent actor in society, with access to communications from memos to national newspapers. Literacy is clearly crucial in this transition.

On the plane of national and international politics, it is very difficult indeed for an illiterate woman to enjoy full participation. As participants in national legislatures and in international meetings such as international human rights meetings, illiterate women are obviously very likely to be left out. Even if at times their voices are heard, they can't participate fully in meetings that involve the circulation of draft upon draft of a human rights document, and so forth.

Literacy is crucial, too, for women's access to the legal system. Even to bring a charge against someone who has raped you, you have to file a

complaint. If your father or husband is not helping you out, and some legal NGO does not take on your case, you are nowhere if you cannot read and write – and, indeed, more than that. For you need an education that includes basic knowledge of the political and legal process in your own nation.

These concrete factors suggest some less tangible connections. Literacy (and education in general) are very much connected to women's ability to form social relationships on a basis of equality with others, and to achieve the important social good of self-respect. It is important, as well, to mobility (through access to jobs and the political process), to health and life (through the connection to bodily integrity and exit options) – in short, to more or less all of the "capabilities" that I have argued for as central political entitlements.

Especially important is the role that female education has been shown to have in controlling population growth. No single factor has a larger impact on the birth rate: for as women learn to inform themselves about the world they also increasingly take charge of decisions affecting their own lives. And as their bargaining position in the family improves through their marketable skills, their views are more likely to prevail.

So far I have focused on the role played by education in supporting other capabilities. But learning has a more subtle value as well, as a cultivation of powers of thought and expression that might otherwise go neglected. Such neglect of a human being's mental space is especially

likely in lives given over to heavy physical labor and the added burden of housework and child care. A young widow in an adult literacy program in Bangladesh told activist Martha Chen that her mother questioned the value of the class. She replied: “Ma, what valuable things there are in the books you will not understand because you cannot read and write. If somebody behaves badly with me, I go home and sit with the books. When I sit with the books my mind becomes better.”^a The feeling of a place of mental concentration and cultivation that is one’s own can only be properly prized, perhaps, if one has lacked it. There’s something in sitting with a book, this young woman was saying, that makes her feel more herself, less willing to be pushed around by others.

Thinking about the intrinsic value of basic education makes us see that what should be promoted – and what good activists typically promote – is not mere rote use of skills; it is an inquiring habit of mind, and a cultivation of the inner space of the imagination. I shall return to this thought.

So far I have focused on basic literacy – and with much reason, given the depressing statistics about women’s primary education in this excellent report. Basic literacy already opens up many options for women, as well as having intrinsic value as a cultivation of mind and thought. But most job opportunities require

far more than basic literacy, and so does most active participation in citizenship and politics. Secondary education is a more difficult goal by far for women than primary education, since it is at this time that girls who have managed to go to school are often taken out of school to do housework, or to get married. University education is the most difficult of all, because it usually requires going away from home, and the sacrifices involved are more readily made for boys than for girls. But the reality of politics in developing countries suggests that university educated women are far more likely to be able to influence debates at a national level, as well as having access to the most influential and higher paying jobs.

The authors of the report correctly emphasize that early intervention is crucial, since psychological evidence shows that key capacities develop best when stimulated early. Even adult education, however, can change women’s situation, and the report draws attention to the obstacles adult (often working) women face if they attempt to catch up in later life.

The report, operating with the best data available, focuses in a valuable way on many concrete obstacles that stand between women of all ages and an adequate education: not only opposition from family and restrictions on mobility, but such mundane matters as the absence of decent classrooms and toilet facilities, teacher

^a Martha A. Chen, *A Quiet Revolution: Women in Transition in Rural Bangladesh* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1985), p. 202. Rohima, the woman in question, also emphasizes the way in which literacy has increased her general mental concentration and understanding.

corruption and absenteeism, gender bias in teaching materials, and the depressing reality of sexual harassment and, often, sexual violence. (One small comment I would make is that, although the report schematically divides “basic capabilities” from “security,” concern for women’s security and bodily integrity has long been absolutely central to workers on the capabilities approach, and is prominently reflected in my own list of “Central Human Capabilities.”^b)

What country data cannot tell us, however, since countries do not bother to study such things, is what the pedagogy and content of education does to cultivate capacities that are crucial to women’s empowerment and, indeed, to the cultivation of active democratic citizenship for all. Many nations think that education is all about producing technical skills, and they believe that producing these skills by the methods of rote learning is a perfectly adequate way to go about the business of educating citizens. The classroom all too often becomes a drill session, and examining turns into a dreary exercise in regurgitation. What about the development of the student’s active critical and evaluative capacities? What about the ability to question authority, using one’s own reflection and argument? The ability to spot a flaw in the use of evidence, or in a traditional form of argumentation? All citizens need these abilities,

but perhaps the disempowered need them all the more, since tradition and authority are usually against them. South Asia used to be the home of some glorious educational experiments in Socratic empowerment of the student, prominently including women: the school of Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan, the progressive primary school associated with Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi, and many others. Today the progressive voice in education is virtually silent, as technical mastery is the buzz word of the day and people are imagined merely as instruments for national economic growth.

Similarly in eclipse are two other abilities that Tagore believed central: the ability to think of one’s place in the whole world and to approach world problems in the spirit of a world citizen; and the ability to reach out with the sympathetic imagination and inhabit the situation of a person different from oneself. I agree with Tagore that these abilities are crucial if world problems are ever to be solved; and yet policy makers ignore them in favor of more and more technical skill.^c They are certainly crucial for women’s empowerment, and in both directions: women need to develop robust imaginative capacities, and men need to develop the capacity to imagine women’s lives. Even a shred of Tagore’s imaginative feminism would be a great improvement!

^b See M. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

^c See Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Readers of this report may say at this point: These things are frills. Let's make sure that the teacher shows up, that women are not intimidated, that the school has a toilet, and later we can worry about such niceties. I do not agree. First, education of the type I envisage is not very expensive. I have seen NGOs operating under very rough conditions, with no classroom and no equipment, who do a far better job here than government schools, even of an opulent nature. Second, the abilities I have in mind provide education with a heart and soul, making it more likely that both students and teachers will participate in a spirit of more than instrumental drudgery. Why learn to read? Well, if one's critical skills are first enlivened by dialogue about one's social situation (as NGOs frequently do), then one will see why one should want to learn to read, and one will apply oneself. Teachers, similarly, will be empowered to see themselves as creating

human lives, not just providing fodder for national income accounts. And problems such as sexual harassment and intimidation can be more adequately confronted if the pedagogy and content of the classroom includes the idea of human empowerment by showing what it is to respect the active powers of mind of each and every student. So I think we're much more likely to achieve success on the mundane matters confronted in this report if we think large, radical, and creative thoughts about educational reform, and try to get the politicians of the world to see how crucial such reforms are for the health of democratic societies.

Above all, though, the authors of this report are to be warmly congratulated for the work they have done to bring this crucial information to light, and to organize and analyze it so clearly. This itself is a signal contribution to women's progress.

Martha Nussbaum

Martha Nussbaum is an American philosopher with a particular interest in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, political philosophy and ethics.

She taught philosophy and classics at Harvard in the 1970s and early 1980s, then at Brown University until the mid-1990s. Currently she is Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, a chair that includes appointments in the Philosophy Department, the Law School, and the Divinity School. She also holds Associate appointments in Classics and Political Science, is a member of the Committee on Southern Asian Studies, and a Board Member of the Human Rights Program.

*Her work on capabilities, with Amartya Sen, has often focused on the unequal freedoms and opportunities of women, and she has developed a distinctive type of feminism, drawing inspiration from the liberal tradition, but emphasizing that liberalism, at its best, entails radical rethinking of gender relations and relations within the family. Recent work (e.g. *Frontiers of Justice*, 2006), in which she furthered the capabilities approach, has established her as a theorist of global justice.*



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Report Card for South Asia is a call to rights-based action for governments and stakeholders. It uses a gender lens to score and grade countries across South Asia on the basis of country abilities to nurture gender equality in education.

The idea of such a report card originated in Kathmandu during a 2008 regional meeting of the South Asia partnership of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). Its current form, however, reflects a series of discussions, debates and negotiations among members of ASPBAE, and the UNGEI partnership.

There are a number of individuals and groups we need to thank for their contributions to this report.

Our deepest thanks are due to Swati Narayan, the writer and lead researcher of this report. Swati is an independent development analyst who advises government and civil society organizations on policies for the social protection of the basic rights to food and education. Rigorous and relentless in her research, solid and refreshing in her analysis – this report would not have been possible without her highly competent hand.

This report has also been enriched by the conceptual contribution and editorial support of Dr. Nitya Rao of the University of East Anglia (UK) and ASPBAE's representative on the Global Advisory Committee (GAC) of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). Her wide experience of work on gender, livelihoods, education and social policy as a social activist and academic strongly informed the analytical framework of this report.

We also appreciate the excellent inputs of the South Asia UNGEI partnership.

This report drew on the wide expertise and experience of several development practitioners and activists who generously contributed analysis and insight: Shantha Sinha and Mina Swaminathan from India, Rasheda Choudhury, M. Enamul Hoque and Mohammad Muntasim Tanvir from Bangladesh and Rinchen Samdrup from Bhutan. The report also benefited from invaluable inputs from several national education coalitions affiliated with ASPBAE notably Campaign for Popular Education Bangladesh, Pakistan Coalition for Education and the National Campaign for Education Nepal and from Education International's Asia Pacific office. Special thanks are also reserved for ASPBAE staff at the Mumbai Secretariat for their ever helpful support and assistance.

And lastly, our thanks go to the women and girls across South Asia whose daily struggles to exercise their right to a meaningful education continue to inspire and challenge. This report attempts, however failingly, to capture these accounts to stir much needed policy change.

Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan

Secretary General

ASPBAE

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPI	Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International)
CPS	Community Primary School
ECR	Extended Classroom
EFA	Education For All
FAWE	Federation of African Women Educationalists
GAC	Global Advisory Committee (of UNGEI)
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
GEEI	Gender Equality in Education Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GNI	Gross National Income
GPI	Gender Parity Index
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services (India)
IDA	International Development Association (World Bank)
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
MDG	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTA	Parent–Teacher Association
RNGPS	Registered Non-Government Primary School (Bangladesh)
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Equality Index
SMC	School Management Committee
SWAp	Sector-Wide Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Asia has witnessed an education revolution in the last two decades with millions of girls enrolling into schools. Girls from wealthy urban families are now just as likely as their brothers to complete at least five years of primary education, with little discrimination. But it is invariably the poor, especially in rural areas, who literally have miles to go – to the nearest school.

Today, 96 million girls¹ across South Asia remain out of the different levels of formal basic education, from pre-primary to secondary levels. They confront numerous barriers from lack of suitable schools, unaffordable and illegitimate fees, unavailability of functional toilets, absent teachers and sexual harassment to invisible household chores and grinding poverty.

Forty-eight per cent of girls are also married before the age of 18 years, which often leaves their education incomplete.² In the twenty-first century, policy makers and educationalists can no longer afford to side-step the gender-sensitive challenges of education – girls cannot wait another generation.

Report card

This report, therefore, uses a gender lens to score and grade countries across South Asia based on their respective abilities to distinctly nurture gender equality in education. The quantitative framework and the specific indices chosen for the report reflect

¹ 96 million refers to the total number of girls across South Asia of respective school ages who are not in pre-primary, primary or secondary schools.

² UNICEF (2005). *Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice: A Statistical Exploration*. New York: UNICEF. http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf (last retrieved November 2009).

some of the priorities of civil society and UNGEI partners for basic education, and serve as a call to action to national governments to ensure that every woman and girl receives her rights to a meaningful education.

This report card has emerged in its present form through a process of discussions and negotiations between key members of ASPBAE and UNGEI, with inputs from ASPBAE's national coalitions, as well as development practitioners and experts in the field of education from across South Asia.

The analysis relies on the latest cross-country comparable data that is largely available in the public domain from databases maintained by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. Education surveys conducted by national governments and civil society organizations have also been used.

The analysis reveals that very few countries are able to achieve an 'A' grade (80 per cent or more marks on a five point scale – see individual Country Report Cards for grades, and Sources and Calculations for detailed methodology) on any of the parameters analysed.

Country by country

Despite an impressive 500 per cent increase in enrolments in the last eight years in

Figure 1 | South Asia Gender Equality in Education Report Card

	Overall Mark	Overall Grade
Afghanistan	36	D
Bangladesh	57	C
Bhutan	52	C
India	63	B
Nepal	50	C
Pakistan	41	C
Sri Lanka	72	B

Afghanistan,³ nearly one-third of districts have no schools for girls.⁴ While the country has used the opportunity of the enactment of its new constitution to extend the guarantee of free education up to secondary level for all students,⁵ it still has a long way to go towards its implementation. However, this situation needs to be seen in the context of government contending with active conflict that has severely limited its ability to realize its policies.

Bangladesh is acknowledged to have made sizeable strides to universalize primary school enrolment from a mere 46 per cent in 1990.⁶ It has also been able to attain gender parity in both primary and secondary levels of education before the 2005 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) deadline.⁷ However, the education system remains burdened with poor quality and

³ Mojaddidi *et al.* (2006). *Free Quality Education for Every Afghan Child*. Oxfam Briefing Paper 93, Oxfam GB.

⁴ U.S. Department of State (2009). *Human Rights Report 2008: Afghanistan*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Washington: US Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/sca/119131.htm> (last retrieved November 2009).

⁵ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2004, http://www.president.gov.af/sroot_eng.aspx?id=68

⁶ N. Hossain and N. Kabeer (2004). Achieving Universal Primary Education and Eliminating Gender Disparity, *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 4.

⁷ UNESCO (2007). *Education for All by 2015 – Will we make it?* EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008. Paris and Oxford: UNESCO and Oxford University Press.

low completion rates – at the primary level 46 per cent of teachers are untrained and 34 per cent of students drop out.

Bhutan has made dramatic improvements in primary school enrolments, especially for girls, by addressing the difficulties of its mountainous terrain through rapid expansion of community schools and boarding facilities.⁸

India has introduced a variety of progressive initiatives in the last decade – from residential schools for girls (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas) to universal midday school meals – to expand the access and quality of basic education coverage, especially for girls. The enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in August 2009 has also displayed immense political will. But the real test for the millions of educationally deprived children will lie in its effective implementation. The recently launched Female Literacy Mission (Saakshar Bharat Mission) to make 60 million women functionally literate by 2012 with the support of village-level elected *panchayats*,⁹ too, is an ambitious intervention which holds much promise.¹⁰

Maldives has enacted a host of policy interventions and measures to ensure gender equality. However, due to the inability to access the required data, it could not be included in this South Asia analysis.

While **Nepal** has proposed guarantees of free education up to secondary level, its draft constitution has yet to be ratified.

Pakistan needs to see a renewed commitment to girls' education as 40 per cent of girls are not enrolled in primary school.¹¹

In **Sri Lanka**, systematic historical investments in education, across its varied dimensions, have ensured that more than 90 per cent of women are literate and 97 per cent of girls are in primary school.¹² But the post-tsunami and post-conflict reconstruction needs of the education system continue to pose important challenges.

Future directions

Girls have few opportunities to enrol in school and complete their basic education, especially when they reside in rural areas and hail from the poorest communities of South Asia. Despite

⁸ RGoB (2009). *A Study on Enrolment and Retention Strategies in Bhutan*. Policy & Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu. RGoB (2006). *Education for All, Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2000–06*. Policy & Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu. Denchen Zam (2008). *The Development of Education: National Report of Bhutan*. Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/bhutan_NR08.pdf (last accessed by the author on August 2009).

⁹ Panchayats are an elected body of representatives at the village level as the lowest tier of decentralized democratic governance. Special Correspondent (2009). National Mission for Female Literacy launched, Frontpage, *The Hindu*, 9 September 2009 and Vishnoi, A. (2009). Panchayats to power new literacy mission, Story, *Indian Express*, 6 August 2009.

¹⁰ 2009, Pranab Mukherjee's Budget Speech. <http://business.rediff.com/special/2009/jul/06/budget09-finance-ministers-budget-speech.htm> (last retrieved November 2009).

¹¹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics, *ibid*.

¹² World Bank (2005). *Treasures of Education System in Sri Lanka*, Executive Summary, Overview, Principal Findings and Options for the Future. World Bank, Sri Lanka.

many signs of progress, the 2015 MDG deadline for universal primary completion and elimination of gender disparities at all levels of education, now only 5 years away, is likely to be missed by many countries.

Monitoring gender parity within classrooms alone, however, is not sufficient. Gender discrimination continues to remain all-pervasive both within and beyond the education system with knock-on effects of deprivation evident in every facet of women's lives.

We have therefore developed a composite indicator (Figure 2) which analyses the education system and focuses on its potential to promote gender equality by enabling women to be active and equal participants in all spheres of life. The integrated analysis reveals that the interplay of multiple layers of socio-economic barriers, especially poverty, patriarchy and insecurity, restrict the ability of women and girls to access their rights to education and expand their opportunities.

Amartya Sen conceptualizes poverty as 'basic capability failure' and education is one of the most basic of human capabilities. This analysis draws on both (1) the analytical framework of capabilities, resources and security developed by the MDG Task Force on Gender Equality and (2) the interplay of women-intensive and women-exclusive barriers herein.

The comparative perspective also offers a useful tool to gauge the level of political commitment to implement policies to support the education

of girls and women to usher in social change. This report card is designed and conceived to reveal priority areas of policy action to improve gender equality. The key recommendations pertinent to education are:

1. Ensure basic capabilities

Education and nutrition are universally accepted as essential for a person's survival and wellbeing, but are further the means through which a person can lead the kind of life that he or she has reason to value. Every child or adult deprived of education or adequate nutrition is vulnerable to be exploited at work, at home, or within the confines of child marriage. Girls, in particular, need special attention to complete a full cycle of basic education, given the additional constraints they face, in terms of socio-cultural norms that legitimize differential entitlements for men and women. South Asia also has the world's highest rates of child malnutrition and many children from poor families go to school hungry.

- Enact laws with adequate financial commitments to guarantee free basic education of good quality for every child, especially girls till the age of 18 years.
- Expand the coverage of pre-primary education and secondary education especially in rural areas.
- Invest in literacy for all women, with the holistic aim of women's empowerment to enable them to translate basic capabilities into economic, social and political

opportunities for themselves, their family and the community at large.

- Implement legal guarantees to provide nutritious, cooked meals to all school children including at pre-primary levels.

2. Expand entitlements and opportunities

Achieving basic capabilities, especially for the marginalized, requires access to adequate and good quality resources and an enabling environment that provides them with the necessary opportunities to engage with the larger society, economy and polity. A little education is not enough, as the benefits of education endure only after a critical level of schooling which is both relevant and meaningful to their lives. Almost half the girls in South Asia are married before the age of 18 years and an equal proportion are not in secondary school. Enrolments at the pre-primary level are also negligible. Functional schools are necessary to ensure increased enrolment, retention and completion of the full cycle of basic education with the added potential to delay under-age marriages, especially of girls, and prepare them for participating in all walks of life.

- Fill the large vacancies, especially at the pre-primary and secondary levels, with qualified teachers who can support learning and serve as role models especially for girl students.
- Ensure that schools have suitable physical infrastructure including functional toilets for girls, drinking water and safe buildings.

- Make necessary social investments to eliminate gender bias in textbooks, curricula and educational materials.

- Secure equal representation of women in school management committees (SMCs) and parent–teacher associations (PTAs).

3. Confront all forms of violence

Women and girls continue to face different forms of violence, both physical and structural. Within school, this includes corporal punishment, but also the delegation of a range of gendered tasks, involving cleaning and cooking, to girls. On the way to school, girls encounter sexual harassment, and sometimes outright attacks, as in the instances of acid-throwing on school girls in Afghanistan. Structural violence can be both economic and social. The former implies the need to engage in different forms of child labour, both paid and unpaid (domestic work), as well as accept wage discrimination in the labour markets. At the social level, norms such as early marriage for girls and restricted freedom of movement continue to hamper women and girls in living a meaningful life.

- Subsidize transport costs and support construction of residential school/hostel facilities, especially for girls.
- Enact and implement laws on child labour and child marriage to liberate girls in particular from the double burdens of exploitative and subordinating relations at both work and home.

Gender equality can only be achieved by simultaneously addressing a range of barriers that girls and women face across different dimensions of their life. Many of these barriers are not exclusive to women and girls, but equally confront poor boys and men of particular caste and class groups, especially in rural areas; yet the deeply engrained gender roles and relations in society tend to intensify these barriers for girls. If there are limited household

resources, for instance, then girls will be the first to drop out of school. There are also some constraints exclusive to girls, such as restrictions on mobility post-puberty, in most of South Asia. While the above recommendations do not specifically identify policy measures which address gender-exclusive or gender-intensive barriers, each of them will address the issues raised from this perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Thirteen-year-old Nazma wants to be a teacher but cannot go to school. She dropped out as she was not able to stay in school for long hours without a functional toilet. Her father Maulvi Iqbal Khan, a villager from the Mewat district in northern India, is anguished:

*We cannot send our girls to far-away villages for studies as it is not safe to travel 3–4 kilometres on foot. Nazma is an intelligent girl and I feel bad when I see my daughter wanting to go to school but I cannot do anything.*¹³

In contrast, Nazma's four brothers, however, do go to school. The education system needs to acknowledge and address unique gender challenges, especially in rural areas and amongst the poorest communities. The 96 million girls like Nazma across South Asia simply cannot afford to miss their education – from pre-primary to secondary school.¹⁴

Beyond gender parity

The inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment as the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), almost a decade ago, pointed to the global recognition of its importance for meeting the challenges of poverty and development. It drew on the Education for All (EFA) Goal 5:

¹³ This case study draws on primary research and interviews conducted by a local researcher in Mewat.

¹⁴ UNESCO Institute of Statistics, *ibid.*

Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.

While the 2005 deadline has been missed by most countries, it needs to be clarified that gender equality means much more than parity in numbers, or getting more girls into school, which can sometimes even be achieved by lowering the bar for all – both boys and girls.¹⁵ Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and relationships between men and women based on a negotiation of power and identity in society. Gender equality therefore intrinsically implies justice, greater opportunity and a better quality of life for all, so that equality is achieved at satisfactorily high levels of wellbeing.

Education is no doubt a vital ingredient in achieving gender equality, yet it is not sufficient for eliminating the range of inequalities confronting women or enabling them to participate effectively in society. For this to occur, women must also enjoy equal economic opportunities, use of productive assets, freedom from drudgery, equal representation in decision-making bodies, and freedom from the threat of violence and coercion.

But even within the educational field, MDG 3 dilutes the life-cycle approach embedded in the EFA commitments by restricting itself to

primary and secondary education, and bypassing the need for early childhood care and education, life skills, adult literacy and improved quality, all of which have a much greater impact on girls and women in societies where they remain marginalized.

Gender equality redefined

The Task Force on MDG 3 tried to address the historical disadvantage experienced by women and girls across most societies, by suggesting a range of strategic priorities to address constraints and barriers across different dimensions of their lives. Men's engagement in changing gender roles and norms was also seen as vital. According to the report submitted by this Task Force in 2005,¹⁶ gender equality consists of three significant dimensions:

■ The capabilities domain

This refers to the basic human capabilities, that is, the freedom that a person has to make life choices for survival and avoidance of harm, such as ensuring household food security and nutrition, providing children with basic education and access to adequate healthcare during pregnancy. As succinctly described by Amartya Sen, capabilities are 'the substantive freedoms (a person) enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value.'¹⁷ Basic capabilities are fundamental to human wellbeing, and the means through which

¹⁵ UNESCO (2003). *Gender and Education for All: The leap to equality*. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003. Paris: UNESCO.

¹⁶ Grown, C, G.R. Gupta and A. Kes (2005). *Taking action: achieving gender equality and empowering women*. UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. London: Earthscan.

¹⁷ Sen, Amartya K. (1999). *Development As Freedom*. New York: Knopf Press.

people access other forms of wellbeing. In this report, we focus only on girls' and women's access to different levels of education, from pre-primary to adult, as an indicator of their basic capabilities.

■ **The access to resources and opportunities domain**

This primarily refers to the ability to apply or use one's basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as agricultural land or credit) and resources (such as daily wages or factory employment) as well as political opportunities (from representation in national parliaments to parent-teacher associations). In the context of the education system, resources have been identified as those inputs and services that enable a person to acquire basic capabilities and use them to expand their wellbeing. These include the specific availability of suitable infrastructure, quality inputs and incentives. Opportunities lie embedded in the contextual economic and political realities of individual societies, and are here measured with reference to broader indicators of human development and empowerment.

■ **The security domain**

The focus here is on reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict, which can result in physical and psychological harm and prevent individuals from attaining their full

potential. Physical violence could be manifest in conflict and post-conflict situations and in society at large. We have also interpreted violence in broader structural terms to include economic violence reflected through poverty or child labour, or as socio-cultural violence within families and communities in the garb of child marriage and lack of freedom of movement for women, or within the specific context of schools in the form of corporal punishment.

These three domains are interrelated, but gains in any one will not automatically translate into gender equality without attention to the others. For instance, evidence from Latin America indicates that even though girls and boys enrol in equal numbers in primary and even secondary schools, women continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market relative to men with similar education and experience. If the goal of attaining gender equality is to be met, then it is important to pay attention to each of these domains, building synergies between them, rather than focusing exclusively on one or the other.

Women's empowerment is closely related to gender equality, but distinct from it. It implies not just that women should have equal capabilities and equal access to resources and opportunities, but that they must also have the agency or ability to use those rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to

make strategic choices and decisions.¹⁸ And for them to exercise such agency, they must be able to live without fear of violence or coercion.

Intensive and exclusive gender barriers

Across South Asia, gender disadvantage quite significantly cross-cuts other forms of disadvantage, whether in terms of geographic location, caste, class or ethnicity.¹⁹ Some barriers are general in nature – that is, they apply not just for girls, but equally for boys in marginalized communities. However, even in the case of such generic barriers as access to functional and good quality neighbourhood schools, gender norms make these more intense and severe for girls, who lack alternative options. In this scenario, for example, while boys are likely to be sent to fee-paying schools, girls are likely to lose their chance of gaining an education altogether.

Other barriers apply almost exclusively to girls, such as post-puberty mobility constraints. They reflect particular gender roles and norms, which are important to recognize and address if gender equality goals are indeed to be achieved. For instance, marriage is a major reason for girls dropping out of school across South Asia. While one way of addressing this problem is to strictly enforce the legal age of marriage, another could

be to also allow married girls to continue in school, as has now been done in several African countries, such as Ethiopia and Malawi, under pressure from the Federation of African Women Educationalists (FAWE).

The concepts of women-intensive and women-exclusive barriers and constraints have originally been developed in the context of economic empowerment,²⁰ but can equally be applied to an analysis of female empowerment in the realm of education. They are useful concepts in terms of highlighting the cross-cutting and relational nature of barriers faced by girls and women. While some constraints are exclusive to them, such as social norms in relation to marriage soon after puberty, in the case of others, gender serves to intensify the effect.

Analytical frame

This report seeks to analyse the degree of progress made in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment in South Asia by drawing on both (1) the analytical framework of capabilities, resources and security, developed by the MDG 3 task force, and (2) the interplay of women-intensive and women-exclusive barriers herein. While retaining a focus on the education sector, this analysis considers broader socio-cultural, normative and institutional factors that facilitate or hamper this process.

¹⁸ Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3): 435–64.

¹⁹ Huebler, F. (2008). *Beyond gender: measuring disparity in South Asia using an Education Parity Index*. Kathmandu: UNGEI.

²⁰ Carr, M., M. Chen and R. Jhabvala (eds.) (1996). *Speaking Out: Women's economic empowerment in South Asia*. London: IT Publications.

Other measures developed earlier, too, such as the Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI) recognize the importance of context in assessing gender equality. They too have sought to capture the overall environment in the country that can enable or hinder women's exercise of agency, apart from the specific analysis of their educational achievements in terms of enrolment and survival in schools.²¹ The Right to Education Project has also developed a framework based on the 4As of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability with recommended gender disaggregation of indicators.²²

In this report, we try to move the analysis one step forward by grouping the indicators used into four categories (see Figure 2).

In the first category, we have attempted to capture the governance context in terms of political recognition of gender disadvantage and policy commitments to address the same both from a governance and accountability perspective. Educational expenditures have been considered a proxy for political will, and a test of commitment is often the sustaining of educational expenditures during times of crisis, alongside not just the presence of a supportive legal and policy framework, but also its implementation. The role of civil society organizations including NGOs, teachers' unions and communities are critical to ensuring state accountability to provision of basic entitlements.

The remaining three categories are defined in line with the MDG taskforce, as discussed earlier. First, we use girls' and women's access to different levels of basic education through their life-cycle – from the pre-primary and primary levels through secondary education and as adults – as an indicator of their basic educational capabilities.

Next, the emphasis shifts to a multi-pronged analysis on access to resources within the classroom (education infrastructure, quality and incentives) and opportunities beyond. Apart from UNDP's Gender-related Development Index (GDI), we have included the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) to assess how far girls and women are able to translate their education into earnings and political decision-making opportunities. Even though both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, for example, have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education and despite symbolic milestones like former Sri Lankan President Sirimavo Bandaranaike being the world's first woman minister in 1960 and the several successive Bangladeshi Heads of State being women, we find that they trail behind on more holistic gender empowerment measures.

In the final security domain, we have interpreted violence in broad terms as economic violence (reflected through poverty and child labour) and socio-cultural violence (inherent in child

²¹ Unterhalter, E. (2006). *Measuring gender equality in education in South Asia*. Kathmandu: UNGEI.

²² Right to Education Indicator based on the 4A framework: Concept Paper prepared by Gauthier de Beco, Independent Consultant, for The Right to Education Project, May 2009. http://www.right-to-education.org/sites/r2e.gn.apc.org/files/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Concept%20Paper_final.pdf

Figure 2 | Framework and Indicators for South Asia Education Gender Equality Report Card

	Indicator	Women-intensive	Women-exclusive
Section 1 Governance Context			
A) Political Will (PW)	i. Right to free education	✓	
	ii. Public expenditure on education	✓	
	iii. Policy framework to address gender gaps in education		✓
	iv. Ban on physical punishment	✓	
B) Transparency and Accountability (TA)	i. Corruption index	✓	
	ii. Civil society participation in education policy platforms		
	iii. Protection of teachers' rights	✓	
	iv. Women's participation in school management		✓
Section 2 Capabilities			
A) Access to Basic Education (GBE)	i. Girls' Pre-Primary enrolment		✓
	ii. Girls' Primary School enrolment		✓
	iii. Girls' Secondary School enrolment		✓
	iv. Women's Literacy		✓
Section 3 Resources and Opportunities			
A) Infrastructure (EI)	i. School building and drinking water	✓	
	ii. Functional toilets separately for girls		✓
B) Quality (QI)	i., ii. Teacher vacancies and absenteeism	✓	
	iii. Trained teacher-pupil ratio	✓	
	iv., v. Availability of gender-sensitive textbooks		✓
C) Incentives (IN)	i. Existence of universal incentives: school meals	✓	
	ii., iii. Scholarships and non-cash incentives for girls		✓
D) Equality (GE)	i. Gender development (GDI)		✓
	ii. Gender empowerment measure (GEM)		✓
Section 4 Security			
A) Barriers to Education (BE)	i. Poverty levels	✓	
	ii. Prevalence of child labour	✓	
	iii. Age at marriage		✓
	iv. Girls' freedom of movement		✓

marriage and restrictions on freedom of movement for women). While we do analyse the policy framework against corporal punishment in schools, the environment of physical violence visible in conflict and post-conflict situations has not been included in the quantitative analysis, mainly due to lack of comparable data.

We also try to analytically distinguish between indicators that exclusively affect girls and women, and those that affect all vulnerable groups but which within them are more severe for girls. Since capabilities, for example, refer to an individual's ability to act and freedom to make choices, their denial has been considered to define women-exclusive indicators.

Formulae and beyond

The calculations for this report and the detailed methodology for scoring are presented in the Annex. The weightings of the eight major indicators listed above were:

Political Will	15%
Educational Infrastructure	15%
Quality Inputs	15%
Access to Basic Education	15%
Transparency and Accountability	10%
Incentives	10%
Equality	10%
Barriers	10%

Within each indicator, sub-indicators were not always weighted equally. Each sub-indicator uses a five-point scale (quintiles) for ranking, with an A grade representing a score of 80 per cent or more, and an E grade representing a score of less than 20 per cent.

Availability of data has had an important influence on the distribution of weightings to ensure that lack of data does not unduly impact the overall scores for a country. What emerges in the final analysis is that while a country doing poorly on one indicator can partially make up by doing well on another, the interlinkages between these indicators imply the need for holistic policy attention if gender equality goals are to be met.

It must, however, also be noted that the quantitative results of the report card are only

as good as the data that they are based on. Maldives has enacted a host of policy interventions and measures to ensure gender equality. However, due to the inability to access the required data, it could not be included in this South Asia analysis.

While this report uses a country as the unit of analysis, clearly there are huge variations within countries, not only large ones like India, but also smaller ones like Sri Lanka, with reasons ranging from conflict and security issues to those of poverty and exclusion. While this report highlights key issues and problems across countries, translating this into a disaggregated state-level analysis, which brings out regional variation within countries, would be a useful next step.

For now, though, the report first presents the Country Report Cards as an overall summary for each country of performance within the four broad domains: (1) the governance domain: the big picture, (2) the capabilities domain: cycle of basic education, (3) resources and opportunities: in and outside the classroom, and (4) the security domain: from a gender point of view. The remainder of the report provides a deeper analysis of each domain via the indicators and sub-indicators as listed in Figure 2 above. Finally, the Conclusions point policy makers and educationists towards specific policy advocacy priority recommendations for South Asia which emerge from the analysis.



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COUNTRY REPORT CARDS

AFGHANISTAN

REPORT CARD: AFGHANISTAN

Overall Mark: 36 / 100

Overall Grade: D

Subject	Grade (A–F)	Mark
Governance Context		
Political Will	B	78
Transparency and Accountability	D	26
Capabilities		
Access to Basic Education	D	28
Resources and Opportunities		
Education Infrastructure	C	48
Quality Inputs	D	33
Education Incentives	E	9
Gender Equality	E	0
Security		
Gender Barriers to Education	D	37

Afghan girls unfortunately trail behind their South Asian sisters in receiving an education, with enrolments before 2001 officially zero. However, this situation needs to be seen in the context of government contending with active conflict that has severely limited its ability to realize its policies. Since 2001, girls' enrolments in school have increased by more than 500 per cent.²³ Even one-quarter of parliamentarians are women, thanks to an election quota.²⁴

But more widespread gender equality will be a hard-fought battle. Only 12 per cent of women are literate to this day.²⁵ Half the school age population remains out of school.²⁶ Girls are especially vulnerable.

Two-thirds of the girls who do manage to enrol in primary school do not even survive to grade five.²⁷ Classes conducted in the open air, or in temporary tents, need to be in permanent school buildings.²⁸ Teachers need to be recruited, trained and deployed equitably across the provinces.

When schools are far from village homes, they are not considered to be safe, especially in the Southern provinces, which affects the enrolment especially of girls. The impact of security issues on the education sector needs to be addressed.

The task ahead is onerous, but the Karzai government has shown the political will by deploying 25 per cent of public expenditure to education.²⁹ The Education Strategic Plan and PRSPs also provide a clear direction. But the real test lies in the implementation of this vision with accountability. Donors, too, need to ensure that their official aid does not bypass the government but provides long-term predictable finances to support the education budget.

Today, an Afghan mother can expect her child to live for only 44 years.³⁰ Afghanistan still has a long journey to traverse to provide not only good quality education for every child but also raise the levels of human and gender development.

²³ Mojaddidi *et al.* (2006). *Free Quality Education for Every Afghan Child*. Oxfam Briefing Paper 93, Oxfam GB.

²⁴ UNDP (2009). *Human Development Report, Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

²⁵ UNESCO Institute of Statistics. <http://stats.uis.unesco.org> (last retrieved November 2009).

²⁶ Baker, A. (2008). *Afghanistan's Girl Gap*. Karokh District, Herat, 17 January 2008, *TIME* <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1704654,00.html> (last accessed by author November 2009).

²⁷ UIS. *ibid.*

²⁸ U.S. Department of State (2009). *Human Rights Report 2008: Afghanistan*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Washington: US Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/sca/119131.htm> (last retrieved November 2009).

²⁹ UIS. *ibid.*

³⁰ UNDP (2009). *ibid.*

BANGLADESH

REPORT CARD: BANGLADESH

Overall Mark: 57 / 100

Overall Grade: C

Subject	Grade (A–F)	Mark
Governance Context		
Political Will	B	74
Transparency and Accountability	C	48
Capabilities		
Access to Basic Education	C	47
Resources and Opportunities		
Education Infrastructure	B	63
Quality Inputs	B	64
Education Incentives	C	43
Gender Equality	C	46
Security		
Gender Barriers to Education	C	58

Two of every three girls in Bangladesh are married below the age of 18 years.³¹ While the nation has made spectacular strides in the nineties to increase primary enrolments and attain gender parity, most women are still unable to achieve their full educational potential.

The primary education system has expanded considerably, but its quality and accountability are weak. Quality deficits range from the lack of trained teachers to the widespread use of corporal punishment. The deprivation of pre-primary education to 91 per cent of children, both boys and girls, also implies that they enrol unprepared into primary education and are more likely to drop out – a rate which currently stands at 32 per cent.³²

The Female Secondary Stipend Programme has been a path-breaker to attract and retain girls in schools and attain gender parity.³³ However, gender parity per se often proves to be an illusion as it is attributable to the increased

dropout of boys rather than enhancement in girls' participation at the secondary level.

There is undoubtedly a need for many more complementary interventions to enrol and retain the 57 per cent of girls who do not have access to secondary education. Providing all children with nutritious, cooked school meals could potentially make a huge impact not only to serve as an incentive for poor families to enrol both boys and girls, but also to potentially address widespread malnutrition and improve classroom learning achievements.

Despite being a low-income country, over the decades Bangladesh has shown substantial political will to put girls' education at the forefront of national education development. While enrolments in primary education have substantially improved, pre-primary and secondary education and women's literacy are in urgent need of attention.

³¹ DHS (2009). *Declines in fertility and childhood mortality: Good news from the 2007 Bangladesh DHS*. <http://www.measuredhs.com/pr1/post.cfm?id=47EAC2CB-5056-9F36-DC9B0F805D5CE50F> (last retrieved November 2008).

³² UNESCO (2008). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*. Paris and Oxford.

³³ JBIC (2002). *Bangladesh: Education Sector Overview*. Japan Bank of International Cooperation Sector Study, March.

BHUTAN

REPORT CARD: BHUTAN

Overall Mark: 52 / 100

Overall Grade: C

Subject	Grade (A–F)	Mark
Governance Context		
Political Will	A	84
Transparency and Accountability	D	26
Capabilities		
Access to Basic Education	C	58
Resources and Opportunities		
Education Infrastructure	C	57
Quality Inputs	B	68
Education Incentives	D	24
Gender Equality	E	0
Security		
Gender Barriers to Education	B	68

Bhutan has witnessed rapid expansion in school education in the last decade. With 90 per cent of the population living in rural areas with a difficult mountainous terrain, the challenges to expand coverage have been enormous.³⁴ But the government has displayed remarkable political will through the investment of 17 per cent of public expenditure for education.

Community schools and girls' hostels have played an important role to ensure the security of children, especially girls in accessing schools. The provision of two to three meals in selected boarding and day schools is also an important intervention to attract and retain children in school.³⁵

In the face of rapid expansion, however, quality provision remains a challenge with the need to equip teachers in remote locations.³⁶ Corporal punishment in the classroom has been discouraged by a ministerial directive, but it too needs to be enshrined in legislation.

While women's literacy has expanded substantially in the last decade, it needs to experience a similar impetus of expansion as 61 per cent of women are still illiterate.³⁷ Though Bhutan has made visible strides to attain gender parity in primary education, basic education needs to be universalized in tandem with the national vision for Gross National Happiness.

³⁴ RGoB (2008). *National Plan of Action for Gender 2008–13*. National Commission for Women Children & Gross National Happiness Commission, Thimphu. RGoB (2009). *A Study on Enrolment and Retention Strategies in Bhutan*. Policy & Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu. RGoB (2006). *Education for All, Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2000–06*. Policy & Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu. Denchen Zam (2008). *The Development of Education: National Report of Bhutan*. Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/bhutan_NR08.pdf (last accessed by the author in August 2009).

³⁵ See Box 1: Rinchen Samdrup is with the Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu, Bhutan.

³⁶ OWSA (2009). World Bank study spells out Bhutan's education woes. *One World South Asia*. <http://southasia.oneworld.net/todaysh headlines/world-bank-study-spells-out-bhutans-education-woes> (last accessed by author May 2009).

³⁷ UIS. *ibid*.

INDIA

REPORT CARD: INDIA

Overall Mark: 63 / 100

Overall Grade: B

Subject	Grade (A–F)	Mark
Governance Context		
Political Will	B	76
Transparency and Accountability	C	49
Capabilities		
Access to Basic Education	B	61
Resources and Opportunities		
Education Infrastructure	B	71
Quality Inputs	B	66
Education Incentives	C	51
Gender Equality	C	56
Security		
Gender Barriers to Education	B	63

Forty-seven per cent of girls in India are married before the age of 18 years.³⁸ This is but one of the many barriers that they face in the completion of their basic education. While facilities have expanded in the last decade, the varied expenses to be incurred in pursuit of an education from illegal school fees to costs for transportation are important deterrents.

But even if girls do attend school, the quality is often so poor that they are barely literate. Thirty-five per cent of primary school children were found to be unable to read a simple paragraph and 41 per cent unable to solve a simple arithmetic problem.³⁹ With 30 per cent of teachers routinely absent,⁴⁰ 30 per cent of schools lacking *pucca* classrooms,⁴¹ 15 per cent without drinking water⁴² and 42 per cent without separate functional toilets for girls,⁴³ the reasons are not hard to imagine. It is then little wonder that a quarter of girls drop out from school even before they complete their primary education.

Despite this, there has been a very positive impetus provided by the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education

Act 2009, which offers much hope if implemented effectively with adequate financial commitment. The universal expansion of the midday school meal programme has also served as an important incentive to draw children into schools.⁴⁴ While primary education has received much attention in previous decades, secondary education now needs sustained emphasis.

The Supreme Court orders for the universalization of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to offer pre-primary education and nutrition for young children below the age of six is also a key area of concern.⁴⁵ The future of an entire generation rests on the efficacy of its implementation across the network of more than 6 million *anganwadis*.

For a country which has entered the new millennium with an enviable economic growth rate, it is a shame that almost half of the women are illiterate. In this context the announcement of the Women's Literacy Mission is welcome,⁴⁶ but much depends on the earnestness of its commitment to serve as a platform not merely for functional literacy but to enable women to strive towards empowerment and equality.

³⁸ UNICEF (2009). *The State of the World's Children: Maternal and Newborn Health*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

³⁹ Pratham Resource Center (2008). *Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2007: Provisional*. Mumbai: Pratham Resource Centre.

⁴⁰ UNESCO (2008). *ibid.*

⁴¹ DISE (2006–07). *Elementary Education in India, Progress towards UEE*. National University of Education Planning and Administration.

⁴² DISE (2006–07). *ibid.*

⁴³ DISE (2006–07). *ibid.*

⁴⁴ The midday meal is expected to reduce the dropout rate by 5 per cent per annum and result in retention of an additional 1.5 million children every year. Planning Commission (2005). *Mid-Term Appraisal of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002–2007)*. Government of India, Box 2.1.1 and Para 2.1.29.

⁴⁵ Started by the Government of India in 1975, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme is today considered to be the world's largest child care programme. It is expected to support the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating mothers and adolescent girls as well as the pre-school education of children under the age of six years. The services are provided through a large network of *anganwadi* centres (AWC) which are interchangeably referred to as *balwadis* in some states of the country.

⁴⁶ 2009, Pranab Mukherjee's Budget Speech. <http://business.rediff.com/special/2009/jul/06/budget09-finance-ministers-budget-speech.htm> (last retrieved November 2009).

NEPAL

REPORT CARD: NEPAL

Overall Mark: 50 / 100

Overall Grade: C

Subject	Grade (A–F)	Mark
Governance Context		
Political Will	B	76
Transparency and Accountability	D	36
Capabilities		
Access to Basic Education	C	48
Resources and Opportunities		
Education Infrastructure	C	50
Quality Inputs	C	60
Education Incentives	E	0
Gender Equality	C	51
Security		
Gender Barriers to Education	C	54

Till recently the expansion of education opportunities in Nepal was constrained by a decade of civil conflict. As a result a quarter of girls continue to remain out of primary school and sixty per cent have no access to secondary education.⁴⁷

With the restoration of democracy, the country has effectively used the opportunity of drafting the constitution to enshrine the rights of children to free education of good quality till secondary level, though the constitution has yet to be finalized. Now the onus lies on the national leadership to ensure its effective implementation to draw in millions of children, especially girls, into school, and reap the peace dividend. It is

equally as important to improve the quality of education as it is to expand its infrastructure.

The initiative to transfer the management of all schools including the appointment of teachers to School Management Committees (SMCs) elected by parents by 2015 could potentially increase decentralized accountability.⁴⁸ But there is also the danger that this experiment could fall prey to local level politics and effectively reduce government regulation of and investment in schools to ensure quality.

The draft School Sector Reform Policy does mention that 50 per cent of girls should receive education scholarships from grade 1 to 8 to support their inclusion,⁴⁹ but the real test will lie in its implementation.

⁴⁷ UIS. *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Nepal has had a history of community-managed schools prior to nationalization in 1972 when the government took over. N. Choudhury and S. Devarajan (2006). *Human Development and Service Delivery in Asia*. Background paper for the conference on 'Asia 2015: Promoting Growth, Ending Poverty', London, March 6–7.

⁴⁹ GoN (2008). *School Sector Reform, Core Document: Policies and Strategies*. Ministry of Education and Sports, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu.

PAKISTAN

REPORT CARD: PAKISTAN

Overall Mark: 41 / 100

Overall Grade: C

Subject	Grade (A–F)	Mark
Governance Context		
Political Will	E	20
Transparency and Accountability	D	30
Capabilities		
Access to Basic Education	C	41
Resources and Opportunities		
Education Infrastructure	C	56
Quality Inputs	B	65
Education Incentives	E	8
Gender Equality	C	48
Security		
Gender Barriers to Education	C	43

In 1921 Mohammad Ali Jinnah, at the then Imperial Legislative Council, urged support for the Elementary Education Bill: 'It is the duty of every civilized government to educate the masses.'⁵⁰ Despite the post-independence constitutional guarantee, Pakistan has yet to fulfil this vision of its founding father.⁵¹ Especially in the Swat valley, girls' education remains endangered.⁵²

Urgent action is required to prioritize education on a major scale, especially for girls. School buildings need to be repaired and constructed, teachers recruited and trained *en masse* and gender biases in textbooks eliminated with active support of civil society. But most crucially the deficit of political will needs to be bridged. Public expenditure to education needs manifold

expansion and guarantees instituted to provide education free of cost to all pupils.

Girls face a number of socio-cultural barriers. The wide gap between the minimum age of marriage (which itself needs to be increased from 16 to the international benchmark of 18 years) and the maximum age of compulsory education (9 years) needs to be bridged.⁵³

Positive initiatives also need to be recognized, expanded and replicated across provinces. The stipend programme initiated in Punjab⁵⁴ and the unique transportation model for female teachers in Upper Dir offer useful lessons.⁵⁵ The road to gender equality in education is clearly paved – what remains to be seen is when girls in Pakistan will be able to walk on it.

⁵⁰ Mohammad Ali Jinnah, First President of Pakistan, Imperial Legislative Council in April 1912, in support of Gopal Krishna Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill.

⁵¹ UNESCO (2008). *ibid.*

⁵² Arif, K. (2009). *The establishment of a Taliban emirate*. http://www.himalmag.com/The-establishment-of-a-Taliban-emirate_nw2882.html (last accessed by author May 2009).

⁵³ UNICEF (2009). *ibid.*

⁵⁴ UNESCO (2008). *ibid.*

⁵⁵ See Box in the Section Security: From a Gender Point of View, adopted from Angers, G. (2007). *Mobility Support for Female Teachers in NWFP: A Simple Intervention with a Huge Impact*. UNICEF Pakistan.

SRI LANKA

REPORT CARD: SRI LANKA

Overall Mark: 72 / 100

Overall Grade: B

Subject	Grade (A–F)	Mark
Governance Context		
Political Will	B	62
Transparency and Accountability	C	58
Capabilities		
Access to Basic Education	A	92
Resources and Opportunities		
Education Infrastructure	B	66
Quality Inputs	A	85
Education Incentives	C	48
Gender Equality	B	63
Security		
Gender Barriers to Education	A	93

Sri Lanka historically has long recognized the value of education. Many years of investment in universal and equitable education have ensured that girls are not only on a par with boys but that many graduate from the schooling system to join the able cadre of professionally qualified female teachers.⁵⁶

The suitable implementation of several complementary and mutually reinforcing policies, such as tuition-free schooling, free textbooks, free uniforms and subsidized access to public transport buses,⁵⁷ in combination with

strong household demand for education have made Sri Lanka's achievement legendary in the field of education.

In the recent past, however, the post-conflict and post-tsunami reconstruction efforts have presented a challenge of enormous scale. Pre-primary education also finds itself unusually neglected.⁵⁸ The erstwhile initiative to provide nutritious, cooked school lunch meals, which has now been downsized to only the poorest districts, also needs to be universalized.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ World Bank (2005). *Treasures of Education System in Sri Lanka*, Principal Findings and Options for the Future. World Bank, Sri Lanka; and S. Mehrotra (1998). Education for All: Lessons from High-Achieving Countries, *International Review of Education*, 44 (5/6): 461–8.

⁵⁷ Kumarasinghe, U. and I. Range (2009). Transport Minister presents supplementary estimate for Sri Lanka Transport Board, *Daily News*. <http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/07/10/pol02.asp> (last retrieved November 2009).

⁵⁸ World Bank (2005). *ibid*.

⁵⁹ Projects to Improve Nutritional Status of Children, *Sunday Observer*, Daily News Online Edition, 21 May 2006.



© Maseeh Rahman, 2007, Uruzgan, Afghanistan

I am a poet. For a long time I have suffered from violence and injustice in our society but I couldn't express myself, until one day I took pen to paper ... It will help me to become someone one day.

*16-year-old Nilab Tanhar, 2009
Jalalabad, Afghanistan⁶⁰*

DOMAIN 1

GOVERNANCE: The Big Picture

Afghanistan's journey towards universal education is in many ways unique. In the late 1970s, it had quite high levels of literacy, but witnessed a steady decline thereafter. With the establishment of democracy in 2001, however, there has been a 500 per cent increase in enrolment rates. The new national Constitution has further provided a window of hope especially for thousands of girls like Nilab to pursue their dream of free education at least up to secondary school.

Across South Asia, while democracy remains the predominant means of political legitimacy and state power, each country has progressed on different governance trajectories. Intense conflict has historically characterized Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan while growing religious fundamentalism has more recently posed a major constraint on girls' access to schooling and women's participation in the economy and politics in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and parts of India.

To analyse the national context of governance of education, this section focuses on two robust indicators: (A) the existence of political will to prioritize universal basic education including comprehensive policies to address gender gaps, and (B) the extent of transparency and accountability in social governance which has a bearing on the education sector.

⁶⁰ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_50750.html

INDICATOR 1A: Political Will (PW)

Political will signals the commitment of the governing elite to prioritize specific development goals. Women's literacy, for example, has long languished in the rural countryside for want of this elusive political commitment across South Asian capitals. Interestingly, on the other hand, girls' primary

education has witnessed a surge. The average annual rate of increase in girls' primary school enrolment has been more than twice as high as that of boys in the period 1980 to 2007.⁶¹ The Education for All (EFA) international commitment at the turn of the millennium has added to this momentum.

Figure 3 | Indicator of political commitment

	Right to Free Education	Public Expenditure on Education (%)	Policies in relation to Gender Gaps in Education	Legal Ban on Physical Punishment in Schools	Marks for PW	Grade for PW
Afghanistan	Free	25	No	Partial	78	B
Bangladesh	Free	14	Partial	Partial	74	B
Bhutan	Free	17	Yes	Partial	84	A
India	Free	11	Yes	Yes	76	B
Nepal	Free	15	Partial	Partial	76	B
Pakistan	Fee	11	No	No	20	E
Sri Lanka	Free	9	No	Partial	62	B

PW = Political Will

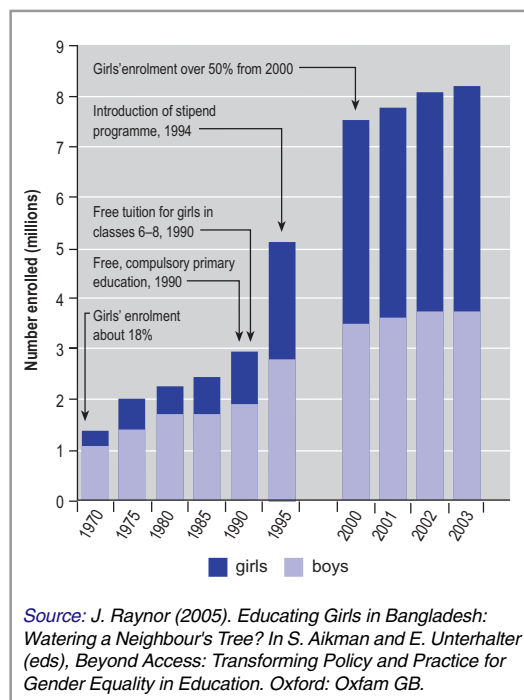
⁶¹ Oxfam GB (2006). *Girls' Education in South Asia*. Education and Gender Equality Series, Programme Insights. Oxford: Oxfam GB. with updated data from UNESCO Institute of Statistics. <http://stats.uis.unesco.org> (last retrieved November 2009).

The top scorers of the indicator of political commitment (Figure 3) are countries which have displayed concrete progress in the recent past. Bhutan, through the rapid expansion of community primary schools, construction of boarding facilities, provision of school meals and appointment of female teachers, has in the last decade ensured that the growth rate of girls' enrolment in primary education (49.6 per cent) has been twice as fast as that for boys (Box 1). However, greater inclusion of 'non-nationals' with access to quality education in their mother tongue is imperative.⁶²

Invest sustainably

Though Bangladesh and Sri Lanka as historic high-achievers seem to have been pushed away from the limelight in this indicator, there are many lessons to be learned from their historical achievements. Sri Lankan policy makers in the forties and fifties were generations ahead of their time by emphasizing public financing and provision of universal basic education. In Bangladesh, consistent political commitment across successive governments, especially with democratic political competition in the nineties, has been crucial for increasing school enrolments especially of girls (Figure 4).⁶³ However, more recently, with the rapid expansion of madrasas, the emphasis unfortunately seems to have shifted to largely prepare girls for marriage.

Figure 4 | Growth of secondary school enrolments in Bangladesh, 1970–2003



This analysis considers four attributes of political commitment for the pursuit of universal basic education, which have an intensified effect on girls' enrolment and survival in school: i) The enshrinement of the right to free education, ii) public expenditure on education, iii) the existence of specific policies to address the gender gap and iv) the ban on corporal punishment.

⁶² HRW (2007). *Last Hope – The Need for Durable Solutions for Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal and India*. Human Rights Watch.

⁶³ N. Hossain and N. Kabeer (2004). Achieving Universal Primary Education and Eliminating Gender Disparity, *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 4.

i) Right to Free Education

The right to free education constitutes one of the most basic of human rights. The International Bill of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) commit ratifying governments to guarantee the right to free and compulsory education at least in primary schools.

Once fees are abolished, subsequent governments find it politically difficult to reintroduce any student fees or costs. For girls, free education holds greater significance as, although parents want to send their girls to good quality schools, they are often reluctant to pay for them.

education is free for all at the primary level in Bangladesh, it is extended up to secondary school for girls. Sri Lanka is leagues ahead as it even offers tuition-free education up to university for all children.

The only exception in the region is Pakistan, which despite its constitutional emphasis on free education does not provide any legal guarantees. The New Education Policy 2009, however, does attempt to steer in a progressive direction by stating that ‘free’ education covers all costs including expenditure on stationery, school bags, transport and meals.⁶⁴ But it remains one of the few nations in the world in which compulsory secondary education is not a legal requirement.⁶⁵

Figure 5 | The right to free education

Right to Free Education	
Afghanistan	Free
Bangladesh	Free
Bhutan	Free
India	Free
Nepal	Free
Pakistan	Fee
Sri Lanka	Free

Guarantee constitutionally

In the last decade, there has been a distinct trend of several countries in South Asia using the opportunity of the construction or amendment of their constitutions to enshrine the right to free education. After the first parliamentary elections in 2008, the Bhutanese constitution enforced free education for all ‘national’ citizens up to tenth standard.⁶⁶ While Afghanistan too adopted similar guarantees in 2006,⁶⁷ Nepal has yet to enact its draft constitution with similar commitments.

Make free and compulsory

Most countries in South Asia guarantee free, compulsory education, if only on paper. While

Bangladesh too falters on this step. Though a Compulsory Primary Education Act was passed in 1990, education is still not a fundamental

⁶⁴ Sarwar (2009). New education policy: A review. *Pakistan Observer*, 18 September 2009.

⁶⁵ McCutcheon, S. (2007). *Education in Pakistan*. Riding for Education. http://www.r4e.org/education/Pakistan/education_in_pakistan.htm (last retrieved November 2009).

⁶⁶ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008, <http://www.constitution.bt/TsaThrim%20Eng%20%28A5%29.pdf>

⁶⁷ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2004, http://www.president.gov.af/sroot_eng.aspx?id=68

constitutional right. On the other hand, with broad-based civil society pressure, the Indian Constitution was amended in 2002⁶⁸ and the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, too, was finally enacted in mid-2009 to cover all children between the ages of 6 to 14 years.

ii) Government Spending

Sufficient allocation of finances, as a measurable indicator of political commitment, however, remains weak across South Asia. The rapid economic growth in the region, notwithstanding the recent economic recession, should have made it easier for governments to allocate more monies for education, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of Gross National Income (GNI).

Figure 6 | Public expenditure on education

Public Expenditure on Education as a percentage of GNI (%) 2000–08

Afghanistan	–
Bangladesh	2.2
Bhutan	5.2
India	3.2
Nepal	3.7
Pakistan	2.9
Sri Lanka	–

Despite this opportunity, public expenditure on education in India and Pakistan is surprisingly low, so far (Figure 6).⁶⁹

Spend more

Bhutan has displayed sincere efforts to bolster its education expenditures from 3.2 per cent of GDP in the nineties to 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2005. Nepal, however, has failed to display similar zeal. While the then Finance Minister Dr Baburam Bhattarai recently declared that ‘New Nepal can be created only after the end of gender discrimination. Education is the only means to end gender discrimination,’ his government’s financial commitment remains deficient.⁷⁰

Sri Lanka, a historical high-achiever, currently spends only 3 per cent of GDP and 9 per cent of budgetary expenditure on education. But its capital stock of school buildings constructed in the fifties and sixties, with an average spend of 5 per cent of GDP and 15 per cent of the government budget, explains its continued ability to provide free education for all children up to university. However in the northern and eastern regions, there is now an acute need for investment to rebuild the devastated education infrastructure after the recent end of violent civil conflict.

⁶⁸ Aradhya, N. and Kashyap, A. (2006). *The ‘Fundamentals’: Right to Education in India*. Bangalore: Books for Change. In UNESCO (2007) *Education for All by 2015 – Will we make it?* EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008, Paris and Oxford: UNESCO and Oxford University Press.

⁶⁹ With the recent legislative change in India the financial commitment which currently hovers around 3 per cent of gross national income (GNI) is poised to increase. The National Education Policy approved by the Pakistani cabinet in September 2009 also promises to increase education expenditure to at least five per cent of GNI by 2010 and seven per cent by 2015. 2009, Sources: Cabinet approval on National Educational policy, <http://www.interface.edu.pk/students/Sep-09/Education-policy-2009-cabinet-approval.asp> (last retrieved November 2009); Vision Education: 2015, *Dawn*, <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/16-education-vision-2015-hs-10> (last retrieved November 2009).

⁷⁰ Speech delivered at the Meeting of the Constituent Assembly (CA) on 29th September 2008.

Invest efficiently and predictably

Bangladesh is another classic example of a high-achiever despite low per capita incomes. Though it does not meet the rigid EFA–FTI (Education for All – Fast Track Initiative) benchmark of committing 20 per cent of the government budget to education it has been able to transform scarce resources to expand access to elementary education through efficient and judicious spends consistently over two decades.

Donors also need to ensure that they provide at least 0.7 per cent of their GNI in overseas development aid, with at least 20 per cent allocated to basic services including budget support for basic education as committed in the Paris conference on aid effectiveness in 2005.⁷¹ In Afghanistan in particular, which is heavily dependent on external aid, though the government has made a heroic effort to devote one-quarter of its budget to rebuild its education infrastructure, donors too need to invest in building the capacity of government systems, rather than by-passing them.⁷²

iii) Bridge the Gender Gap

The third measure of political commitment is the recognition of gender gaps within the education system and the formulation of specific policies to address them. In Afghanistan, where only 15 per cent of girls are enrolled in secondary education (Figure 7), the need for gender-sensitive education policies is the most acute. India, Pakistan and Nepal also have unhealthy enrolment trends against girls and are unlikely to meet the EFA and MDG 2015 goal of gender parity at the secondary level even by 2025.

Figure 7 | Gender gap at secondary level

	Gender gap in secondary enrolment of girls versus boys (percentage point difference)	Policies in relation to gender gaps in education
Afghanistan	19	No
Bangladesh	–2	Partial
Bhutan	5	Yes
India	10	Yes
Nepal	6	Partial
Pakistan	8	No
Sri Lanka	–2	No

⁷¹ The Paris Declaration, endorsed on 2 March 2005, is an international agreement to which over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials adhered and committed their countries and organizations to continue to increase efforts in harmonization, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators.

⁷² Three-quarters of the funds channelled by international donors to private projects is estimated to by-pass the government. F. Nawa (2006). *Afghanistan Inc: A CorpWatch Investigative Report*. Oakland: CorpWatch.

BOX 1:

BHUTAN'S BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Education is recognized both as a basic right and a prerequisite for achieving wider social, cultural and economic goals, which are fundamental requirements for realizing Gross National Happiness, the framework for overall development of Bhutan.

The basic education structure in Bhutan comprises 11 years of free schooling starting from pre-primary to grade X. This cycle is subdivided into seven years of primary, two years of lower secondary and two years of middle secondary education.

Girls' enrolment in primary/secondary⁷³

Over the last decade, the absolute share of girls' enrolment in primary education has dramatically increased from 35,220 girls for 42,787 boys in 1998 to 52,529 girls for 53,571 boys in 2008. This translates into a growth rate of 49.6 per cent for girls and 25.2 per cent for boys over the period, taking the Gender Parity Index (GPI) from 0.82⁷⁴ in 1998 to 1.02 at the primary level in 2008. This indicates that currently there are slightly more girls than boys in primary education corresponding to their respective age cohort.

In 1998, girls constituted 43.6 per cent of the enrolment at the secondary level (grades VII–X); this increased to 50.2 per cent in 2008. In absolute terms this represents a jump from 7,570 to 20,502 girls over the years. Similarly, GPI for this level has increased from 0.77 in 1998 to 1.0 in 2008,⁷⁵ narrowing the gender gap at the secondary level of education.

What factors contributed to these achievements?⁷⁶

■ **Community Primary Schools (CPSs):**

In the past, most schools were located at district centres. This entailed a long walk for the girls unless they stayed as boarders, like boys, which many parents were reluctant to allow earlier. The establishment of CPSs within walking distance of communities enhanced access to education especially for girls. The impact was immediate and girls' enrolment increased dramatically, from 5,523 in 1998 to 14,528 in 2008.

■ **Boarding Facilities/School Feeding Programme:**

Due to the mountainous terrain and the dispersed settlements, providing a school within a 3 km radius (equivalent to one hour walking distance) is not always possible. Therefore, the provision of hostel facilities and midday meals through a school feeding programme has been instrumental in enhancing girls' enrolment and retention in remote areas. Increasingly, more girls benefit from this programme as the statistics show 9,679 girls and 10,812 boys beneficiaries in 2008 compared with just 7,697 girls and 12,378 boys in 1998.

■ **Health and Sanitation Facilities:**

The Comprehensive School Health programme has also had

a great impact on the general health of students through programmes such as behavioural change on hygiene, iron supplementation, training of school health coordinators, etc. This has increased attendance rates of students, especially girls. In addition, all schools were provided with segregated toilets, thus addressing privacy and safety issues, and making schools more girl-friendly.

■ **Gender Sensitive Curriculum:**

The curriculum reform in the key subjects of Mathematics, English and *Dzongkha* (national language) have been initiated and implemented at all levels of education since 2004. These reforms have given explicit attention to remove sex stereotypical materials, making the curriculum more gender sensitive thereby improving girls' performance. Such impact is evident from the reduction in girls' repetition rate at grade VI from 7.6 per cent in 1998 to 3.2 per cent in 2008.

■ **Female Teachers:**

The increasing number of female teachers at all levels has helped to boost girls' enrolment and retention, as they serve as role models. As of 2008, females constituted 50 per cent of primary school teachers, 49 per cent in lower secondary and 41 per cent in middle secondary schools. However, female teachers in CPSs make up only 23 per cent of teachers. This is

because most CPSs are located in rural and remote parts of the kingdom with difficult living conditions.

In the 10th five year plan,⁷⁷ the Royal Government will pursue the following strategies to further improve enrolment at the primary level in general and for girls in particular:

1. Establishment of extended classrooms (ECRs) to provide education even in the remotest and most isolated communities to reach the unreached.
2. Establishment of boarding facilities in remoter areas; provision of midday meals in the day schools; and introduction of bus services in urban and other areas where possible.

In addition, there is also a need for the royal government to deploy more female teachers to CPSs in remote and difficult areas.

Source:

Rinchen Samdrup, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu, Bhutan.

Though India has a number of schemes designed specifically for girls – from the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) for the creation of ‘model’ cluster schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) for residential girls’ hostels and Mahila Samakhya for women’s empowerment through education – yet it continues to suffer from large educational gender disparities against girls.

Gender lens

Bhutan, on the other hand, has shown the benefits of coordinated interventions to prioritize girls’ education and overcome gender gaps (Box 1).

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are the only two exceptions in South Asia which register a gender gap in the reverse direction – marginally against boys.

⁷³ Most of the data is based on RGoB (1998). *General Statistics 1998*. Planning and International Aid Coordination Section, Education Division, Ministry of Health and Education, Thimphu; and RGoB (2008). *General Statistics 2008*. Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu.

⁷⁴ Estimated by dividing enrolment of girls by boys since population age group was not available in 1998.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ RGoB (2008). *National Plan of Action for Gender 2008–13*. National Commission for Women, Children & Gross National Happiness Commission, Thimphu.
RGoB (2009). *A Study on Enrolment and Retention Strategies in Bhutan*. Policy & Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu.

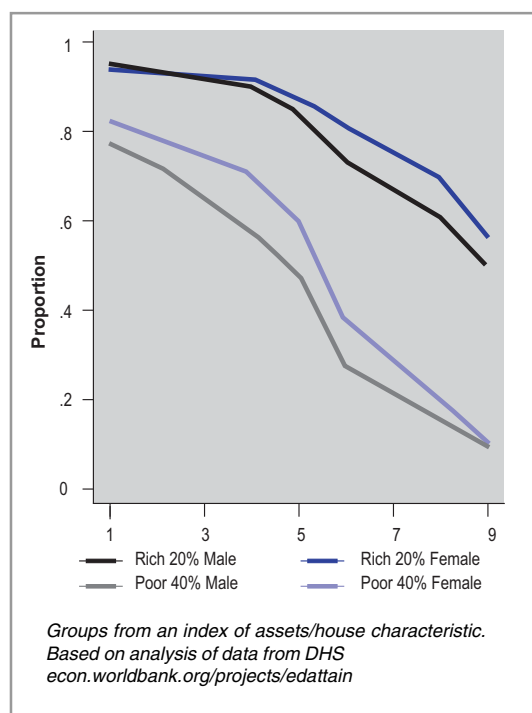
RGoB (2006). *Education for All, Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2000–06*. Policy & Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu.

Denchen Zam (2008). *The Development of Education: National Report of Bhutan*. Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, Thimphu. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/bhutan_NR08.pdf (last accessed by the author in August 2009).

⁷⁷ RGoB (2008b). *Tenth Five Year Plan 2008–13*, Vol. 1. Gross National Happiness Commission, Thimphu.

Though Bangladesh's draft National Education Policy 2009 is set to revamp the education system with a girl's right to education as a primary concern,⁷⁸ boys too (see black and grey lines in Figure 8), from both rich and poor families, need greater attention.⁷⁹ Efforts are especially needed to improve the survival and completion of all children in secondary school.

Figure 8 | Bangladesh education completion of children aged 15–19 years



iv) Schools without Violence

Two out of every three school-going children in India have confided to being victims of corporal punishment or physical abuse.⁸⁰ Sexual abuse suffers from an even greater conspiracy of silence. Girls are particularly vulnerable.

In this analysis, the existence of policy initiatives to eliminate violence in schools serves as a concrete measure of political commitment to ensure a child-friendly and gender-sensitive learning environment.

Reform laws

A number of countries across South Asia have publicly denounced corporal punishment. The Ministry of Education in Afghanistan has announced in June 2006 that 'the use of any form of violent behaviour and beating and humiliation of children is strictly prohibited.' Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have also issued similar ministerial directives/circulars but none of these are legally binding.

India is the only country in South Asia to enact legislative prohibition as part of the Children's Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009.⁸¹ In Nepal, the foundation has been laid with the Supreme Court ruling in 2005 to remove specific legal defences available in favour of

⁷⁸ IRIN (2009). *New education policy soon in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, 24 September 2009. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=86270> (last retrieved November 2009).

⁷⁹ Shafique, M.N. (2009). A Reversal of Educational Fortune? Education Gender Gaps in Bangladesh. *Journal of International Development*, 21, 137–155.

⁸⁰ MoWCD (2007). *Study on Child Abuse: India 2007*. Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

⁸¹ Peter Newell (2009). Public lecture by the Coordinator, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment, organized by UNICEF and NCPCR on 4th February 2009, New Delhi.

corporal punishment⁸² and the reiteration of this commitment in the Ministry of Education's School Sector Reform strategy.⁸³

Figure 9 | Corporal punishment

Legal ban on punishment in schools	
Afghanistan	Partial
Bangladesh	Partial
Bhutan	Partial
India	Yes
Nepal	Partial
Pakistan	No
Sri Lanka	Partial

Source: Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children

Change attitudes

Eliminating corporal punishment requires both clear and explicit law reform and sustained public education – about children's rights, the dangers of corporal punishment and the promotion of positive, non-violent relationships with children (Box 2).

Peter Newell, who spearheads the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment is insightful in his analysis:

Law reform on its own is not enough. But law reform is necessary. While the law says it is OK to hit children, public education to try and change prevailing attitudes will have little impact.

⁸² Mr Devendra Ale *et al.* v Office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet *et al.*, Supreme Court decision 6 January 2005.

⁸³ GoN (2008). *ibid.*

BOX 2:

BAN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS

In a nursery classroom, a six-year-old child pinched her classmate. In response, the teacher found it fit to punish her by hitting her on the head and the child fell unconscious. The teacher then locked her up in an *almirah* (cupboard). As the girl did not return home that evening, her worried parents complained to the police. A day later she was found floating in a water tank in the neighbouring school.

Without doubt, the teacher's extreme act of violence resulting in death is condemned by all. But, unfortunately, the teacher's intention to punish as a measure of discipline has the approval of the large majority of adults in our society. Without this social sanction the teacher would not have dared raise a hand against the child, let alone escalate the scale of violence. Our silently acquiescent society is as much to blame as the teacher in this regard.

Moral outrage

Episodes of violence on children in schools, hostels, juvenile homes are so commonplace that they do not provoke outrage in any quarter. Each incident actually starts with the child being scolded, insulted and humiliated as if such acts would not hurt her. Such actions are ignored as non-violent. There is also an allowance for another set of degrading punishments which are all too familiar, like standing on the bench, kneeling down, being made to run around the school grounds. It seems even these are condoned because each one of us in our own childhood as students have experienced them.

By not realizing the implication of tolerance of such 'disguised violence' or 'misuse of power relations', we have

paved the way to make children vulnerable to be victimized by extreme forms of violence, sexual exploitation and even death. We have been unable to perceive and acknowledge the undeniable subterranean link between the acceptance of so-called 'non-violent' insults escalating into the finality rendered in terms of loss of life.

More importantly, we have not realized the damage it can do to the child's psyche by creating permanent scars, both physical and mental, which they are burdened to carry all through their lives. Often, we have preferred to forget the pain of humiliation and believe that it is a corrective disciplinary measure and an important pedagogic tool. Little do we realize that in justifying punishment as harmless and useful, based on a defensive perception of our own experiences, we are mutilating the acceptable rules of school culture and their foundational role in nurturing the evolving capacities of children.

Indeed, are there any other institutions better equipped, in a professional sense, to offer protection of a child's rights? Should not the school instead also take on the role of identifying the children who face abuse and hardship in their own families and counsel them to respect and care for children?

Born equal

All these acts emanate from an understanding that children are not equal to adults and therefore adults have the power to overwhelm the child and exercise their authority as a matter of right. This unequal relationship between the adult and the child is taken for granted as if it

were natural. It gets perpetuated through daily practices in all spheres and spaces – at home, in the family, in schools and everywhere.

We are not even willing to acknowledge that there is a problem in the adult-child interaction. This can be compared to women's struggles, as children like women are perceived to be weaker and there is a refusal to acknowledge that there is an unequal partnership in the relationship. While feminists have been able to mainstream a gender perspective and invoke an enlightened response that questions patriarchy, there is still a lot to be done to build awareness on respecting children as equals. This is especially so as children, especially girls, are even more voiceless to speak out or articulate their sufferings.

Zero tolerance

The steps to be taken in the direction of banning corporal punishment must be at all levels. There is a need to encourage a public debate of violence on children – both subtle and extreme forms. Such an environment will help children to talk about their humiliation in schools and seek parental support.

In schools, children should be encouraged to provide feedback to school authorities regularly. Schools must have a mechanism for reviewing the conduct of teachers by peers and students. The thrust must be on mutual support rather than policing. Teachers are as much part of the problem as they are the solution. Creating a school environment which supports learning without fear would also give courage to parents to bring incidents of punishment to the notice of school

authorities without fear of further victimization. Teachers also begin to appreciate the negative impact of violence on children and need to be equipped with skills through teacher training and peer exchanges to interact with children and win over the recalcitrant ones.

On the legal front, most countries in South Asia have not passed any legislation to ban corporal punishment in schools. India is an exception where the Children's Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act recently enacted in August 2009 categorically states, '(1) No child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment.' There is also the need for a sound legal framework that bans corporal punishment in all spaces including violence on children in the families and institutions across South Asia.

Society must treat children with respect and dignity in daily life as a matter of everyday cultural norms and practices. The seed of the potential to create a society without violence in all its forms fundamentally lies in developing and nurturing this culture of respect for the rights of our children – our future.

Source:

Shantha Sinha currently Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Government of India, is a child rights activist with over two decades of experience in social mobilization for abolition of all forms of child labour and child marriages, and building capacities of public schools to respect first generation learners.

INDICATOR 1B: Transparency and Accountability (TA)

The education system needs an inbuilt mechanism to monitor and protect the basic human rights of present and future generations. Public schools particularly need attention, as they are often the only chance for girls to attain an education, as against boys who are increasingly being enrolled in fee-paying private schools. The existence of a transparent and inclusive society with active civil society participation, especially within the education system such as the existence of active parents' associations and teachers' unions, could offer important mechanisms for accountability.

However, despite the presence of a buoyant civil society, most South Asian countries perform poorly and no country receives better than a 'C' grade on measures of transparency and accountability in this report. Not only are the levels of transparency within South Asian democracies weak, but also the acceptance of various forms of civil society participation including women's voices is extremely limited.

This report focuses on four measures of transparency and accountability with relevance to the education especially of girls: (i) levels of

Figure 10 | Indicator of transparency and accountability

	Transparency International's CPI 2008	Civil Society Participation in Education Policy Platforms	Protection of Teacher Union Rights	Equal Representation of Women in SMCs/PTAs	Marks for TA	Grade for TA
<i>Weight</i>	40%	20%	20%	20%		
Afghanistan	Poor	Okay	Poor	No	26	D
Bangladesh	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	48	C
Bhutan	Good	Poor	No	—	26	D
India	Okay	Okay	Poor	Yes	49	C
Nepal	Okay	Okay	Poor	Partial	36	D
Pakistan	Poor	Poor	Poor	Partial	30	D
Sri Lanka	Okay	Good	Okay	Yes	58	C

TA = Transparency and Accountability

corruption in the country, (ii) civil society participation in education policy platforms, (iii) protection of teacher union rights and (iv) representation of women in school management committees (SMCs) and parent–teacher associations (PTAs).

i) Corruption In and Outside the Classroom

Corruption is a cancer which erodes investments in education. In Bangladesh, 40 per cent of students at the primary level are reported to pay fees for admission which is supposed to be free and 32 per cent of girls pay to receive their government stipend.⁸⁴ Bribes paid in Indian schools are cumulatively estimated to be Rs 4,137 crore (\$920 million) per year with parents who are unable to send their children, usually girls, to private schools suffering the most as bribe-givers.⁸⁵

Most countries in South Asia routinely rank at the bottom of Transparency International's annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI) which surveys the levels of corruption in a country. It constitutes the first measure of transparency for the purposes of this report card.

Zero leakage

Corruption can be combated at various levels. At a political level, the existence of multi-party

Figure 11 | Corruption Perception Index

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2008		
Afghanistan	Poor	1.5
Bangladesh	Poor	2.1
Bhutan	Good	5.2
India	Okay	3.4
Nepal	Okay	2.7
Pakistan	Poor	2.5
Sri Lanka	Okay	3.2

democracies, vocal civil society and a free press are key building blocks. Right to Information laws also enable citizens to foster a culture of public vigilance.⁸⁶

Specifically within the education sector, salaries and working conditions should be improved. In India, Bangladesh and Nepal, the largely ineffective teacher codes of conduct⁸⁷ – which cover almost all aspects from day-to-day school governance to policy issues related to admission, discipline, examinations, etc. – and disciplinary measures should also be strengthened.

Ban private tuition by school teachers

Conflict of interest also needs to be weeded out of the education system. In Bangladesh 43 per cent of primary school students engage private

⁸⁴ TI Bangladesh (2005). *Corruption in Bangladesh: A Household Survey*. Dhaka: Transparency International.

⁸⁵ TI (2005). *India Corruption Study to Improve Governance*. June 30, 2005, Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi: Transparency International.

⁸⁶ N. Vithal (2000). *Combating Corruption*. India 1999: A Symposium on The Year That Was, Issue 485, Seminar, January.

⁸⁷ Khandewal and Biswal (no date). *Ethics and corruption in education*, Section Two. Teacher codes of practice in Bangladesh, India (Uttar Pradesh) and Nepal: a comparative study. UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

tutors, often the same teachers as they have in school,⁸⁸ at an exorbitant cost.⁸⁹ In Pakistan, too, many teachers earn significant additional income through private tutoring of students.⁹⁰ In this situation, girls, in particular, either lose out on improving learning outcomes or become more vulnerable to sexual advances by male tutors outside the domain of the classroom.

Excessive reliance on private tuition across many South Asian countries increases the inequity of education achievements across income groups and gender.⁹¹ The recently enacted Indian education legislation which includes a blanket ban on private tuition by school teachers is a welcome measure.

ii) Voice of Civil Society

South Asia has a buoyant civil society with over 100,000 non-government organizations.⁹² In the last few decades in the field of education, they have played multi-faceted roles as alternative service providers, innovators, critical thinkers, advisers, watchdogs, advocates and policy partners.⁹³ The scope of their participation in education policy platforms is the second

barometer of transparency and accountability in this report card analysis.

The fundamental responsibility for the planning, coordination, regulation and provision of education undoubtedly lies with the state. Civil society, however, has often proved to be an able partner to build systems in the face of limited state capacity. The roles of the state and civil society are largely complementary in this regard. In Bangladesh, while 97 per cent of all secondary schools are managed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local school management committees (SMCs), they receive substantial subventions from the government.⁹⁴

Advocate policies

Since the turn of the new millennium, however, there has been a progressive trend for civil society

Figure 12 | Civil society participation

Civil Society Participation in Education Policy Platforms

Afghanistan	Okay
Bangladesh	Good
Bhutan	Poor
India	Okay
Nepal	Okay
Pakistan	Poor
Sri Lanka	Good

⁸⁸ A. Mansoor and R. Chowdhury (2005). *Beyond Access: Partnership for Quality with Equity*. 'Beyond Access' Regional Seminar, Dhaka, 31 January – 1 February.

⁸⁹ JBIC (2002). *Bangladesh: Education Sector Overview*. Japan Bank of International Cooperation Sector Study, March.

⁹⁰ CfBT and VSO (2008). *Managing Teachers: The Centrality of Teacher Management to Quality Education. Lessons from Developing Countries*. http://www.vso.org.uk/Images/Managing_Teachers_tcm79-20998.pdf (last accessed by the author in November 2009).

⁹¹ A. Sen (2002). Introduction, *The Pratichi Education Report*, Number 1, Pratichi (India) Trust.

⁹² Of these, 25,000 are in India, 22,000 in Bangladesh, 10,000 in Pakistan and about 18,000 in Nepal. Some 30,000 are in Sri Lanka and 500 in Afghanistan. S. Shah (2002). 'Development critique: From evil state to civil society', Essay, *Himal Magazine*, November.

⁹³ UNESCO (2001). *Report on the Special Session on Civil Society Involvement in EFA at the International Conference on Education*, UNESCO.

⁹⁴ A. Mansoor and R. Chowdhury (2005). *Beyond Access: Partnership for Quality with Equity*. Beyond Access, Regional Seminar, Dhaka, 31 January – 1 February 2005.

to shift its focus as a policy partner and advocate in the policy-making process. In India, broad-based social mobilization preceded the amendment for the constitutional guarantee of education and the Supreme Court directive to implement universal midday school meals.

Civil societies’ role in building political momentum and instilling a culture of accountability is also crucial in reducing the pressures of patronage, conflict of interest and blatant corruption. CAMPE – a coalition of more than 1000 NGOs in Bangladesh – has, for example, developed ‘Education Watch’ as an independent citizens’ report (currently in its ninth year of publication) to regularly monitor the ‘education for all’ agenda and voice civil society policy advocacy.

iii) Teachers’ Union Rights

Within the education sector, teacher unions too can potentially play an important role to influence accountability. However, the protection of their rights is extremely weak across South Asia.

Protect unions

In Bhutan, workers in any sector do not have the right to form or join trade unions, to bargain collectively or to strike.⁹⁵ In Pakistan, formation

of trade unions amongst teachers has little protection. India and Nepal are marginally better off as teachers are permitted to organize themselves based on their professional affiliation into unions and associations.

Figure 13 | Teacher union rights

Protection of Teacher Union Rights	
Afghanistan	Poor
Bangladesh	Poor
Bhutan	No
India	Poor
Nepal	Poor
Pakistan	Poor
Sri Lanka	Okay

But collective bargaining is a rare occurrence. In none of the South Asian countries is the salary of teachers greater than the minimalist World Bank norm of 3.5 times per capita GDP.⁹⁶ In fact, in 2002 Sri Lankan teachers earned only about 85 per cent of their 1978 incomes in real terms, resulting in poor teacher motivation.⁹⁷ There has also been an increasing pressure across South Asia to hire para-teachers on short-term contracts, with lower qualifications, lesser training and lower wages which has in effect simply institutionalized a cheaper, inferior, parallel schooling system for the poorest children.

⁹⁵ EI (2007). *op.cit. Country Profile: Kingdom of Bhutan*. http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles_detail.php?country=bhutan (last accessed by the author in November 2009)

⁹⁶ In the early 1990s, primary teacher salaries were 2.7 in Bangladesh, 3.4 in India, 2 in Nepal, and 3.6 in Pakistan in terms of GDP per capita. Bruns, Minger, and Rakotomalala (2003). *Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015: A Chance for Every Child*. Washington DC: World Bank.

⁹⁷ World Bank (2005). *Treasures of Education System in Sri Lanka*, Executive Summary, Overview, Principal Findings and Options for the Future. World Bank, Sri Lanka.

iv) Mothers Matter in Schools

The fourth parameter of accountability that this report card monitors is the ability of parents and communities to monitor the education that their children receive. Mothers, in particular, are often responsible for childcare as part of their reproductive roles but do not necessarily find equal representation as stakeholders within the education system.

School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) officially exist in every country in South Asia. Nepal has even devolved public school management responsibilities to parents and the local community⁹⁸ who have the right to fire government teachers who do not perform their duties.

Reserve for women

The representation of women within these processes, however, cannot be taken for granted. The Education Act in India has only recently inserted a legal clause to ensure equal

Figure 14 | Women in SMCs/PTAs

Equal Representation of Women in SMCs/PTAs	
Afghanistan	No
Bangladesh	Yes
Bhutan	–
India	Yes
Nepal	Partial
Pakistan	Partial
Sri Lanka	Yes

representation of women in SMCs and PTAs. Bangladesh too has a few seats reserved but they are often in practice dominated by teachers and local elites (Box 3).

Mothers are often not acknowledged as full-fledged guardians of their children. But a formalization of their roles within the education system is important – beyond the token formation of voluntary mothers’ committees without any rights or decision-making authority. This becomes even more crucial in a context of increasing migration of men for work and their absence from home for considerable periods of time.

⁹⁸ Nepal has had a history of community-managed schools prior to nationalization in 1972 when the government took over. N. Choudhury and S. Devarajan (2006). *Human Development and Service Delivery in Asia* Background paper for the conference on ‘Asia 2015: Promoting Growth, Ending Poverty’, London, March 6–7.

BOX 3: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES (SMC) IN BANGLADESH

After Bangladesh became independent, the constitution adopted in 1972 dictated the establishment of a uniform and universal system of education. The government issued a 'Decree of Nationalization' for all primary schools with the central government assuming sole authority. School Management Committees were abolished.

SMCs revived

However, SMCs were re-introduced with the Primary Education Act of 1981 which sanctioned an 11 member committee with diverse stakeholders. The structure included the village chief (ex-officio member), school head as secretary and two nominated educationists, one nominated benefactor, one nominated woman, one elected teacher representative and four elected parent and guardian representatives.⁹⁹

This structure has remained largely constant. Their roles have also remained largely unchanged, which include supervision of school activities, construction and repair, ensuring enrolment and attendance of all children, recruitment of teachers in case of RNGPS (registered non-government primary schools) and coordination with local education authorities and communities.

However, in a recent circular dated August 10, 2009, the government has introduced some significant changes in composition and formation of the SMCs.¹⁰⁰ Now the committee will have 12 members, the new member being the Ward Member/Commissioner from the area, which is a political position and thus will increase the danger of partisan influences. On a positive note, there are two confirmed positions for women with the possibility of more (i.e. if

the member secretary is a male teacher, the other teacher member must be a woman).

Elite control

In 2000, 99 per cent of schools had a school management committee (SMC). But on an average only 14 per cent of SMC members were female.¹⁰¹ The participation of women is strikingly higher in NFE schools – 60 per cent compared with less than 14 per cent in government schools, 12 per cent in private schools and 1.1 per cent in madrasas.¹⁰²

The ground realities are that members of the SMC largely constitute community elites who support the status quo, thereby limiting participation of female members and those of other traditionally marginalized groups.¹⁰³ Further, CAMPE's Education Watch Report 2003–04 analyses:

⁹⁹ Jalaluddin, A.K. and A. Mushtaque Chowdhury (eds.) (1997). *Getting Started: Universalising Quality Primary Education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, UPL.

¹⁰⁰ GoB, Directorate of Primary Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, <http://www.dpe.gov.bd/> (last checked by the author October 2009).

¹⁰¹ R. Chowdhury, A. Mushtaque, Rasheda Choudhury *et al.* (2000). *Education Watch 2000: A Question Of Quality: State of Primary Education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

¹⁰² Ground Work Inc. (2002). *Bangladesh Education Sector Review Report No. 2: Overview of the Status of Gender Equity*. Washington, D.C.

¹⁰³ Ground Work Inc. (2002). *ibid.*

*SMCs have been given a broad and sweeping role in primary school management, but with little real authority ... Political control, now institutionalized by giving the local MP a role, and cronyism of head teachers in the case of GPS (government primary schools) and of the founding group in the case of RNGPS, have led to formation of SMCs with mostly the wrong people for such a committee.*¹⁰⁴

Government officers and teachers often become 'co-owners' of the schools with the ownership further shared by the local influential people. As a result the community at large, though a primary stakeholder, loses its zeal to contribute towards education that does not belong to them.¹⁰⁵ Another recent report indicates that despite

the mandate for monthly meetings, on an average only 7 to 11 SMC meetings are held per year.¹⁰⁶

Only in name

Interviews conducted with field workers of several NGOs working with SMCs also reveal similar trends garnished with interesting anecdotes. Apparently, as Kamrul Hassan Khondoker from Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE) commented, 'women members are mostly inducted in SMCs to fulfil their quotas and hand picked by the local elites to get unconditional support for their initiatives in the name of the SMC.' Jibon Dey Shyamal of Sabalamby Unnayan Samity (SUS) noted, 'These women members are usually very regular in attending meetings; however, they remain mostly silent except when they are asked for support

by their benefactors, who in many cases are their senior relatives.'

In exceptional cases, women members are part of women empowerment groups facilitated by NGOs, but these instances are few and far between. The government, under the ongoing Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) Programme PEDP II, has undertaken training of SMC members to inform them of their roles, but the effectiveness of this training has not been systematically evaluated so far.

In sum, while the provision of women members in SMCs was introduced with the best of intentions, its potential has not been fully reached and systematic interventions are required to make the SMCs functional and make women members integral stakeholders.

Source:

Mohammad Muntasim Tanvir, South Asia Policy Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator for ASPBAE. He works closely with national education coalitions across South Asia to support research and advocacy campaign initiatives.

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed, Manzoor, Samir Nath *et al.* (2005). *Education Watch 2003/4: Quality With Equity: The Primary Education Agenda*. Dhaka: CAMPE.

¹⁰⁵ ActionAid Bangladesh (2002). *Understanding Exclusion from Education*. Dhaka: ActionAid Bangladesh.

¹⁰⁶ Hossain, Altaf *et al.* (2009). *CREATE Bangladesh: Community and School Study (COMSS) Baseline Report*. <http://www.create-rpc.org/publications/index.shtml> (last checked by the author October 2009).



© Indivar Mukhopadhyay, 2008, A.P., India

*I want to be a teacher because
I want to follow my mother.
I want to see other children studying and
I want to help them do that in the future*

*Fawzana, 10 years, 2006
Hambantota, Sri Lanka¹⁰⁷*

DOMAIN 2

CAPABILITIES: The Cycle of Basic Education

Education is a force that enables women to expand their horizons. The capability approach appreciates this intrinsic value (expanding choices and freedoms) of education rather than only its instrumental merit (economic growth). It encompasses 'the real opportunity that we have to accomplish what we value' and includes not only civil and political liberties but also progressive economic, social and cultural freedoms.

Apart from being fundamental to individual wellbeing, human capabilities enable us to access other forms of wellbeing for ourselves and our communities. Khaleda Begum, though busy with her studies like an average teenager in rural Bangladesh, for example, has already proved to be a force for change in her village as she was able to convince the parents to stop the marriage of her 13-year-old friend:

*I feel very good about helping Sharifa. She is a very intelligent girl. Now she can have a bright future.*¹⁰⁸

While there are a number of interrelated capabilities which contribute to social opportunities, this report which focuses on education evaluates only the right of women and girls to attain a full cycle of basic education.

While great improvements have been made in primary enrolments, on an average less than 50 per cent of both girls and boys are enrolled at the secondary level. While gender parity may by then largely have been achieved, it is unsatisfactory as over half the youth population remains deprived of sustainable literacy skills.

¹⁰⁷ http://www.unicef.org/emerg/disasterinasia/index_36576.html

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.unicef.org.nz/page/342/Featurearticles.html?n=1256&>

INDICATOR 2A: Gender Access to Basic Education (GBE)

Despite the important contribution that early childhood care and education (ECCE) can potentially make to a child's cognitive development, in some countries in South Asia enrolments are virtually negligible at the pre-primary level. Additionally, with the exception of Sri Lanka and Bhutan, less than 50 per cent of both girls and boys are enrolled at the secondary

level of education. The attainment of gender parity alone is therefore often insufficient.

A range of economic, social and cultural factors specific to regions and countries across South Asia deprive women and girls of their rights to basic education. In India, 37 per cent of girls from scheduled castes or tribes do not attend

Figure 15 | Indicator of gender access to basic education

	Girls not enrolled in Pre-Primary Education (%)	Girls not enrolled in Primary School (%)	Girls not enrolled in Secondary Education	Women without Basic Literacy	Marks for GBE	Grade for GBE
<i>Weight</i>	25%	25%	25%	25%		
Afghanistan	99	16	85	87	28	D
Bangladesh	91	14	57	52	47	C
Bhutan	62	20	24	61	58	C
India	52	12	48	46	61	B
Nepal	68	68	60	56	48	C
Pakistan	64	40	72	60	41	C
Sri Lanka	10	0	12	11	92	A

GBE = Gender access to Basic Education

school, compared with the deprivation of only 26 per cent of girls who belong to Hindu castes.¹⁰⁹ In Pakistan, among the poorest rural households only one girl for every three boys attends school.

While many boys, especially those belonging to poor, rural and marginalized communities, are deprived of their basic education, the problems confronting the girl child are often much more severe. In this indicator, we therefore analyse the gender dimension of four levels of the cycle of basic education: (i) pre-primary, (ii) primary, (iii) secondary and (iv) adult literacy. Comparative data on boys' enrolments is also presented as appropriate.

i) Pre-Primary Education

Ninety per cent of the brain develops by the age of five years. Early childhood years are a highly sensitive period marked by rapid transformations in physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Pre-primary education enables children to better cope with primary education.¹¹⁰

Despite its intrinsic value, pre-primary education remains the weakest link in the cycle of basic education in South Asia. More than 90 per cent

of children in Afghanistan and Bangladesh and more than 50 per cent in Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and India have no access to pre-primary education. While the gender disparity in pre-primary enrolments is marginal, it also has implications for elder girls, often charged to look after their younger siblings while their parents are at work.

Figure 16 | Pre-primary education enrolment

	Boys not enrolled in Pre-primary Education (%)	Girls not enrolled in Pre-primary Education (%)
Afghanistan	99	99
Bangladesh	91	91
Bhutan	—	62
India	53	52
Nepal	62	68
Pakistan	59	64
Sri Lanka	—	10

There have been only a few attempts to expand pre-primary facilities in the last decade. In Pakistan, Education Sector Reforms of 2001–05 for the first time allocated specific federal government funds to the provinces for early childhood education, though their coverage is negligible.¹¹¹ Bangladesh, too, has recently in 2009 announced the introduction of pre-primary classes in all schools.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Lewis, Maureen A. and Marlaine E. Lockheed (2006). *Inexcusable Absence*. Washington: Center for Global Development. <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/11898> (last accessed by author May 2009).

¹¹⁰ Pre-primary education refers to programmes at the initial stage of organized instruction, primarily designed to introduce very young children, aged at least 3 years, to a school-type environment and provide a bridge between home and school. Various referred to as infant education, nursery education, pre-school education, kindergarten or early childhood education, such programmes are the more formal component of early childhood care and education (ECCE).

¹¹¹ In the traditional style, there are no special funds for ECE and the regular primary teacher allocates a portion of his/her time in teaching 'katchi' students. UNESCO (2006). *Pakistan: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes*. Background paper for UNESCO (2006), *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007: Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. Paris and Oxford: UNESCO and Oxford University Press.

¹¹² <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=117664>

In India, the Supreme Court in 2001 ordered the universalization of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) *anganwadi* (courtyard) schools, but the implementation

remains inadequate in terms of coverage, quality and synergy. The Indian state of Tamil Nadu, with a longer history of early childhood education, offers important insights (Box 4).

BOX 4: SYNERGY IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

I vividly recall a scene in Tamil Nadu more than twenty years ago, soon after India's first-ever Midday Meal Programme for schools (and pre-schools) was started. Lunch time at a newly opened ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) centre – a noisy crowd of pre-schoolers sitting down to lunch, and a wan, pale, hapless ten-year-old girl, Rasathi, with matted hair, holding her little sibling on her hip. She sets him down to eat with the others and stands in a corner, looking longingly at the food. But Rasathi has to go hungry, because she, as the little caregiver, cannot go to school, and only school children get the midday meal. Yet she can and does see that the little one is fed. I am still haunted by her face and her eyes.

Today's Tamil Nadu is quite different. Ten-year-old Selvi, like almost all girls of her age, gets lunch in school. And Selvi, like most other girls in the village will almost certainly go to high school too. At the *balwadi*,¹¹³ her four-year-old brother gets a nutritive lunch (with an egg three times a week). In the morning, there is a special *laddu* of flour, pulses and *jaggery* for the under-tuos, a heritage of TINP (Tamilnadu Integrated Nutrition Programme). The older children (3–5 years) enjoy play activities in the morning, take a nap after lunch and go home at 3.30. When Selvi's mother, then a labourer, was pregnant with her second child, she used to come in for the midday meal for pregnant and lactating women two or three times a week. Today, with only two children, and both taken care of during the day, she can work in a local cane factory and earn much more. The children go home together to their

grandmother, a helper in another *balwadi*, who minds them till their mother gets home. And ICDS is universal – not only one or more centres in every village, but 'mini-ICDS' centres for the smallest hamlets, with almost every child above two or three in its net. Now the Selvis are everywhere and one can hardly see Rasathis.

But this rosy scenario is not due to the success of ICDS alone, though that makes a substantial contribution. It is the outcome of a host of closely linked trends – a general decline in fertility rates and widespread acceptance of the two-child norm; high levels of institutionalized childbirth and the dramatic fall in IMR (Infant Mortality Rate); high levels of female literacy and women's work participation; rising levels of girls' and women's education fuelled by scholarship schemes for high school education for girls coupled with incentives for delayed age of marriage; and financial assistance for childbirth. Also, the twenty-year TINP programme focused on nutrition for the under-tuos and led to a 'two worker' model of the *balwadi* which could cater effectively to both the age-groups among children below six.

All these are part of a 40-year-long tradition of progressive, popular and women-friendly welfare schemes such as widow remarriage and inter-caste marriage under DMK (*Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*) rule, and widespread public awareness related to political promotion involving the media. The synergy among a multiplicity of effective and linked health, social welfare, education and

development programmes, even when run by different agencies, has paid off over the last two decades, and Tamil Nadu scores high on most gender indicators. And this synergy has been driven by an ideological vision translated into political goals, and then achieved by well-structured and administered programmes. The fascination with the gleaming machinery should not, as it often does, make us forget the driver.

But, lest we become complacent, lurking beneath the surface are still many Rasathis – though now more and more difficult to spot – girls out of school as sibling caregivers and child labourers, over-burdened mothers in women-headed families, children of migrant labour and nomadic communities, in remote and tiny hamlets and among pavement dwellers or the chronically ill. These, and others, are the small, invisible, marginalized, hard-to-reach groups. Is the system already too rigid and bureaucratic to reach out to them? Tamil Nadu still has the last mile to go, to meet the needs of the 'last' child.

Source:

Mina Swaminathan, a long-time practitioner, teacher trainer and community worker in Early Childhood Care and Education, active in advocacy for the young child and on gender issues. A powerful voice speaking out for day care for young children, she now lives in Tamil Nadu.

¹¹³ Started by the Government of India in 1975, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme is today considered to be the world's largest child care programme. It is expected to support the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating mothers and adolescent girls as well as the pre-school education of children under the age of six years. The services are provided through a large network of *anganwadi* centres (AWC) which are interchangeably referred to as *balwadis* in some states of the country.

ii) Primary School

Primary education has witnessed widespread expansion across South Asia, but 40 per cent of primary school age girls in Pakistan are not even enrolled in school compared with only 27 per cent of boys.

Of the children who do enter classrooms across the rest of South Asia, only Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were able to achieve the MDG and EFA target to achieve gender parity by 2005. Sri Lanka's historical investments in universal education for all children have reaped rich rewards, including the creation of a professionally trained cadre of female teachers (70 per cent), who serve as role models for girls to complete their education.

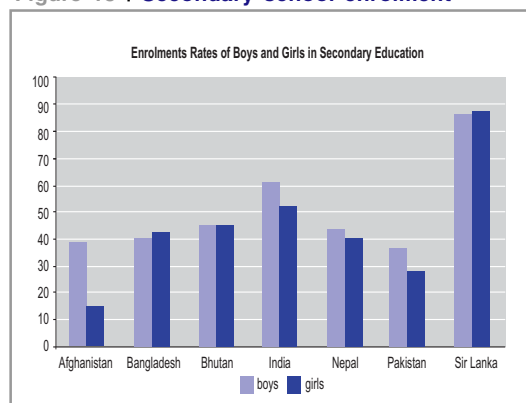
Figure 17 | Primary school enrolment

	Boys not enrolled in Primary School (%)	Girls not enrolled in Primary School (%)
Afghanistan	—	16
Bangladesh	11	14
Bhutan	18	20
India	9	12
Nepal	21	24
Pakistan	28	40
Sri Lanka	0	0

iii) Secondary Education

Little education is of little use. Often when of poor quality, learning is fragile and the relapse

Figure 18 | Secondary school enrolment



into illiteracy high. It is therefore important to ensure that children complete at least the final tier of their basic education – secondary school.

Across South Asia, gender differences in secondary enrolment rates (Figure 18) are marginal. Afghanistan is the exception, with only 15 per cent of girls enrolled in secondary schools. Worryingly, across most countries, less than 50 per cent of children – both girls and boys – are likely to go to secondary school.

Apart from access, quality issues also remain. While Bhutan has had a 37 per cent increase in secondary enrolments since 2002,¹¹⁴ through simple upgradation of primary schools, many face an acute shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate laboratories and insufficient sports facilities. Though girls' enrolment is marginally more than that of boys, in Bangladesh only one child of every five secondary school entrants is able to pass the school certificate exam.¹¹⁵ The female secondary stipend programme has been

¹¹⁴ World Bank, *Education in Bhutan*. <http://go.worldbank.org/WK9XEOLIN0> (last accessed by author November 2009).

¹¹⁵ Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 2006.

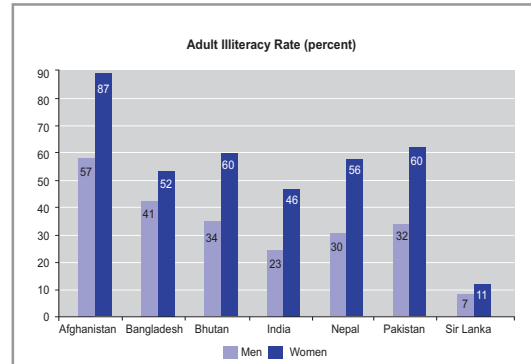
able to generate demand for girls' education, but supply side quality improvements, including the training of teachers, are equally necessary to ensure completion.

iv) Basic Literacy

Half of the world's adult illiterates live in South Asia. For those who have missed out on or dropped out from the education cycle there are few opportunities to learn the alphabet. Women have a higher rate of illiteracy than men across every single country in South Asia (Figure 19).

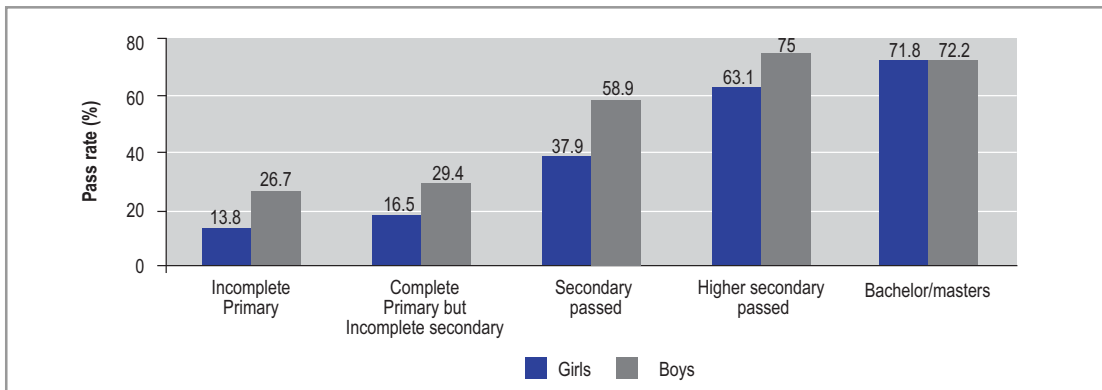
Illiteracy severely restricts freedom. An educated mother, for instance, is more likely to have access to public services, be able to better take care of her children, play a valuable role in the political and social life of her community, and be better equipped to contribute to her family's resources.

Figure 19 | Adult illiteracy rate



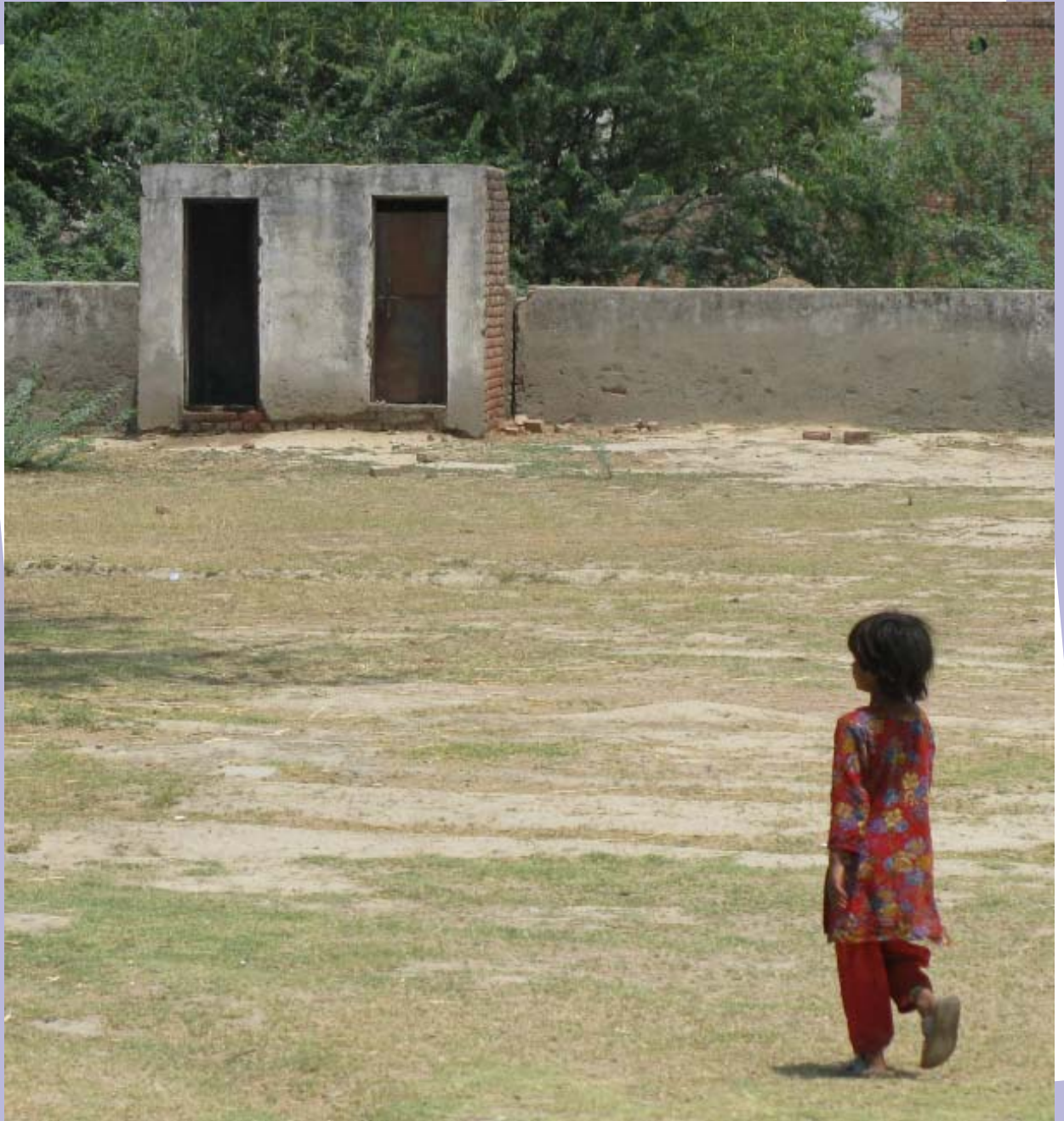
The impact of illiteracy also spills over across generations. In Bangladesh, the pass rate of pupils in examinations is heavily influenced by their mother's levels of education (Figure 20). Though youth and adult learning opportunities remain limited,¹¹⁶ India has recently launched a Female Literacy Mission, across 365 educationally backward districts.

Figure 20 | Pass rate by mothers' education for girls and boys in Bangladesh



Source: Education Watch students' profile and learning achievement test, 2007

¹¹⁶ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), *Literacy Assessment Survey 2008*.



© Swati Narayan, 2009, Haryana, India

*Why would I want to walk three miles in this heat
to go to a school with no teachers?*

*Asha, 9 years, 2005
Bihar, India ¹¹⁷*

DOMAIN 3

RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES: In and Outside the Classroom

Schools without teachers simply cannot impart any education. Teachers without blackboards and textbooks also cannot be expected to teach. Free education is often meaningless without basic investments and access to poor quality education is often tantamount to no access at all.¹¹⁸

Leaking taps, unusable toilets, broken chairs and damaged boundary walls are common occurrences across South Asian schools. Teachers' salaries and vacancies also often remain unattended. These deficiencies affect all children, but are more burdensome for girls due not only to concerns of safety and security, but also to notions of shame. Once a girl drops out from a poor quality resource-deprived educational institution, it affects the opportunities available throughout her lifetime and those of her children.

This segment of the report analyses four essential aspects of educational resources investments required especially from girls' and women's point of view both within and outside classroom walls: (A) the state of education infrastructure, (B) quality of inputs in the classroom (C) incentives offered to attract and retain pupils, especially girls, in schools and (D) the opportunities available to women beyond the classroom throughout their lifetime.

¹¹⁷ http://www.unicef.org/india/education_945.htm

¹¹⁸ UNICEF (2003). *Accelerating Strategies for Girls' Education*. Education Division, Programme Division, New Delhi: United Nations Children's Fund.

INDICATOR 3A: Education Infrastructure (EI)

School lessons under trees may be a romantic idea, but are a nightmare in the downpour of the Indian monsoon rains or the sub-zero temperatures in the Afghan snowfall. An all-weather (*pucca*) classroom is essential to ensure that children are enrolled and retained in schools. Safe drinking water and separate functional toilets, especially for adolescent girls, are bare necessities.

However, most countries in South Asia falter even on these basics. In India, 42 per cent of schools do not have functional toilets for girls.¹¹⁹ In Sri Lanka, schools serving about one-half of pupils were reported to be in need of major repairs or complete rebuilding.¹²⁰ Afghanistan, facing the largest education

challenges in the region, needs not only to reconstruct schools destroyed during the 23 years of conflict but also to protect them from persistent safety threats in the South.¹²¹

This indicator on education infrastructure comprises three elements: (i) the existence of *pucca* (all weather) buildings, (ii) the availability of drinking water and (iii) the presence of separate functional toilets, especially for girls to ensure that they are able to spend long hours in school. All the parameters are analysed in terms of their deficit to unravel the extent of the need to rehabilitate the current state of education infrastructure.

¹¹⁹ DISE (2006–07). *Elementary Education in India, Progress towards UEE*. New Delhi: National University of Education Planning and Administration.

¹²⁰ UIS (2008). *A View Inside Primary Schools, A World Education Indicators (WEI) cross-national study*. UNESCO Institute of Statistics. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/wei/sps/Report.pdf> (last accessed by author November 2009).

¹²¹ HRW (2006). *Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan*, Volume 18, Number 6 (C), Human Rights Watch.

Figure 21 | Indicator of education infrastructure

	Schools without Pucca Buildings (%)	Schools without Drinking Water (%)	Schools without functional Girls' Toilets (%)	Marks for EI	Grade for EI
<i>Weight</i>	40%	30%	30%		
Afghanistan	75	48	25	48	C
Bangladesh	40	6	65	63	B
Bhutan	—	6	3	57	C
India	30	15	42	71	B
Nepal	58	29	59	50	C
Pakistan	55	32	41	56	C
Sri Lanka	40	24	37	66	B

EI = Education Infrastructure

i) Pucca Classrooms

With the recent culmination of civil conflict, Sri Lanka finds itself with a need for massive reconstruction of education infrastructure (see Box 6 later). In Afghanistan, 75 per cent of school buildings have been damaged or destroyed during 23 years of conflict.¹²² Though many 'buildingless' schools continue to be held in rented premises, tents, mosques or in the open air, they discourage parents from sending their children, especially girls.¹²³ Boundary walls are also seen as an essential protection against prying eyes and attacks – a conservative, reactionary response to girls' education.

Figure 22 | Schools without pucca buildings

Schools without Pucca Buildings (%)	
Afghanistan	75
Bangladesh	40
Bhutan	—
India	30
Nepal	58
Pakistan	55
Sri Lanka	40

Apart from capital expenditure, many schools in South Asia are routinely in a state of absolute disrepair (Box 5). Half the schools in India have been found to have a leaking roof and 35 per cent without blackboard or furniture.¹²⁴ In Pakistan, two-thirds of schools are without electricity.¹²⁵

¹²² Mojaddidi *et al.* (2006). *Free Quality Education for Every Afghan Child*. Oxfam Briefing Paper 93, Oxfam GB.

¹²³ NRVA (2005). *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2005*. Central Statistics Office, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

¹²⁴ DISE (2006–07). *Elementary Education in India, Progress towards UEE*. New Delhi: National University of Education Planning and Administration.

¹²⁵ Pakistan Development Forum (2004). *Challenge of Education and Economic Growth*. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, March 17–19.

BOX 5:

SLICE OF INDIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

On the road to Mewat, situated only 80 km from the Indian capital New Delhi, a more fitting milestone would probably be 'two hours to the middle ages'.¹²⁷ The area is chiefly inhabited by Meos, formerly a tribe of Rajput Hindus that converted to Islam during the Tughlak dynasty of the 14th century. Dependent on small, rain-fed farms, Meos are today among the most disadvantaged communities with a staggeringly low estimated female literacy rate of 1.8–2.13 per cent.¹²⁸

Public schools in disrepair

In Mewat, some 60 per cent of all children drop out after grade five and 80 per cent by year eight. Especially for girls from the Meo community there are numerous barriers which hinder their access to education. Umar Deen from village Rupraka wanted to send his daughters Islami, aged 15, and Sameena, 12, to school, but they found it unsuitable. Islami dropped out after class three as there was no functional toilet. His neighbour Maulvi Iqbal Khan has a similar story to recount, 'My daughter Nazma went to school for a few days but she dropped out as there was no drinking water, no toilet for girls of age of 13–14.'

Security concerns

The neglect of higher rungs of the education ladder further hampers girls' progress. Maulvi Khan explains, 'My elder daughter also dropped out after class five because the girls' school in the village is only for primary classes and not up to eight. We cannot send our girls to far away villages for studies as it is not safe to travel 3–4 kilometres on foot.'

No school, then work

Many villagers in Mewat realize that not educating their children is a wasted opportunity. Umar Deen says, 'I feel bad when I see my daughter carrying 25 kg of fodder from the fields and carrying drinking water on her head but I have no other option as these girls do not want to stay at home all the time and are happy helping their parents in the fields and at home.' Any child who is not in school is most likely to be put to work.

Child marriage

Most Meo girls are married by the age of 14 years and rarely continue their education after that. Mubina, aged 9, is in class 3 and was even given a prize during Independence Day celebrations for her good performance in school.

But her illiterate parents, who got her elder sister married at the age of 14 years, are adamant that she too will be a child bride. Her classmate at the Noorpur school, Irfana, who hails from a more well off family, also stares at a similar future.

But Mubina's mother Saira, though illiterate and married at the age of 14 years, is quite clear that had she had the opportunity to study at school she would have become a teacher. Now the challenge lies in realizing these lost dreams of Meo girls. As Maulvi Iqbal Khan asserts, 'This is a myth that Meos don't send their children to schools. The fact is that every one, including Meos, want to educate their children but are helpless because there are no schools available and if available, they are not fit for education.'

Source:

This case study draws on primary research and interviews conducted by a local researcher in Mewat.

Unfortunately in most countries in South Asia, with the possible exception of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, over 95 per cent of recurrent education budgets are spent on salaries of teaching staff, with negligible proportions

remaining for maintenance.¹²⁶ Foreign donors, too, have been traditionally unwilling to finance recurrent costs with a preference for one-time infrastructural support only.

¹²⁶ In India, non-salary expenditures increased only modestly from 1.2 per cent of total expenditures in education in 1992 to 4.7 per cent by 1998. In Pakistan the greatest deficit of non-salary expenditure is in Punjab and Sindh provinces, which allocated only 4 per cent of total expenditure to education in 1989–99. In North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan approximately 10 and 8 per cent respectively are dedicated to education.

Z. Hasnain (2005). *The Politics of Service Delivery in Pakistan: Political Parties and the Incentives for Patronage 1988–1999*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

¹²⁷ PROBE (1999). *Public Report on Basic Education in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹²⁸ Mewat Development Agency, *Profile of Mewat*. http://mda.nic.in/profile_of_mewat.htm (last accessed by author November 2009).

ii) Drinking Water

Availability of safe drinking water in schools is the second parameter measured to determine the quality of education infrastructure. Not all children have the luxury to carry water bottles from home to schools. In northern Pakistan, due to persistent droughts water scarcity is a significant problem.

Women and young girls are especially burdened with the task of water collection. In India, this household chore cumulatively accounts for 150 million working days per year or equivalent to the loss of \$200 million.¹²⁹ To be able to free women and girls of their household chores and retain them in literacy centres and classrooms, provision of safe drinking water is essential.

But, fifteen per cent of schools in India have no water supply.¹³⁰ In Pakistan, 32 per cent and in Afghanistan 48 per cent suffer from the same

problem.¹³¹ Areas of Bangladesh face the added danger of arsenic contamination. Regressive cultural practices in Nepal result in segregation of drinking water served for Dalit students. In India, despite strong anti-discrimination laws, Dalit children are reported to be made to sit separately to eat midday meals. Unfortunately, many children *learn* discrimination in schools.

iii) Functional Toilets

At the onset of menstruation, many girls drop out from school, partly because there are no separate toilet facilities for them. If toilets exist they are often dysfunctional. Teachers lock them for their personal use. Or they lack water supply and there are no amenities for their maintenance. Mehak Essa, in the seventh grade of a government school in Pakistan, explains her struggles:

*My house is at an hour's distance from the school ... and I can't afford to miss my class lecture each time so I try and control till school ends in the afternoon or avoid drinking water.*¹³²

Figure 23 | Schools without drinking water

Schools without Drinking Water (%)	
Afghanistan	48
Bangladesh	6
Bhutan	6
India	15
Nepal	29
Pakistan	32
Sri Lanka	24

¹²⁹ UNESCAP (2005). *A future within reach: reshaping institutions in a region of disparities to meet the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific*. Programme Management Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific: A Future Within Reach.

¹³⁰ DISE (2006–07). *ibid*.

¹³¹ Bruns, Minger and Rakotomalala (2003) *Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015: A Chance for Every Child*. Washington DC: World Bank.

¹³² <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/18-bare-necessities-am-01>

Figure 24 | Schools without functional girls' toilets

Schools without functional Girls' Toilets (%)	
Afghanistan	25
Bangladesh	65
Bhutan	3
India	42
Nepal	59
Pakistan	41
Sri Lanka	37

Girls are left with few choices in coping with their basic needs for sanitation and safety. In India close to 42 per cent of schools have no

functioning toilets.¹³³ Bangladesh fares even worse with two-thirds of the schools without suitable sanitary facilities for girls.¹³⁴ In Afghanistan, the latrines are often no more than open pits located in a far corner of the school compound.¹³⁵

Worse still, girl students often have to face the double burden of both caste and gender discrimination. In rural India, Dalit children, especially girls, are often made to clean school toilets – in the case of dry latrines by manual scavenging.¹³⁶

¹³³ DISE (2006–07). *ibid.*

¹³⁴ Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2003). *Education for All: National Plan of Action II 2003–2015*, Fourth Draft. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, May.

¹³⁵ Baker, A. (2008). *Afghanistan's Girl Gap*. Karokh District, Herat, 17 January 2008, *TIME*. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1704654,00.html> (last accessed by author November 2009).

¹³⁶ Bhattacharya, D.P. (2008). In rural Gujarat schools, cleaning toilets is still the job of Dalit students. 15 October 2008, Ahmedabad, *Indian Express*. <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/in-rural-gujarat-schools-cleaning-toilets-is-still-the-job-of-dalit-students/373553/0>

Mari Marcel Thekaekara (2009). Manu Over Ambedkar: Gujarat's Balmiki kids face daily humiliations in school and village. 26 October 2009, *Outlook*. <http://www.outlookindia.com/printarticle.aspx?262319> (last accessed by author November 2009).

INDICATOR 3B: Quality Inputs (QI)

The quality of education imparted is selected as the second indicator within the resources and opportunities domain. Startlingly, it reveals that the education system routinely produces 'educated illiterates'. Across Indian schools, almost half the children surveyed in grade V were found to be unable to read a class II text.¹³⁷ Similarly, in the Punjab province of Pakistan, over two-thirds of grade III students could not solve a simple subtraction problem.¹³⁸

The cost and impacts of these wasted years of education are incalculable. In India, Bangladesh and Pakistan more than 35 per cent of students drop out from primary schools. Once a child

drops out from school unable to bear the tedium of meaningless education, it is difficult to convince him/her to return. Girls in particular have fewer chances of resuming their education. Though boys are more likely to drop out than girls (Figure 25), they may have an opportunity to go to private schools, or those with boarding facilities, apprenticeship training etc.

Unlike the rest of South Asia, in Sri Lanka only 0.8 per cent of students repeat school years. The country offers many successful lessons in the achievement of universal access, quality and equity (Box 6).

¹³⁷ Pratham Resource Center (2008). *Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2007: Provisional*. Mumbai: Pratham Resource Centre.

¹³⁸ Das, J., Pandey, P. and Zajonc, T. (2006). *Learning Levels and Gaps in Pakistan*. Washington, DC, World Bank (Policy Research Working Paper, WPS4067). In UNESCO (2008). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*. Paris and Oxford: UNESCO and Oxford University Press.

¹³⁹ World Bank (2005). *Treasures of Education System in Sri Lanka*, Principal Findings and Options for the Future. World Bank, Sri Lanka.

¹⁴⁰ S. Mehrotra (1998). Education for All: Lessons from High-Achieving Countries, *International Review of Education* 44 (5/6): 461–84, quoted in UNDP (2003) *Human Development Report 2003, Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Figure 25 | Indicator of quality inputs

	Teacher Vacancies (pre-primary, primary and secondary to attain a PTR of 40:1) (%)	Untrained Teachers in Primary Education (%)	Teacher Absenteeism (%)	Lack of Free Textbooks	Gender Bias in Textbooks	Marks for QI	Grade for QI
<i>Weight</i>	30%	25%	25%	10%	10%		
Afghanistan	39	64	—	Yes	Partial	33	D
Bangladesh	38	46	16	No	Partial	64	B
Bhutan	0	9	—	No	Partial	68	B
India	28	22	30	No	Partial	66	B
Nepal	22	34	10	Yes	Yes	60	C
Pakistan	50	15	12	No	Yes	65	B
Sri Lanka	0	4	18	No	Partial	85	A

QI = Quality Inputs

BOX 6: LESSONS FROM SRI LANKA'S SUCCESS

The Sri Lankan education system has been long celebrated in development policy. In the 1930s and 1940s it built the framework for a robust education system, which was far ahead of its time. The recipe emphasized importance of public financing and provision of universal basic education to the entire population. In the early 1960s private schools were legally banned.

Free basic education

The main focus of Sri Lanka's education policy has been to limit public resources devoted to tertiary education, and instead lay emphasis on the basic education cycles. This has enabled the country to attain comparatively high human development levels even for a relatively low income economy. The public sector dominates primary and secondary education, accounting for 93 per cent of schools and 95 per cent of student enrolment. Enrolment rates of children across economic groups show that in the primary education cycle there is a high degree of equity between families from various economic levels.

Quality investments

The average student:teacher ratio for the country is low at 21:1. Net enrolment in grade 1 is about 97 per

cent for both boys and girls, and nearly all children complete grade 5. Several complementary and mutually reinforcing policies exist, such as tuition-free schooling, free textbooks, free uniforms and subsidized transport.

Recurrent expenditure

Sri Lanka allocates at least 27 per cent of education expenditure annually to non-salary recurrent components, which go a long way towards ensuring the quality of education. Textbooks and school uniforms are provided free to all students, and these items receive 3 per cent and 2 per cent of total education expenditure respectively. The remaining maintenance funds are mainly used for electricity, communications, water and other amenities¹³⁹ to ensure availability of drinking water, functional toilets and teaching materials.¹⁴⁰

Two important challenges for the future however remain:

Early childhood care and education

Early childhood development is not formally part of the Sri Lankan public education system. The participation of children aged 3–5 in pre-school education, however, has risen from 20 per cent in the 1980s to 60 per cent in 2001. The National Education Commission (2003) recommends connecting learning activities for children

aged 3–5 with the more formal school system from age 6 upwards and establishing quality standards. This represents an important lacuna.

Post-conflict education reconstruction

The recently concluded 25 years of civil conflict in the North and Eastern parts of the country have resulted in considerable damage to the education system. More than two-thirds of the costs of its reconstruction will need to be devoted to education capital stock, such as school infrastructure, furniture and equipment. Peace-building and social cohesion through the medium of education to build a stable post-conflict future also offer immense potential.

Source:

World Bank (2005), Treasures of Education System in Sri Lanka, Principal Findings and Options for the Future, World Bank, Sri Lanka; and S. Mehrotra (1998), Education for All: Lessons from High-Achieving Countries, International Review of Education, 44 (5/6): 461–84.

To analyse the importance of quality inputs within the classroom, this section narrows its focus on to two inputs – teachers and curricula. The specific parameters analysed with consideration to gender sensitivities are: (i) unfilled teacher vacancies, (ii) deficit of professional teacher training, (iii) levels of teacher absenteeism, (iv) availability of textbooks free of cost and (v) elimination of gender biases in the curricula.

In most countries in South Asia, gender parity in the cadre of teachers has been achieved at all levels from pre-primary to secondary, and therefore we have not measured it separately. Female teachers in secondary schools, in particular, can serve as role models and be a reassuring presence for parents to send their girls to school. While Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal need some attention on this front with less than a third of secondary teachers being female, at the other extreme Sri Lanka in particular faces the distinct danger of over-feminization of the teaching profession with almost two-thirds of the secondary teachers and four-fifths of the country's primary teachers being women.¹⁴¹

Figure 26 | Female teachers in secondary education

Female Teachers in Secondary Education (%)	
Afghanistan	28
Bangladesh	20
Bhutan	41
India	34
Nepal	15
Pakistan	51
Sri Lanka	63

i) Teacher Vacancies

How can children be expected to learn without a teacher? But in India there are officially 6,014 primary schools without a single teacher!¹⁴² In Bangladesh and Pakistan, one-fifth of teacher posts remain vacant. As a result, crowded classrooms are the norm across South Asia. In Afghanistan on an average there is only 1 teacher for every 83 students. Eleven per cent of all primary schools in India also have only a single teacher,¹⁴³ who is forced to manage hundreds of students in multi-grade classrooms.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics. <http://stats.uis.unesco.org> (last retrieved November 2009).

¹⁴² *Seventh All-India School Education Survey*, reported in Menon S. (2007), *India Inc. can help educate our kids*. <http://www.rediff.com/money/2007/may/14guest2.htm> (last accessed by author May 2009).

¹⁴³ DISE (2006–07). *ibid*.

¹⁴⁴ A. Ram (2002). Teachers by Contract: Quality Education Calls for Dedicated and Competent Faculties, *The Statesman*, New Delhi, Thursday 6 June.

Figure 27 | Teacher vacancies

	Teacher Vacancies in Pre-primary (%)	Teacher Vacancies in Primary (%)	Teacher Vacancies in Secondary (%)
Afghanistan	96	0	53
Bangladesh	87	16	33
Bhutan	97	0	5
India	61	0	41
Nepal	45	0	53
Pakistan	60	17	73
Sri Lanka	–	0	0

Fill the teacher gap

Even though national averages indicate an absence of teacher vacancies at the primary level (Figure 27), some districts and provinces in remote, rural, conflict-affected areas often continue to suffer as teachers are unwilling to relocate there. Over 20 per cent of newly trained teachers in Afghanistan – especially 40 per cent of women due to security concerns – choose to work only in Kabul, the capital.¹⁴⁵ In Pakistan, too, absenteeism of female teachers is high¹⁴⁶ due to inadequate and unsafe transport facilities.

The largest numbers of teacher vacancies are evident at the pre-primary level. Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan are especially laggards as they have no formal provision to cater to the education needs of children under the age of six years.

At the secondary level of education, too, due to abject neglect a large number of teacher posts routinely remain vacant, especially in India, Nepal and Pakistan. Girls, especially, find their opportunities to climb the higher rungs of the education ladder jeopardized.

ii) Teacher Absenteeism

The presence of teachers within classrooms during school hours is also an important measure of the quality of education imparted. Shockingly, on an average in India, 25–30 per cent¹⁴⁷ of teachers are found to be missing from their classrooms on any given day. The cost of this absenteeism is estimated to be as high as \$2 billion per year.¹⁴⁸ In Bangladesh, while absence of teachers is lower at 16 per cent, it is headteachers who are most frequently away.¹⁴⁹

Figure 28 | Teacher absenteeism

Teacher Absenteeism (%)	
Afghanistan	–
Bangladesh	16
Bhutan	–
India	30
Nepal	10
Pakistan	12
Sri Lanka	18

¹⁴⁵ UNESCO (2009). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters* Paris, UNESCO and Oxford University Press.

¹⁴⁶ T. Andrabi, J. Das, A.I. Khwaja and T. Zajonc (2005). *Religious School Enrolment in Pakistan: A Look at the Data*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3521.

¹⁴⁷ UNESCO (2008). *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Patrinos, H.A. and Kagitumba, R. (2007). *Maximizing the performance of education systems: the case of teacher absenteeism*. In UNESCO (2009). *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ N. Chaudhury, J. Hammer, M. Kremer, K. Mularidharan and F.H. Rogers (2004). *Roll Call: Teacher Absence in Bangladesh*. June, World Bank.

Imposition of various non-teaching official duties on teachers is often a culprit. Teachers are regularly pulled away from the classroom by teacher training assignments, administrative meetings, festive holidays, coordination of school meals and extra-curricular activities, apart from sick and maternity leave.¹⁵⁰

Teachers are also demotivated due to systemic deficiencies – in under-equipped, under-funded, under-staffed, and overcrowded schools. Teacher salaries are routinely delayed for many months. In Pakistan, almost 40 per cent of schools have no toilets, 32 per cent are without drinking water, 17 per cent without a roof and two-thirds without electricity.¹⁵¹

Let teachers teach

Improving working and living conditions is crucially important to rebuild the public sector ethos. Teachers in India are found to be less likely to be absent from those schools which have been inspected recently, have better infrastructure, and are closer to a paved road.¹⁵²

Several other effective strategies can also be employed to reduce teacher absenteeism. Teachers can be encouraged to encash their unutilized leave. Recruiting teachers directly to schools, rather than a centralized, transferable

service is another option. Time-bound compulsory rural service contracts and financial incentives to relocate to remote and difficult areas are also effective. Provision of safe housing, especially for female teachers, near the school is a further possibility. To weed out ghost teachers, who have been registered more than once or who do not turn up to work but only collect their salaries, Afghanistan has also launched a teacher registration programme.¹⁵³

iii) Untrained Teachers

Within the classroom, a well-trained teacher is more likely to be effective. But to expedite the reduction in widespread teacher vacancies, in the Indian state of Jharkhand more than 55 per cent of teachers are hired on low-paid contracts and two-thirds neither meet the minimum professional qualifications nor are they trained. In Bangladesh, too, almost half the teacher cadre is without professional training (Figure 29). This has institutionalized a cheaper, inferior, parallel schooling system for the poorest children. In northern Afghanistan a 2005 survey revealed that only five per cent of primary school teachers were able to pass the exams which their pupils must take.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Howes, S. and Murgai, R. (2004). *Subsidies and Salaries: Issues of restructuring Government Expenditure in India*. Revised version of the paper presented at the IMF-NIPFP conference on fiscal reform, January 2004, New Delhi. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/seminars/eng/2004/fiscal/pdf/howes.pdf> (last retrieved November 2009).

¹⁵¹ Pakistan Development Forum (2004). *Challenge of Education and Economic Growth*. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, March 17–19.

¹⁵² N. Chaudhury, J. Hammer, M. Kremer, K. Muralidharan and H. Rogers (2004). Teacher Absence in India: A Snapshot, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 9 (2): 85–110.

¹⁵³ Mojaddidi *et al.* (2006). *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Spink, J. (2006). Education, Reconstruction and Forced Migration in Afghanistan, *Forced Migration Review*, FMR Education Supplement, July, p.15.

Figure 29 | Untrained teachers in primary education

Untrained Teachers in Primary Education (%)	
Afghanistan	64
Bangladesh	46
Bhutan	9
India	22
Nepal	34
Pakistan	15
Sri Lanka	4

Teach the teacher

Teachers need to be trained in good quality pedagogical techniques rather than rote learning. Child-friendly methods (Box 7) especially need emphasis.

BOX 7: LEARNING THE CHILD-FRIENDLY WAY IN NEPALI SCHOOLS

It's the start of a typical day for first graders in the Kachana Mahadev Secondary School as they happily sing a rhyme describing the seven days of the week. This school in Itahari, located in Sunsari district, eastern Nepal, is among those implementing the country's Child Friendly School Initiative.

'Every morning, students themselves decide their routine for the day,' explained Maya Bhujel, a first-grade teacher at Badri Nath Primary School at Dharan, also in Sunsari. 'This is very unusual, for traditionally the children had to study whatever we taught them. Children have also formed committees to keep their classroom clean, and this has helped inculcate a sense of responsibility in them.'

Interactive teaching and learning

Clustered in a circle around their brightly decorated classroom at Badri Nath, the children shout out the days of the week. 'Sombaar! Mangalbaar! Budhabaar!' they chant. The fun they have while learning is not witnessed in many of Nepal's schools, where the stress is on rote learning and 'discipline' (which translates to corporal punishment). The child-friendly methodology followed in the primary sections of this school encourages interactive teaching and learning instead.

Even the facilities, from the seating arrangements to the toilets, are developed keeping the child in mind. 'The Child Friendly School Initiative aims to provide a safe and joyful environment to the children so that they experience learning as a fun activity,' said UNICEF Project Officer Dovan Lawoti. 'Child-friendly learning and activity-based teaching help children to fully develop their potential.'

1,000 schools reached

The child-friendly school effort started in Nepal in 2002 at 45 government-run schools in two districts, Kavre and Sunsari. The initiative has now reached some 1,000 schools across 15 districts of the country.

In close partnership with the Department of Education, UNICEF provides training on child-friendly teaching and learning to the teachers in the pilot schools. This training provides conceptual clarity to the teachers and orients them on the intricacies of dealing with young boys and girls as individuals.

UNICEF also provides the materials necessary to facilitate child-friendly teaching and learning methods. With the implementation of this initiative, the schools have completely changed their

classroom set-up to be more child-friendly. Desks and benches have been replaced with carpets and mats. And the blackboards have been lowered to the children's level, making them more accessible.

'I love coming to school'

As there is no more physical punishment in the school, children are more vocal about their needs and demands. This has helped to boost their morale and confidence.

'Children are comparatively more confident and creative,' said Ms. Bhujel. 'Earlier, I used to think that I needed to be strict for children to be disciplined and for them to learn better. However, I am now amazed to see how these children learn so quickly and are more creative in a more informal and "free" setting.'

Added Indira Neupane, a second-grade teacher in Kachana School: 'Children now enjoy coming to school as they get to learn in a relaxing environment. This has helped to retain the students. The number of absentees has also decreased remarkably.'

While arranging number blocks in a row, Rabina Chaudhary, 5, had the last word: 'I love coming to school. I have many friends here and our teachers also love us a lot.'

Source: Ashma Shrestha Basnet, UNICEF Nepal.
This report was filed from Sunsari district on 19 March 2009.

iv) Free Textbooks

The curriculum available to teachers is the second most crucial component of quality education. Most countries in South Asia are committed to providing free textbooks to all children in public schools. In Bangladesh, even schools run by NGOs, communities and madrasas are also covered.¹⁵⁵ However, despite officially being free, costs of textbooks repeatedly appear as an important reason for children dropping out of school in some South Asian countries. In Afghanistan, while a new school curriculum has been developed in 2003, delays have plagued the delivery of textbooks to classrooms.¹⁵⁶

Figure 30 | Lack of free textbooks

Lack of Free Textbooks	
Afghanistan	Yes
Bangladesh	No
Bhutan	No
India	No
Nepal	Yes
Pakistan	No
Sri Lanka	No

v) Gender Bias

Gender discrimination is often institutionalized within the education system through the curricula. It is embedded in textbooks, lessons and classroom interactions. Bias takes the form

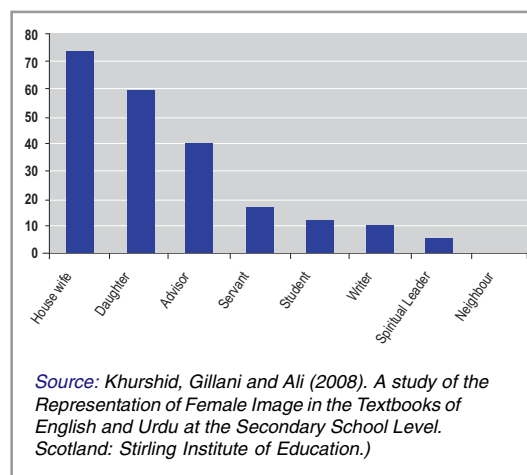
Figure 31 | Gender bias in textbooks

Gender Bias in Textbooks	
Afghanistan	Partial
Bangladesh	Partial
Bhutan	Partial
India	Partial
Nepal	Yes
Pakistan	Yes
Sri Lanka	Partial

of women's invisibility, perpetuation of gender division of labour, emphasis on stereotypes of feminine or masculine attributes and gendered linguistic biases.

In the Indian state of West Bengal, more than half the illustrations in primary school textbooks

Figure 32 | Occupations assigned to women in Urdu textbooks



¹⁵⁵ A. Mansoor and R. Chowdhury *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ MOE (2009). *Defining the Gaps: the case of Afghanistan (From Education Reforms to Sustainable Development)*. INEE 2009 Global Consultation Bridging the Gaps: Risk Reduction, Relief and Recovery in Istanbul. Ministry of Education, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. http://www.afghan-web.com/education/case_afg_education.pdf (last retrieved November 2009).

were found to depict only men.¹⁵⁷ Social realities are also often distorted to reflect bias. In the Sindh province of Pakistan, women are invisible as teachers in school textbooks even though they constitute more than half of secondary school educators.¹⁵⁸

Remove biases

All South Asian countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which proposes, in Article 10, the elimination of gender stereotypes in school textbooks. The NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) in India has developed an innovative curriculum in this direction

which integrates sensitive gender issues in subtle ways even in textbooks for Mathematics.¹⁵⁹

One subject which, however, remains missing from most secondary school curricula across South Asia is sex education. There is an acute need to educate girls on the protection of their rights in a region with widespread child marriages and teenage pregnancies. Child sexual abuse is also worrisome with 53 per cent of children in India confiding to have faced one or more forms of sexual abuse.¹⁶⁰ Protection of children is paramount, but even Sri Lankan education planners are only slowly waking up to the need for sex education.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Ahmed, F.B. (2006). Male bias in school texts, *The Tribune* Online Edition, No. 26, February. In UNESCO (2007). *ibid*.

¹⁵⁸ Ram, L. Do the Primary School Textbooks in Pakistan Reflect Gender Biases? A Content Analysis of Illustrations. *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, December 2008, Vol. 2, No.2, pp 92—102. <http://www.ue.edu.pk/jrre/vol2-2/2-2-1.pdf> (last retrieved November 2009).

¹⁵⁹ While only 32 per cent of students have access to these newly developed textbooks in 15 states that have adopted the NCERT textbooks, they represent a progressive step towards gender-sensitive curricula.

Mukherji, A. and A. Mukul (2009). *Ma'am, the textbook has changed*. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/articleshow/msid-5060338.curpg-1.cms> (last retrieved November 2009).

¹⁶⁰ MoWCD (2007). *ibid*.

¹⁶¹ Sandun A. Jayasekera (2009). School curricula needs sex education: Minister. http://www.dailymirror.lk/DM_BLOG/Sections/frmNewsDetailView.aspx?ARTID=39919 (last retrieved November 2009).

INDICATOR 3C: Education Incentives (IN)

Incentives are another measure to potentially encourage girls and boys to stay in school and continue their education. They can either be made available universally or targeted specifically for girls, children from poor communities, etc. India has a wide range of incentives on offer from universal school meals to bicycles provided to secondary school girls in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Gujarat.

This indicator essentially focuses on three types of incentives: (i) universal school meals, (ii) existence of cash stipends especially for marginalized communities and girls and (iii) any other non-cash incentives to facilitate girls' access to schools.

We have used a three-point scale where 'Yes' implies that more than 75 per cent of the eligible child population have access to the

Figure 33 | Indicator of education incentives

	Free School Meals	Cash Stipends for Marginalized Communities or Girls	Other Non-cash Incentives to Facilitate Access to Schools of Girls	Marks for IN	Grade for IN
<i>Weight</i>	35%	35%	30%		
Afghanistan	Few	No	No	9	E
Bangladesh	No	Yes	Few	43	C
Bhutan	Few	No	Some	24	D
India	Yes	Few	Few	51	C
Nepal	No	No	No	0	E
Pakistan	No	Some	Few	8	E
Sri Lanka	Few	Few	Yes	48	C

IN = Education Incentives

incentive, for example school meals, while 'Some' and 'Few' imply that at least half or a quarter respectively enjoy the benefit.

i) Free School Meals

Between 30 and 55 per cent of children in South Asia are malnourished. Six million – 48 per cent of children – in Afghanistan are estimated to be stunted due to malnourishment. School meals offer an important means to improve their nutrition, health, and educational achievements,¹⁶² especially for the millions from poor families who come to school hungry. Universal school meals provided to all children, additionally, avoid the problems associated with selection and identification of beneficiaries.

Figure 34 | Free school meals

Free School Meals	
Afghanistan	Few
Bangladesh	No
Bhutan	Few
India	Yes
Nepal	No
Pakistan	No
Sri Lanka	Few

In India, school meals which were first introduced in the state of Tamil Nadu in the sixties¹⁶³ have been universalized nationwide since 2001.¹⁶⁴ Bhutan provides not one but two meals a day to approximately 20 per cent of primary and secondary school students – both boarders and day students.¹⁶⁵ However, Sri Lanka has withdrawn universal midday meals, with the exception of a few schools in the poorest districts.¹⁶⁶

ii) Cash Transfers

Cash stipends offer a different form of incentive, to offset some of the opportunity costs of education. They are often targeted at specific groups and awarded based on fulfilment of conditionalities. But identification of eligible children to provide education incentives is often difficult. Selection of beneficiaries is not cost-effective since poverty is widespread and the process of identification itself systemically breeds corruption.

The Bangladesh Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP), therefore, has been proved to be largely unsuccessful¹⁶⁷ with two-

¹⁶² The midday meal is expected to reduce the dropout rate by 5 per cent per annum and result in retention of an additional 1.5 million children every year. Planning Commission (2005). *Mid-Term Appraisal of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002–2007)*. Government of India, Box 2.1.1 and Para 2.1.29.

¹⁶³ Swaminathan *et al.* (2004). Tamil Nadu's Mid day Meal Scheme: Where Assumed Benefits Score over Hard Data. *Economic and Political Weekly*.

¹⁶⁴ In response to public interest litigation by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (Rajasthan) in April 2001, a Supreme Court order has directed all state governments in India to provide cooked midday meals for all children in government schools. The production of food has been decentralized to NGOs, self-help groups, corporate houses, or assistants within schools.

¹⁶⁵ RGoB (2009). *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Projects to Improve Nutritional Status of Children, *Sunday Observer*, Daily News Online Edition, 21 May 2006.

¹⁶⁷ Hossain, N. (2009). *School Exclusion as Social Exclusion: the Practices and Effects of Conditional Cash Transfer Programme for the Poor in Bangladesh*. Working Paper No. 148, Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

Figure 35 | Cash stipends for marginalized communities or girls

Cash Stipends for Marginalized Communities or Girls

Afghanistan	No
Bangladesh	Yes
Bhutan	No
India	Few
Nepal	No
Pakistan	Some
Sri Lanka	Few

thirds of the eligible children, including girls from the poorest households, not receiving their entitlement.¹⁶⁸ The Secondary Stipend Programme for girls (FSP), however, has had more success, due to its universal coverage amongst all rural girls (Box 8), irrespective of their family income.¹⁶⁹

BOX 8:

STIPENDS FOR GIRLS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

The Female Stipend Programme (FSP) was launched in 1982 in six rural areas of Bangladesh as a pilot programme to enrol and retain girls in secondary schools. The programme yielded an impressive increase in girls' secondary enrolments and decrease in dropout rates.¹⁷⁰ The Government of Bangladesh from 1994 onwards expanded the programme with funds from IDA, ADB and NORAD. Since 2002 the stipends have been extended to include higher secondary and metropolitan cities.

The stipends are referred to as 'conditional cash transfers' as each girl is expected to attend 75 per cent of school days, attain 45 per cent of class-level test scores, and remain unmarried.

The modest stipend ranges from Tk 25 to Tk 60 (\$0.36 to \$0.87) per month directly provided to each eligible girl student, and complementary tuition subsidies¹⁷¹ are transferred directly to the concerned school through a scheduled bank. This initiative supports more than 2 million girl students each year. This 'flagship initiative' to fulfil the MDG Goal 3 accounts for more than 60 per cent of the country's secondary school development budget and 13 per cent of the education sector budget.¹⁷²

A unique feature of the FSP is that it not only supports demand-side incentives but also supply-side incentives. Schools which educate girls are provided with subventions for teacher salaries in order to cater for the projected increase in enrolment, with an emphasis on recruiting female teachers. In fact, it is reported that many madrasas opened their doors for girl students as the FSP teacher subventions provided a sizeable incentive.¹⁷³

In addition, reform of curriculum and instructional materials, teacher training, recruitment of female teachers, improvement of school infrastructure, community mobilization, etc. intend to support the enrolment and empowerment of girl students. Research investigations reveal the following impacts:

Gender parity in classrooms

The FSP has increased girls' enrolment substantially.¹⁷⁴ Gross enrolment at the secondary level was 43 per cent for boys and 45 per cent for girls in 2007.¹⁷⁵ Not only does this imply gender parity in classrooms but also a substantial increase in enrolment and retention compared with previous years which may have also benefited from the introduction of free tuition in 1990 for girls in

grades VI to VIII.¹⁷⁶ Girls now outnumber boys in secondary schools.

Delayed marriages

Bangladesh has the second highest rate of child marriage in the world¹⁷⁷ with more than 65 per cent of girls marrying before the age of 18.¹⁷⁸ Conclusive statistics on delayed marriage or fertility control are hard to come by but is undeniable that stipends have had a positive impact to reduce the incidence of dropout due to marriage for those students enrolled in secondary and to delay the marriage of a few girls.¹⁷⁹ There is also a significant difference in overall dropout rates between stipend awardee girls (1.3 per cent) and non-awardee girls (50.3 per cent).¹⁸⁰

Enhanced quality?

The FSP, per se, can have a negative impact on the overall quality of education by increasing enrolment without parallel strategies to increase the number of teachers or classrooms, or by imposing unrealistic criteria for receipt of stipends. The high dropout rates for girls (46 per cent compared with 39 per cent for boys) in Grades VI–X highlight the risk of a trade-off between higher enrolments and lower quality.¹⁸¹ A learner's assessment shows that girls' achievements were

less compared with boys' at Grade X in 2007 with similar household food security status. The gender gap was observed as 8.6 per cent among the students of surplus households, 12.3 per cent in break-even households, and 21 per cent in deficit households.¹⁶² The 45 per cent pass mark requirement implies that girls with literate parents who can help with their homework or have enough income to pay for private tuition are much more likely to qualify for the stipend.

Alleviation of poverty?

Children from families which are extremely poor usually do not finish primary school due to the costs of education (which cannot be offset by the low amount of the stipend) and are not eligible for stipends.¹⁶³

Research for Education Watch 2007 reveals that the household cost of education for a rural girl is Tk. 2,554 (equivalent to \$37) per year for studying in government primary schools and Tk. 8,607 (equivalent to \$126) in government secondary schools.¹⁶⁴ The FSP therefore caters only to families who could afford to enable their girls to complete primary education rather than the disadvantaged.¹⁶⁵

Whatever may be the shortcomings, FSP has definitely proved to be one of the major mechanisms for reducing gender disparity in education. The main challenge is how to use the preliminary gains for enhancing quality and equity. Political commitment backed by appropriate targeting

strategies revisiting criteria for encouraging poor families, community participation, good governance, close monitoring and resource commitment are needed to materialize the objectives of the female stipend programmes.

Source:

Rasheda K. Choudhury,
Executive Director, and
K.M. Enamul Hoque,
Programme Manager,
Campaign for Popular
Education (CAMPE), a coalition
of more than 1000 NGOs
involved in literacy and
education in Bangladesh.

¹⁶⁶ The PESP expects School Management Committees (SMCs) and head teachers to identify and target girls who hail from the poorest households, attain 40 per cent marks in examinations and have 85 per cent attendance. R. Choudhury and A. Mansoor (2005). *ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Samarrai, S. (2007). *Changes in Employment in Bangladesh, 2000–2005: The Impacts on Poverty and Gender Equity*. Washington, DC, World Bank, South Asia Region. (Background paper for the Bangladesh Poverty Assessment.) In UNESCO (2008). *ibid*.

¹⁷⁰ Haq and Haq (1998). *Human Development in South Asia 1998*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

¹⁷¹ Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education, 2009.

¹⁷² World Bank (1997). *Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Project Mid-term Review Report*.

¹⁷³ JBIC (2002). *ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ Khandker, S.R., Pitt, M.M. and Fuwa, N. (2003). *Subsidy to Promote Girls' Secondary Education: The Female Stipend Program in Bangladesh*. Washington DC: World Bank.

¹⁷⁵ UNESCO (2009). *ibid*.

¹⁷⁶ Abadzi, H. (2003). *Project Performance Assessment Report: Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Project*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

¹⁷⁷ Mathur, S., Greene, M. and Malhotra, A. (2003). *Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights and Health of Young Married Girls*. Washington, DC: World Bank. http://www.icrw.org/docs/tooyoungtowed_1003.pdf (last retrieved by the author in October 2009).

¹⁷⁸ UNICEF (2009). *The State of the World's Children: Maternal and Newborn Health*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

¹⁷⁹ Raynor, J. and Kk Wesson (2006). The Girls' Stipend Program in Bangladesh. *Journal of Education for International Development*, 2:2. <http://www.equip123.net/JEID/articles/3/Bangladesh.pdf> (last retrieved by the author in October 2009).

¹⁸⁰ JBIC (2002). *ibid*.

¹⁸¹ Ahmed, M., Nath, S R., Hossain, A. and Kalam, M.A. (2006). *Education Watch 2005: The State of Secondary Education: Progress and Challenges*. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

¹⁸² Nath, S.R., Haq, M.N., Begum, U.S., Ullah, A.M.M.A., Sattar, M.A. and Chowdhury, A.M.R. (2008). *Education Watch 2007: The State of Secondary Education: Quality and Equity Challenges*. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

¹⁸³ Abadzi (2003). *ibid*.

¹⁸⁴ Ahmad, Q.K. and Ahmed, K.S. (2007). *Education Watch 2006: Financing Primary and Secondary Education in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE).

¹⁸⁵ Hove, J. (2007). *Barriers to Girls' Secondary School Participation in Rural Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Centre for Policy Research – IUBAT.

iii) Secure Incentives

Girls are perceived to suffer from greater safety or security risk in travelling to school on a daily basis. Therefore incentives, apart from food or cash, which are designed to support safer transport offer an important gender-sensitive means to support school participation.

Many Indian states like Jharkhand provide bicycles to girls in secondary schools. Sri Lanka, which has better public transportation, charges students only 10 per cent of the cost of a season ticket to use public buses.¹⁸⁶

Bhutan, with a difficult mountainous terrain, on the other hand, has focused on construction of

community schools nearer student homes. Additionally, the construction of several hostels and residential boarding facilities has rapidly expanded primary school enrolments, especially for girls.

Figure 36 | Other non-cash incentives to facilitate access to schools of girls

Other Non-cash Incentives to Facilitate Access to Schools of Girls	
Afghanistan	No
Bangladesh	Few
Bhutan	Some
India	Few
Nepal	No
Pakistan	Some
Sri Lanka	Yes

¹⁸⁶ Kumarasinghe, U. and I. Range (2009). Transport Minister presents supplementary estimate for Sri Lanka Transport Board, *Daily News*. <http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/07/10/pol02.asp> (last retrieved November 2009)

INDICATOR 3D: Environment of Gender Inequality (GE)

The final indicator in this section of the resources and opportunities domain focuses on the opportunities available for women. While the education system potentially supports women to be active and equal participants in all spheres of life, gender discrimination in the patriarchal societies of South Asia remains all-pervasive. This not only affects the access to and completion of education of girls and women, but also hampers their economic and political opportunities for social empowerment.

This report card relies on two dimensions to evaluate the environment of gender equality, both calculated by the UNDP's Human Development Reports: (i) the Gender Development Index, which provides an assessment of the gendered gap in basic capabilities including literacy, life expectancy and earned income and (ii) the Gender Empowerment Measure which examines the extent of economic and political participation of women.

Figure 37 | Indicator of gender (in)equality

	Gender Development Index between Men and Women	Gender Empowerment Measure	Marks for GE	Grade for GE
<i>Weight</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>30%</i>		
Afghanistan	—	—	0	E
Bangladesh	0.539	0.264	46	C
Bhutan	—	—	0	E
India	0.600	0.451	56	C
Nepal	0.52	0.486	51	C
Pakistan	0.525	0.386	48	C
Sri Lanka	0.735	0.389	63	B

GE = Gender (In)Equality 2009.

Source: UNDP (2009). Human Development Report.

i) Gender Development

An Afghan mother can expect her child to live for only 44 years. In contrast, with far better access to healthcare a Sri Lankan child can easily expect to live at least an additional 25 years. Gender development constitutes a multi-dimensional measure of a person's life chances – life expectancy, education and earnings – from a gender perspective.

Figure 38 | Life expectancy

Average Life Expectancy at Birth (years)	
Afghanistan	44
Bangladesh	66
Bhutan	66
India	63
Nepal	66
Pakistan	66
Sri Lanka	74

Source: UNDP (2009). Human Development Report.

The disparities are the starkest in South Asia in terms of earned income. Even though 85 per cent of workers in garment factories – the largest national employer in Bangladesh – are women, the collective national earned income of women is only half of that of men as a whole. In Pakistan, with an even lower participation of women in the workforce, they are able to earn only 18 per cent of the country's income.

Given the gendered segmentation of labour markets, women are usually offered the lowest paid jobs in the factories, or services sector, with little chance of mobility. They therefore often prefer to leave the labour force when the

economic condition of their household improves to cope with their continuing primary responsibility for reproductive work and social norms that value women staying at home. Despite improvements in literacy levels in India, women's labour force participation, therefore, has remained remarkably stable at around 30 per cent in the last two decades.

Since labour force participation is not considered to be a good standalone indicator of gender equality or women's empowerment, we have laid emphasis on the more holistic measure of gender development and empowerment.

ii) Gender Empowerment

South Asia has had a long history of women in leadership positions of political power. But from the former Sri Lankan President Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the world's first woman minister, to the current Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed, most of them have risen to power from politically powerful families. Their elevation has not necessarily had an impact on women's access to socio-economic opportunities or political power in general. The glass ceiling remains unbroken.

The achievement of gender balance in political institutions remains elusive.¹⁸⁷ The Women's Reservation Bill – to secure 33 per cent of seats in the Indian Parliament – has only just been passed by the Rajya Sabha (upper house of Indian parliament), in March 2010, after being stalemated for 14 years.

Nepal and Afghanistan have well established quotas. The Pakistani Parliament, too, through effective implementation of quotas, has a representation of 20 per cent women, which exceeds the global average. But Pakistani women lag far behind in other spheres – only 3 per cent of legislators, senior officials and managers are female.¹⁸⁸

Figure 39 | Women in Parliament

Seats in Parliament held by Women (%)	
Afghanistan	26
Bangladesh	19
Bhutan	14
India	9
Nepal	33
Pakistan	21
Sri Lanka	6

Source: UNDP (2009) Human Development Report.

¹⁸⁷ All statistics in this section are drawn from UNDP (2009). *Human Development Report, Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

¹⁸⁸ Ebrahim, Z. (2009). Politics-Pakistan: Women in Parliament Push for Space, *IPS News*. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=47055> (last retrieved in October 2009)

BOX 9: PROLONGED INSECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

Daniel Toole, UNICEF's regional director for South Asia, has given some insightful analysis: 'Afghanistan today is without a doubt the most dangerous place to be born.'¹⁸⁹ In a country which remains mired in conflict, attacks on civilians, including women and girls, instil widespread fear. On an average, the female life expectancy is only 45 years. But even in the face of these deprivations and challenges, education offers much hope for the future.

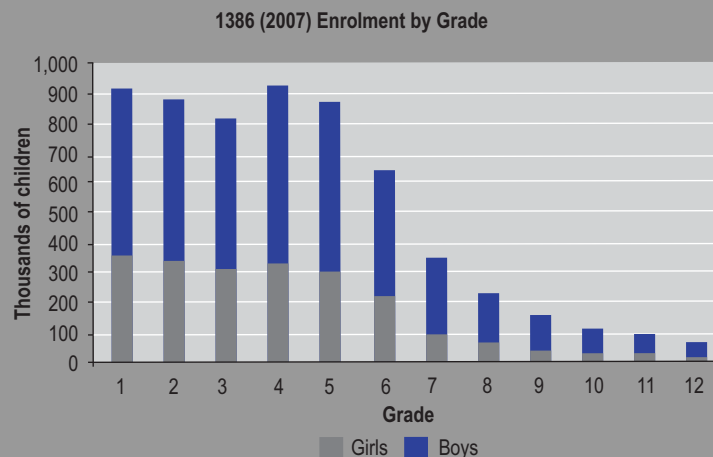
'If you don't study, you're like a blind person!' says a mother of two sons and two daughters, all enrolled in school in rural Chahar Asyab in Kabul province of Afghanistan.¹⁹⁰ Since the establishment of democracy in 2001, enrolments have seen manifold increases across Afghanistan with millions of young girls and boys entering schools. However the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction of the education system remain with almost half the school-age children outside the classroom, as they have never enrolled or are unable to survive.

No schools

The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Survey (NRVA) in 2005 clearly indicates that the single most important reason for parents not sending their children to schools is the physical lack of them. School buildings and teachers are simply non-existent in many remote areas. In the

past six years, 3,500 new schools have been opened across the country, but fewer than half of them have buildings. Most sessions are in tents or in the shade of trees or any available open spaces. This directly affects girls' enrolment: most Afghan families will not allow their daughters to be where they may be seen by men.¹⁹¹

Figure 40 | Enrolment in Afghanistan by grade in 2007



Household costs to education

Though the constitutional provision to provide free, basic education up to grade 9 heralds a new beginning, it remains far removed from ground realities. In Daikundi province of Afghanistan 85 per cent of schools are reported to charge school fees¹⁹² of approximately 300 Afs (\$6) per student annually.¹⁹³ That apart, families need to spend on school uniforms, books, transport costs, shoes, stationery, meals, etc. Many poor households are unable to afford them and girls are invariably the first to drop out.

Women teachers

Only 28 per cent of Afghan teachers are women. Since so few girls are able to complete their education, it

remains a challenge to nurture the next generation of female teachers. Worse still, of the 40,000 teachers needed to meet the demand for schooling, the central government has been able to find the budget for only 10,000.¹⁹⁴

Restricted movement

When an Afghan woman leaves her home, especially in a rural village, she usually needs to be accompanied by her husband or son. Socio-cultural traditions combined with constant fear of violence (be they old landmines or fresh attacks) pervades every aspect of life for women, affecting their participation in the economy, in politics, in cultural life and their access to education, healthcare and government services.

The establishment of democracy has brought with it considerable freedoms for women. Quota-based representation in parliament alone does not imply influence or power. Recently, the regressive Shiite Personal Status Law was passed by the Afghan parliament, which authorizes a husband to withhold food from a wife who fails to provide sexual service at least once every four days, despite opposition by a few woman parliamentarians who were only able to increase the marriageable age for girls from age 9 years to 16 years on the floor of the house.¹⁹⁵ Clearly, true empowerment of Afghan women has a long way to go.

¹⁸⁹ Alfano, S. (2009). UNICEF: Afghanistan Worst Place to Be Born. <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/11/20/world/worldwatch/entry5722231.shtml> (last retrieved in October 2009).

¹⁹⁰ Hunte, Pamela (2005). *Household Decision-Making and School Enrolment in Afghanistan*, Case Study 1: Chahar Asyab District, Kabul Province. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

¹⁹¹ Baker, A. (2008). *ibid.*

¹⁹² Mojaddidi *et al.* (2006). *ibid.*

¹⁹³ HRRAC (2004). *Report Card: Progress on Compulsory Education – Grades 1–9*. The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, March 2004, has estimated that in Kabul province the average annual cost of sending a child to first grade was 350 Afs (\$7), to fifth grade 1,000 Afs (\$20), and to ninth grade 1,700 Afs (\$35).

¹⁹⁴ Baker, A. (2008). *ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Jones, A. (2009). The Trivial Fate of Women, *Middle East Online*. <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=35241> (last retrieved in October 2009)

*Teaching is a very attractive profession for ladies.
It is possibly the only acceptable profession
if a woman wants to work.
More parents send their
daughters to school – they know
that I will be there.*

*Mubashira Bashir-Ud-Din,
Woman teacher, Pakistan, 2007*

DOMAIN 4

SECURITY: From a Gender Point of View

The 'human security' approach places human beings at the centre and makes achieving freedom from want and fear its twin objectives.¹⁹⁶ Safety from violence is considered to be integral to their achievement, and constitutes the fourth domain of this analysis which focuses on barriers that women and girls face to complete their education - both in terms of fear of deliberately orchestrated violence and underlying structural deprivations.

In Afghanistan, for example, even after almost a decade since the return of democracy, insecurity continues to be the number one concern of women, largely due to the continued attack on civilian life including schools¹⁹⁷ resulting in teachers in the Southern provinces increasingly finding themselves under threat.¹⁹⁸ In the Swat valley of Pakistan, too, security concerns have intensified since early 2007, as an estimated 191 schools have been destroyed, 122 of which were exclusively for girls, affecting an estimated 62,000 children.¹⁹⁹

But even in countries which are not in the thick of violent conflict, underlying social exclusion and discrimination increase girl's and women's vulnerability to missing out on an education.

As it is difficult to find comparative quantitative data on levels of violence prevalent in a society, the indicators used are focused on structural violence, both economic and social. Poverty, in particular, not only inhibits household expenditure on schooling, but further creates opportunity costs in terms of child labour. Patriarchal social norms also add pressure for both marriage and restrictions on mobility of girls post-puberty.

These two forms of violence are analysed in this indicator. Economic constraints are represented by (i) household poverty and (ii) child labour, while socio-cultural violence is analysed in terms of (iii) child marriage and (iv) freedom of movement which particularly constrains girls' progression to secondary schools.

¹⁹⁶ Womankind (2008). *Taking Stock Update: Afghan Women and Girls Seven Years On*. London: Womankind. <http://www.womankind.org.uk/upload/Taking%20Stock%20Report%2068p.pdf> (last retrieved in October 2009).

¹⁹⁷ Womankind (2008). *ibid*.

¹⁹⁸ EI (2007). *Education International Barometer of Human & Trade Union Rights in Education*. Country Profile: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. http://www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/profiles_detail.php?country=afghanistan (last accessed by the author in November 2009).

¹⁹⁹ Arif, K. (2009). *The establishment of a Taliban emirate*. http://www.himalmag.com/The-establishment-of-a-Taliban-emirate_nw2882.html (last accessed by author May 2009).

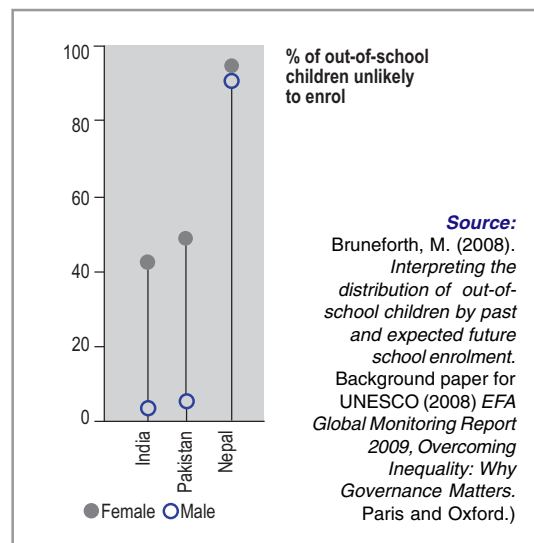
INDICATOR 4A: Barriers to Girls' Education (BE)

Poverty and gender discrimination are the two most important barriers preventing girls from attending and achieving in schools across South Asia. In poor households, with limited resources, boys are more likely to be sent to school than girls. Entrenched cultural prejudices which perceive girls' education as 'watering a neighbour's tree' have a detrimental influence. This interplay of cultural and economic prejudices and active discrimination in patriarchal societies often makes girls less likely to enrol in schools (Figure 41) to achieve their fullest potential.

Of the girls who do manage to enter school in India, almost half drop out by the time they reach class VIII.²⁰⁰ Once they attain puberty, classrooms prove to be even more elusive.

Sri Lanka has been able to minimize gender obstacles, especially with the culmination of

Figure 41 | Percentage of out-of-school children unlikely to enrol, by gender, 2006



the long decades of civil conflict, while the analysis reveals that girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan face the greatest barriers.

²⁰⁰ Ramchandran (2007). The Great Number Race and the Challenge of Education. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 September.

Figure 42 | Indicator of barriers to girls' education

	Marriage of Girls before 18 years	Girls Engaged in Child Labour	Freedom of Movement	Population Living on Less than \$1.25 per Day	Marks for BE	Grade for BE
<i>Weight</i>	30%	30%	30%	10%		
Afghanistan	43	33	Low	—	37	D
Bangladesh	64	8	Medium	50	58	C
Bhutan	27	22	Medium	26	68	B
India	47	2	Medium	42	63	B
Nepal	51	33	Medium	55	54	C
Pakistan	32	—	Medium	23	43	C
Sri Lanka	12	7	High	14	93	A

BE = Barriers to Girls' Education

i) Poverty

Officially education has been declared to be free in many countries of South Asia. But as budgets are inadequate, the burden of education expenses often falls unduly on the poorest families. Between 1998 and 2003, household spending on education increased sevenfold in India.²⁰¹ But due to high levels of poverty (more than 40 per cent live on less than \$1.25 per day) in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, 40 per cent of primary school age children from the poorest quintile do not attend school.²⁰²

The financial burden in secondary education is often twice as high as primary, which constrains children from poor families.

Figure 43 | Population living on less than \$1.25 per day

Population Living on Less than \$1.25 per Day	
Afghanistan	—
Bangladesh	50
Bhutan	26
India	42
Nepal	55
Pakistan	23
Sri Lanka	14

Free education

Poverty curtails educational opportunities. A child from a poor village in Sylhet can expect to spend only four years in school on an average, while their years of education would double if their family were amongst Dhaka city's elite. The contrast is even greater in India (Figure 44).

²⁰¹ UNESCO (2007). *ibid.*

²⁰² Educational Attainment and Enrolment Around the World database. <http://research.worldbank.org/edattain/index.htm> (last retrieved November 2009).

Figure 44 | Average years of education for the poorest and richest 20 per cent of 17 to 22-year-olds

Average years of Education of 17 to 22-year-olds		
	Poorest 20%	Richest 20%
Bangladesh	3.7	8
India	4.4	11

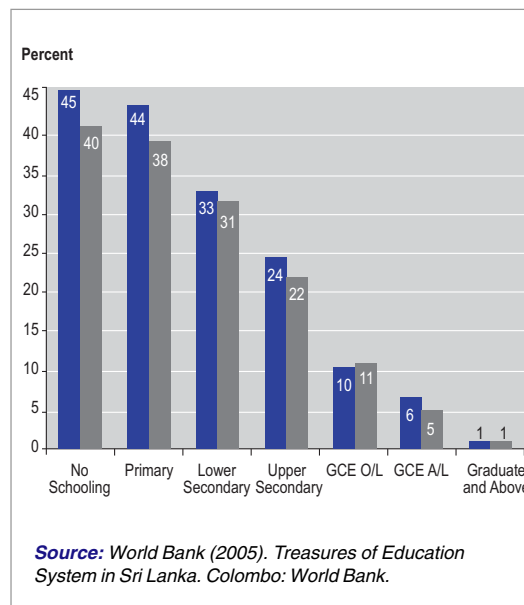
Source: Demographic and health surveys, calculations by Harttgen, K., Klasen, S. and Misselhorn, M. (2008). *Education for All? Measuring pro-poor educational outcomes in developing countries. Background paper for UNESCO (2008) EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters. Paris and Oxford.*

The impact of these inequities reverberates across generations. Though more than 35 per cent of entrants in primary education in Bangladesh are first generation learners, only 7 per cent of these students are able to survive till Grade X.²⁰³ Life chances of families also depend on the level of education of their breadwinners. In Sri Lanka as education levels of the household heads increase, families are systematically less likely to be poor (Figure 45). But completion of primary school alone proves to be insufficient to protect a family from poverty. There is therefore an acute need to make the full cycle of basic education genuinely free of all costs.

ii) Child Labour

Child labour is undoubtedly a barrier to education. Girls from poor families are

Figure 45 | Poverty incidence by education level of household head in 1985/86 and 1995/96 in Sri Lanka



particularly vulnerable to being employed as domestic maids with household and childcare responsibilities. Thousands of girls are also trafficked to metropolitan cities for prostitution. Young girls from Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal and the poorest districts of India and Pakistan are especially vulnerable.²⁰⁴ Forty per cent of sex workers in India enter into prostitution before the age of 18 years²⁰⁵ and the fear of HIV/AIDS has increased the demand for and vulnerability of younger children and virgins.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ CAMPE (2005). Education Watch database.

²⁰⁴ Joffres, C. et al. (2008). Sexual slavery without borders: Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in India, *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 7:22. www.equityhealthj.com/content/7/1/22 (last retrieved November 2008).

²⁰⁵ UNICEF India. *Child Protection*. www.unicef.org/india/children.html (last retrieved 21 November 2008).

²⁰⁶ Joffres, C. et al. (2008). *ibid*.

Even if they are not employed outside the home, girls are routinely expected to undertake familial domestic chores and child care responsibilities, almost by default whether or not they go to school. This domestic work is invisibilized and hidden. Children who are not in school are even more vulnerable to being put to work, both within and outside the home.

Figure 46 | Girls engaged in child labour

Girls Engaged in Child Labour	
Afghanistan	33
Bangladesh	8
Bhutan	22
India	12
Nepal	33
Pakistan	—
Sri Lanka	7

Liberate girls

Education through attendance in full-time schools is therefore crucial to liberate girls from all forms of child labour. School participation is also higher when parents are literate.²⁰⁷ Universalization of both adult literacy and school education is therefore important for the eradication of child labour. Cross-border coordinated action and effective rehabilitation is also required to combat child trafficking.

iii) Child Marriage

Forty-eight per cent of girls in South Asia are married before the age of 18 years.²⁰⁸ This socio-culturally entrenched structural violence not only steals their childhood but is also an important barrier to education. In Bangladesh,²⁰⁹ marriage is the most common reason for more than half of the girls' dropout from secondary school compared with only 2 per cent for boys.²¹⁰ Girls from lower castes in Nepal face greater pressure to marry.²¹¹

Many parents prefer to curtail the education of their girls and get them married, due to the fear of exposure to sexual violence and abuse. Further, gender discrimination fosters the belief that investment in girls' education is wasted when she gets married and lives in another household.²¹² Even if married girls are allowed to pursue their education, they often are unable to cope with the burden of early childbearing and household chores. Fifty-two per cent of girls in India have their first pregnancy between 15 and 19 years of age.²¹³

²⁰⁷ Mehta, N. (2008). *Child Labour in India: Extent and Some Dimensions*. National Workshop on Socio-Economic Issues in Child Labour: Conference Proceedings, Mahatma Gandhi Labour Institute, Ahmedabad. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=996574> (last retrieved November 2008).

²⁰⁸ UNICEF (2005). *ibid*.

²⁰⁹ DHS (2009). *Declines in fertility and childhood mortality: Good news from the 2007 Bangladesh DHS*. <http://www.measuredhs.com/pr1/post.cfm?id=47EAC2CB-5056-9F36-DC9B0F805D5CE50F> (last retrieved November 2008).

²¹⁰ Nath *et al.* (2008). *ibid*.

²¹¹ CWCD (2000). *Situational Analysis of Early/Child Marriage in Plan program Unit Areas*. CWCD, Nepal.

²¹² UNICEF (2001). *Early Marriage, Child Spouses*. Florence: Innocenti Research Center.

²¹³ Gentleman, A. (2005). *India's effort to stop child marriage hits a wall*. Indore, 2 June 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/01/world/asia/01iht-india.html> (last retrieved November 2009).

Postpone marriage

Education is an important factor in preventing early marriages. In Bangladesh there has been found to be a correlation between the number of years a girl attends school and the postponement of her marriage.²¹⁴

Persuading parents to keep their daughters in school is therefore critical. However, in Bangladesh the official age of compulsory education is only 10 years. After that, it is only a matter of choice and 65 per cent of girls are married before the legally permissible age of 18 years.

The Female Secondary Stipend Programme, which requires parents to sign an agreement to

postpone their daughter's marriage till secondary school completion, has proved to be a success among stipend-holders.²¹⁵ A concerted effort, however, needs to be made to expand the coverage of the stipends and simultaneously to bring married and pregnant girls and young mothers back to school.

iv) Freedom of Movement

Schools located at long distances from children's homes undoubtedly affect their attendance.²¹⁶ Girls face greater perceived safety risk in travelling to school. Fear of violence restricts their freedom of movement. Increasing

Figure 47 | Difference between the maximum age of compulsory education and the minimum age for marriage

	Maximum age of compulsory education according to national legislation (A)	Minimum age for marriage according to national legislation (B)	Difference between (A) and (B)	Child marriage of girls before the age of 18 years (%)
Afghanistan	15	16	1	43
Bangladesh	10	18	8	64
Bhutan	16	16	1	27
India	14	18	4	47
Nepal	9	18	9	51
Pakistan	9	16	7	32
Sri Lanka	13	18	5	12

Source: UNICEF (2009). *The State of the World's Children 2009, Maternal and New Born Health*. New York: UNICEF

²¹⁴ ICDDR (2007). Consequences of early marriage on female schooling in rural Bangladesh. *Health and Science Bulletin*, 5 (4).

²¹⁵ World Bank (2003). *Project Performance Assessment Report, Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assessment Project*. Sector and Thematic Evaluation Group Operations Evaluation Department.

²¹⁶ Filmer and Pritchett (1999). The Effect of Household Wealth on Educational Attainment: Evidence from 35 Countries. *Population and Development Review*, 25 (1).

religious fundamentalism in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh further constrains girls’ access to schools.

Figure 48 | Freedom of movement

Freedom of Movement	
Afghanistan	Low
Bangladesh	Medium
Bhutan	Medium
India	Medium
Nepal	Medium
Pakistan	Medium
Sri Lanka	High

Move safely

Parents also fear that the teacher will be absent when their child reaches school. Presence of a female teacher exerts a positive and reassuring impact on the enrolment and attendance of girl students. But female teachers themselves have to overcome a number of obstacles. Socio-cultural practices such as the *purdah* in

Afghanistan and rural Pakistan restrict the movement of women.²¹⁷

Positive initiatives to support the daily commute of teachers to school, such as the safe, reliable and affordable means of transportation adopted in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province (Box 10), have resulted in manifold increases in teacher and student attendance. The existence of a school within the village precincts positively influences the enrolment of children, especially girls,²¹⁸ largely due to safety considerations. The recent decline and cessation of armed violence in Afghanistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka is also expected to reap rich ‘peace dividends’ to restore access to education, especially for girls.

²¹⁷ CfBT and VSO (2008). *ibid.*
²¹⁸ Lloyd, C.B., C. Mete and M. Grant (2006). Rural Girls in Pakistan: Constraints of Policy and Culture. In M. Lewis and M. Lockheed (eds.), *Exclusion, Gender and Schooling: Case Studies from the Developing World*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.

BOX 10:
TRANSPORT PAKISTANI TEACHERS TO SCHOOL

‘In my school, there were only 15 students when the mobility support started in 2004. Now, there are 45 students!’ says Mubashira Bashir-Ud-Din, a teacher from Sher Ullah Banda Jalbai Government Primary School, in Swabi. ‘More parents send their daughters to school – they know that I will be there,’ adds the young teacher.

When she started teaching two years ago, Mubashira was earning only Rs 3,300 (\$55) per month. The only way to get to her school was

by hiring a pick-up truck, which charged Rs 3,000 (\$50). Fortunately, the mobility support intervention started soon after, and she did not have to quit her current position. Mubashira is proud to be a teacher. ‘Teaching is a very attractive profession for ladies. It is possibly the only acceptable profession if a woman wants to work,’ she says.

In Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province there is a 20 percentage point gender gap between the

enrolment rates of girls and boys. Not surprisingly, there are nearly twice as many government primary schools for boys than there are for girls.²¹⁹ Not only do fewer girls go to school, in rural areas they are more likely to drop out.

Cultural barriers

Many cultural norms, often related to *purdah* and *izzat* (honour), restrict a woman’s mobility outside her home – particularly if she needs to travel outside her own village. Many

women must seek permission to go outside their home or must be accompanied by a family member, and most rely on carefully pre-arranged transportation.

The tragedy with this mobility challenge is that in many rural areas of NWFP there are simply no qualified women who can fill the teaching positions. Only 21 per cent of women in the province are literate.²²⁰ In rural areas of the province only 1.2 per cent of women have completed grade 8. This is a persistent theme across Pakistan with rural areas having consistently less than 2 per cent and urban areas 7 per cent qualified women.²²¹

Female teachers have repeatedly indicated that their absenteeism or unpunctuality were mainly linked to mobility problems. Understandably, when one needs to rely on personal arrangements or public buses, reliability can be a frequent problem.

Mobile solution

In partnership with the NWFP Directorate of Schools and Literacy and in consultation with local teachers and members of the Parent-Teacher Association, UNICEF proposed the mobility support intervention in 2003 with fantastic results.

In Hangu, 21 closed schools have reopened since the beginning of the mobility support routes in September 2003, and approximately 35 female teachers have been hired as a result. Many schools that showed very high dropout rates suddenly saw an increase in their enrolment and retention numbers. In three years

(2004–06), more than 85,500 girls have been enrolled in primary school through direct project interventions.

'Because of the mobility support initiative, girls from good families are applying for teaching position,' said a social organizer in Upper Dir. District officials claim that from 2002 to 2006, the girls' enrolment went from 800 to 14,000 students. At district level, monitoring teacher attendance for girls' schools was always a challenge. 'A man cannot go inside a girls' school,' explained a government official. Indeed, it is not considered appropriate for male officials to go inside girls' school compounds. Where the mobility support intervention is in place, however, district representatives can simply stop the bus momentarily and call the teachers' names, or ask the driver who is missing.

One district official in Hangu mentioned that when a teacher is absent, other teachers who are travelling on the same route will also inquire about her. This positive 'peer pressure' may also contribute, to some extent, to the reduced level of absenteeism. According to district officials in Upper Dir, there has been a decrease of about 85 per cent in teacher absenteeism since the beginning of the intervention.

Drive ahead

On every school day, whether or not the sun is shining, Hazrath Sher picks up the teachers early in the morning. Hazrath is one of the two Swabi drivers for this intervention. His journey has been designed so that the teachers do not need to walk very

far from their home. One by one, he drops each teacher very close to her school gate and, when school ends hours later, Hazrath turns his vehicle around and drives the teachers home.

The driver is proud of his role in this intervention – he strongly believes in education. In between his morning and afternoon shifts, he teaches voluntarily in a boys' school located at the end of the route. 'He is a good man,' agreed the women. Given their responsibilities, the selection process for the drivers is carried out carefully. The Directorate of Schools & Literacy hires the drivers, after consultation with the communities.

Depending on each specific route, the vehicles cover a distance of 15 to 55 kilometres from their starting point to the last school. The average monthly cost per teacher for the three supported districts is approximately Rs 1,600 (\$27). In Swabi, this average is even below Rs 1,200 (\$20). These amounts include the portion currently paid by UNICEF as well as the teacher's contribution (Rs 200).

At provincial and district levels, the education authorities know the importance of social mobilization. For a programme to work well, the local people must have a sense of ownership.

Source:

Adapted from Angers G. (2007). Mobility Support for Female Teachers in NWFP: A Simple Intervention with a Huge Impact. UNICEF Pakistan.

²¹⁹ Out of the 22,183 functional government schools in NWFP, 14,600 are for boys while 7,583 are for girls. Government of Pakistan (2006). *Annual Statistical Report of Schools in NWFP (2005-06)*. Education Management Information System, Directorate of Schools & Literacy, May 2006.

²²⁰ Government of Pakistan (2001). *NWFP District-based Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, 2001*. Planning and Development Department, Government NWFP, May 2002.

²²¹ 'Qualified women' denotes women between ages 18 and 50 who have completed at least grade 8 or grade 10. CGA (2005), World Bank (chapter 3) – created with data extracted from PIHS 2001–02 household data.



© Swati Narayan, 2006, Wardak, Afghanistan

*This is a golden opportunity for us to study.
After getting married, it may be difficult
to get permission from the husband
to continue studying.*

*Mahedjaha Atiqa, 16 years, 2008
Kapilvastu, Nepal²²²*

CONCLUSIONS

²²² http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nepal_45048.html

CONCLUSIONS

One-third of the world’s out-of-school children and half of the adult illiterates live in South Asia, many as women facing ‘multiple exclusions’ especially related to gender. Of the out-of-school children across pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education, 51 per cent are girls who largely hail from poor, rural families. Forty-eight per cent of girls are also married before the age of 18 years, which as Mahedjaha fears abruptly ends their education.

This report has used a gender lens to score and grade countries across South Asia based on their respective abilities to overcome their barriers and distinctly nurture gender equality in education. While drawing on the rights framework, this analysis has tried to take on board the varied nuances of the socio-relational elements of gender inequality and women’s empowerment in South Asia by drawing on both (1) the analytical framework of capabilities, resources and security, developed by the MDG 3 task force, and (2) the interplay of women-intensive and women-exclusive barriers herein.

Gender counts

Sri Lanka provides free education for all children up to university, though the recent post-conflict reconstruction needs of the education system continue to pose important challenges. India has introduced a variety of progressive initiatives to mainstream gender concerns within the education system in the last decade.

Figure 49 | South Asia Gender Equality in Education Report Card

South Asia Gender Equality in Education Report Card Overall Marks and Grades		
Afghanistan	36	D
Bangladesh	57	C
Bhutan	52	C
India	63	B
Nepal	50	C
Pakistan	41	C
Sri Lanka	72	B

While Bangladesh is acknowledged to have made sizeable strides to universalize school enrolment, especially for girls, it remains burdened with poor quality. Bhutan also registers a commendable performance in accelerating

girls' enrolments (almost twice as fast as boys) through the rapid expansion of community schools, boarding facilities and teacher posts, but quality issues remain, especially in secondary schools.

Despite investments in education, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal have yet a long way to go to attain universal enrolments and address the challenges of long decades of conflict and/or entrenched poverty.

Towards gender equality in education

The major message that emerges from this analysis is that attaining gender equality at all levels requires the application of multi-faceted strategies that address different dimensions of women's lives each with its specific, attendant constraints. Lack of pre-primary education, for instance, doubly disadvantages girls – not only do they lose out on the benefits of early childhood development, but also often miss the chance of going to secondary school, due to responsibilities for sibling care. In the case of Sri Lanka, taking account of access simultaneously across different educational levels, quality and sustained expenditure over a long period of time was crucial for universalizing basic education. It shows that a little education is not enough. The benefits of education endure only after a critical level of secondary schooling. Sadly, more than half the girls in South Asia are out of secondary schools.

The rights framework has laid emphasis on issues of access, even though the recently developed A4 framework does focus on issues of adaptability and acceptability as well. While access is no doubt crucial, here, coming from a capability perspective, we have placed equal emphasis on issues of quality, reinforcing the fact that good quality education is crucial for developing basic skills and freedoms.

Providing quality education is not cheap. Poor investments expectedly reap poor results – an educated unlettered child. From a capability perspective, our analysis emphasizes that good quality education sustained through the life cycle of a child is crucial for developing basic skills and freedoms. Especially for girls, it holds the added potential to delay under-age marriages and prevent child labour. Educational investment in teachers and functional schools is necessary to ensure quality. School meals offer a universal incentive, especially for girls from poor families who usually go to school hungry, to simultaneously improve their nutrition, health and classroom attainments. However, we find that despite buoyant economic growth rates, concomitant investments in education across South Asia from both governments and donors have been laggard.

Translating capabilities into wellbeing further requires suitable opportunities, in terms of legitimate roles in politics and decision-making, a non-discriminatory labour market and an enabling social environment. Nepal is the only country in South Asia in which a third of parliamentary seats are currently held by women.

With a new democracy, recently emerging from a long period of conflict, the ability of women to negotiate this political space without additional support remains to be seen. In the educational realm, too, while recruitment of female teachers to address the gender gap has been a goal in much of South Asia, one often finds higher levels of absenteeism amongst female teachers, as in Pakistan, or a refusal to accept rural postings for fear of safety, contributing to the phenomenon of non-functional schools. Apart from issues of travel and safety, female teachers continue to be burdened with reproductive responsibilities in their homes, often with little support from their families, community or the state.

Education for gender equality requires not only the political will to provide good quality schooling, but also recognition of the rights and contributions of different members of society to the schooling and larger educational process. Teachers are a crucial link, yet their needs are often neglected, with the growing trend to appoint low-paid, contractual staff, with little or no training. Families, in particular mothers, who are responsible for bringing up their children, are rarely provided the opportunity to be actively involved in the educational process. They are taken for granted and rarely respected for their contributions. Civil society organizations too have a role to play – in developing innovative models of educational delivery; in changing social norms and values; but most importantly, in ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels within the system.

The glass ceiling remains unbroken in South Asia. Let alone not having access to equitable

employment and wages, more than half of the women are illiterate and their voices remain unheard. Except for a minority of professional women in managerial positions, women are concentrated at the lowest levels of agricultural, manufacturing and service sector jobs, earning on an average half or two-thirds of what men earn. Education is perhaps the most important strategy for questioning stereotypes, both male and female, changing mindsets and helping to build a more equitable society. Education for gender equality is more than schooling: it is about social change and justice.

Violence remains a real threat and an increasing barrier to gender equality. Daily reportage confirms the persistence of gender-based violence in the form of sexual harassment, molestation, rape, abuse and corporal punishment both within and outside schools. Increasing violence, however, is not necessarily a sign of women's subordination; rather it is often a backlash against women who have exercised their voice. One cannot then attain gender equality by focusing exclusively on women. Male attitudes need to be changed too, in order to gain their confidence and support, rather than evoke a backlash.

Amartya Sen aptly conceptualizes poverty as 'basic capability failure'. Education is one of the most basic of human capabilities. Every child who is not in school is vulnerable to be put to work, at home, outside, or within the confines of child marriage, which potentially exacerbates the poverty trap across generations. Investments in attaining educational capabilities and gender equality, in

particular educational, are perhaps the first steps to break the cycle of poverty. Girls from poor families, especially in rural areas, who are the most educationally deprived, need special attention to ensure that they complete a full cycle of basic education.

In addition to poor governance and economic constraints due to income poverty across the region, the analysis identifies the nuances of the patriarchal dominance of most South Asian societies which deeply influence social norms and values as well as expectations and behaviours. These impact not only female students, but also female teachers, who continue to be burdened with reproductive responsibilities in their homes, often with little support from their families.

While context-specific report cards were presented earlier, the specific policy advocacy priority recommendations which emerge for policy makers and educationists across South Asia are:

1. Ensure basic capabilities

Education and nutrition are universally accepted as essential for a person's survival and wellbeing, but are further the means through which a person can lead the kind of life that he or she has reason to value. Every child or adult deprived of education or adequate nutrition is vulnerable to be exploited at work, at home, or within the confines of child marriage. Girls, in particular, need special attention to complete a full cycle of basic education, given the additional constraints they face, in terms of socio-cultural norms that legitimize differential

entitlements for men and women. South Asia also has the world's highest rates of child malnutrition and many children from poor families go to school hungry.

- Enact laws with adequate financial commitments to guarantee free basic education of good quality for every child, especially girls till the age of 18 years.
- Expand the coverage of pre-primary education and secondary education especially in rural areas.
- Invest in literacy for all women, with the holistic aim of women's empowerment to enable them to translate basic capabilities into economic, social and political opportunities for themselves, their family and the community at large.
- Implement legal guarantees to provide nutritious, cooked meals to all school children including at pre-primary levels.

2. Expand entitlements and opportunities

Achieving basic capabilities, especially for the marginalized, requires access to adequate and good quality resources and an enabling environment that provides them with the necessary opportunities to engage with the larger society, economy and polity. A little education is not enough, as the benefits of education endure only after a critical level of schooling which is both relevant and meaningful to their lives. Almost half the girls in South Asia are married before the age of 18 years and an equal proportion are not in secondary school.

Enrolments at the pre-primary level are also negligible. Functional schools are necessary to ensure increased enrolment, retention and completion of the full cycle of basic education with the added potential to delay under-age marriages, especially of girls, and prepare them for participating in all walks of life.

- Fill the large vacancies, especially at the pre-primary and secondary levels, with qualified teachers who can support learning and serve as role models especially for girl students.
- Ensure that schools have suitable physical infrastructure including functional toilets for girls, drinking water and safe buildings.
- Make necessary social investments to eliminate gender bias in textbooks, curricula and educational materials.
- Secure equal representation of women in school management committees (SMCs) and parent–teacher associations (PTAs).

3. Confront all forms of violence

Women and girls continue to face different forms of violence, both physical and structural. Within school, this includes corporal punishment, but also the delegation of a range of gendered tasks, involving cleaning and cooking, to girls. On the way to school, girls encounter sexual harassment, and sometimes outright attacks, as in the instances of acid-throwing on school girls in Afghanistan. Structural violence can be both economic and

social. The former implies the need to engage in different forms of child labour, both paid and unpaid (domestic work), as well as accept wage discrimination in the labour markets. At the social level, norms such as early marriage for girls and restricted freedom of movement continue to hamper women and girls in living a meaningful life.

- Subsidize transport costs and support construction of residential school/hostel facilities, especially for girls.
- Enact and implement laws on child labour and child marriage to liberate girls in particular from the double burdens of exploitative and subordinating relations at both work and home.

Gender equality can only be achieved by simultaneously addressing a range of barriers that girls and women face across different dimensions of their life. Many of these barriers are not exclusive to women and girls, but equally confront poor boys and men of particular caste and class groups, located in rural areas; yet the deeply engrained gender roles and relations in society tend to intensify these barriers for girls. If there are limited household resources, for instance, then girls will be the first to drop out of school. There are also some constraints exclusive to girls, such as restrictions on mobility post-puberty, in most of South Asia. While the above recommendations do not specifically identify policy measures which address gender-exclusive or gender-intensive barriers, each of them will address the issues raised from this perspective.

ANNEX

SOURCES AND CALCULATIONS

SOURCES AND CALCULATIONS

This report card aims to analyse the performance of developing nations in South Asia in making the dream of gender equality in education into a reality. While a number of other international scorecards focus on the scale and magnitude of education deprivation at the national level, this report aims instead to focus with a gender lens on the concrete initiatives of governments towards achieving the dream of education for all. Most of the sub-indicators have been selected based on specific civil society policy advocacy priorities.

The report card aims to measure four aspects of Gender Equality in Education in South Asia:

1. Governance: The Big Picture
2. Capabilities: The Cycle of Basic Education
3. Resources and Opportunities: In and Outside the Classroom
4. Security: From a Gender Point of View

Due to paucity of data we have had to make a number of assumptions in the methodology for calculations, grading and ranking used in this report. This section describes the data gaps, assumptions and calculations in detail to provide full transparency.

The grading scale for all the indicators remains the same:

- A: 81% – 100%
- B: 61% – 80%
- C: 41% – 60%
- D: 21% – 40%
- E: 0% – 20%

1. Governance: The Big Picture

INDICATOR 1A: POLITICAL WILL (PW)

Do countries display the political will to provide universal basic education and prioritize girls' education?

Data Analysis

Sub-Indicator i: Right to Free Education

- Having to pay for children's education is one of the more important deterrents for poor families to be able to send their children to school. Due to pervasive discrimination, the girl child is often the most affected by this disadvantage. It is therefore important to ensure that the commitment of developing governments to provide free and compulsory education is not restricted to signing international covenants and passing national legislation but that these legal measures translate into real world benefits for populations – access to a wide network of good quality free schools and learning centres which provide at least free basic education.
- This sub-indicator provides an important articulation of civil society's long-standing demand for elimination of all end-user costs in education.
- To compute marks out of 100 for free education, a simple formula has been used:
= IF (Primary Education is 'Free' = 100, 'Fee' = 0)

Sub-Indicator ii: Public Expenditure on Education

- Public expenditure (not budget) on education as a percentage of total government expenditure represents the translation of government political will into financial support.
- This sub-indicator has been marked using the Education for All (EFA) Fast Track Initiative (FTI) benchmark that low income countries are expected to spend at least 20 per cent of their public expenditure on education.
- The formula we have used uniformly is that, if education expenditure is greater than 20 per cent then allot 100 marks; if education expenditure is less than 20 per cent, then calculate marks as:
= $\frac{(\text{Education Expenditure} \times 100)}{20}$

Sub-Indicator iii: Policies to Bridge the Gender Gap

- Achievement of gender parity in primary education by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015 is one of the MDG goals. However many countries in South Asia have yet to surpass this mark.
- This indicator initially categorizes countries based on the extent of gender disparity in Gross

Enrolment Ratios (GERs) at the level of secondary education between girls and boys.

- In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, in fact, where girls have a marginal advantage over boys in secondary school enrolment, we have a lenient grading scale though we nevertheless believe that it is important for them to have specific policies to promote girls' education and address their specific needs within the education system. The marks are therefore calculated as follows based on the existence of gender policies:

= IF ('Yes' = 100, 'Partial' = 50, 'No' = 25)

This implies that even if these countries do not have a gender policy, they are awarded 25 marks as girls supersede boys in access to secondary schools.

- In Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan, which have gender gaps marginally in favour of boys in terms of a 5–9 percentage point differential, we have a stricter grading scale. Based on the existence of gender policies, the marks are calculated as follows:

= IF ('Yes' = 75, 'Partial' = 50, 'No' = 0)

This implies that countries are penalized by being given 0 marks if they do not have any policies for girls; and even if they do, they will be awarded only 75 marks, as the policies are yet to have an impact on equitable enrolments.

- In India and Afghanistan, where enrolments are heavily in favour of boys with a 10–14 percentage point difference, we have an even more stringent grading scale, based on the existence of gender policies in education:

= IF ('Yes' = 50, 'Partial' = 25, 'No' = 0)

This implies that countries are awarded only 50 marks even if they have gender policies in education as they have yet to have an impact on equitable enrolments.

Sub-Indicator iv: Legal Ban on Corporal Punishment

- Strictly defined 'corporal punishment' is the infliction of pain intended to change a person's behaviour or to punish them. Corporal or physical punishment is any punishment in which physical force is intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort: for example, rapping on the knuckles, beating with a scale, hitting with a cane, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions like kneeling down for long hours, making them run on the school ground, pinching, slapping, torture 'electric shock' and all other acts leading to insult, humiliation, physical and mental injury, and even death.
- Sexual abuse suffers from an even greater conspiracy of silence. Girls are particularly vulnerable, including in the school environment.

Total Marks for PW

- To compute total marks for this indicator, right to free education and public expenditure have been awarded a greater weighting of 35 per cent each to depict the educational context while

the existence of policies to bridge the gender gap and ban corporal punishment have a lesser weighting of 15 per cent each.

Data Sources

1. **Right to Free Education:** This sub-indicator tracks evidence of elimination of school fees in primary education as depicted in the narrative text of the comprehensive report Tomasevski (2006), *Free or Fee 2006: The State of the Right to Education Worldwide: Global Report*, Copenhagen. The report defines free education as a human right based on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) which states that, 'Primary education shall be compulsory and available free for all.' 'Fees' clearly implies the existence of charges for education which have to be borne by parents/guardians/children (i.e. end-users). However the limitation is that the Tomasevski report provides data only for primary education. This report also updates the status on a number of countries which have since 2006 adopted legislative, constitutional or budget guarantees to implement free education.
2. **Public Expenditure on Education:** This data has been procured from the UIS database www.uis.unesco.org (last retrieved December 2009) for public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure for the latest available year. Efforts have also been made to find data, where unavailable, from other secondary sources – inter-governmental, national or civil society publications available in the public domain.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Education Policies:** This data has been procured from a number of data sources in the public domain, especially the Ministry of Education websites.
4. **Legal Ban on Corporal Punishment:** This based on the database maintained by the Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org> (last retrieved December 2009).

INDICATOR 1B: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY (TA)

To what extent is the education system protected from corruption?

Data Analysis

Sub-Indicator i: Corruption Perception Score

- Endemic corruption in the education system is a drain on resources and denies children their right to education.
- Transparency International (TI), a global civil society watchdog, annually updates its corruption perception index (CPI) based on an exhaustive cross-country comparable survey among international experts. For this sub-indicator, in fact, the more specific TI Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) for the education sector would have been preferred but it suffered from a very low coverage of countries.

- The corruption perception raw score which is indicated on a scale of 1 to 10 has been converted to percentages to provide marks for this sub-indicator.

Sub-Indicator ii: Civil Society Participation in Policy Formation

- Civil society can perform an important role not only in inclusive policy formation as a policy partner but also as a watchdog and critique of national education policies.
- The data for this component was collated based on a GCE survey questionnaire administered to national civil society contact points. The five-point grading scale was defined at the two extreme ends of the scale as follows:
Excellent: Regular formalized opportunities to participate in national education policy formation and critique it with full freedom of speech
Very Poor: Repressive government with no opportunity to participate/critique in national education policy formation
- To compute marks for incentives, this simple formula has been used:
= IF (Civil Society Participation 'Excellent' = 100, 'Good' = 75, 'Okay' = 50, 'Poor' = 25, 'Very Poor' = 0)

Sub-Indicator iii: Protection of Trade Union Rights

- The rights of teacher unions as important members of civil society in the sphere of education must be protected.
- To compute marks for this indicator, a simple formula has been used:
= IF (Protection of Trade Union Rights is 'Excellent' = 100, 'Good' = 75, 'Okay' = 50, 'Poor' = 25, 'Very Poor' = 0)

Sub-Indicator iv: Women's Participation in SMCs and PTAs

- All countries in South Asia have an official policy to have school management committees and/or parent teacher associations. But very few have reserved seats for women on them. Even if they exist, often the representation of women is not necessarily equal. For example in Nepal there is a mandatory provision for 2 women members out of 9 in SMCs. In other countries like Sri Lanka, however, even though they do not have official policies to ensure women's representation, we were informed by Education International that women invariably have an equal voice on the ground as 70 per cent of teachers are women, and mothers also routinely play an important role in these committees.
- To compute marks for this indicator we therefore devised a simple formula:
=IF (Representation is 'Equal' = 100, 'Partial' = 50, 'No' = 25).
- Even if countries have not made any attempts to ensure equal representation i.e. 'No', they have been awarded 25 marks, as we discovered that all countries at least officially have SMCs and PTAs and they need to be commended for this initiative.

Total Marks for TA

- To compute total marks for this indicator, corruption perception score as a sub-indicator has been given a weighting of 40 per cent and the remaining sub-indicators of civil society participation, protection of trade union rights and women's representation in school management committees have an equal weighting of 20 per cent each.

Data Sources

1. **Corruption Perception Score:** This data has been procured from the 2006 edition of Transparency International's annual flagship Corruption Perception Index. It relates to perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and country analysts and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt).
2. **Civil Society Participation in Policy Formation:** This sub-indicator has been collated based on data from GCE survey amongst civil society contact points.
3. **Protection of Trade Union Rights:** This data has been evaluated from the text of Education International's (2007) Barometer of Human and Trade Union Rights.
4. **Women's Participation in SMCs and PTAs:** This data was collated largely from enquiries with Education International's teacher unions and ASPBAE's education coalitions in respective countries.

2. Capabilities: The Cycle of Basic Education

INDICATOR 2A: GENDER ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION (GBE)

Do countries provide basic education for their female population measured by those who are unable to access basic education?

Data Analysis

- The simplest way of measuring the gender coverage of basic education would be to depict the female population which misses out on this advantage. The onus lies with national governments to fulfil their responsibility to provide free and good quality elementary childhood care and education facilities, primary and secondary schools and adult literacy centres for their entire populous, including girls and women.
- This indicator tracks the female population which lies outside the education system. To capture the element of lack of universal female education, it tracks girls and women who do not have access to the respective age-specific educational opportunities of different levels of basic education – pre-primary, primary, secondary school or adult literacy.

Sub-Indicator i: Girls without Pre-Primary Education

- Pre-primary education is defined as programmes of organized instruction which are school- or centre-based, occupying at least two hours per day and 100 days per year. It represents the more formal aspects of early childhood care and education which is integrated with the national education system, via kindergartens where care, play and education are all included.
- To compute female population without access to pre-primary education (in percentage) the formula used was based on net enrolment ratio (NER):

$$= (100 - \text{NER of girls in Pre-Primary Education})$$

Sub-Indicators ii and iii: Girls without Primary Education and Secondary Education respectively

- Definitions of 'basic education' traditionally refer to only 9 years of schooling, i.e. up to age 15 or more precisely lower secondary level. However, we have expressed data in terms of secondary education as a whole for two reasons:
 - i) Comparative data on enrolment in lower secondary education suffers from many data gaps.
 - ii) As civil society commentators we feel that it is imperative to raise the bar of basic education to a higher standard to ensure that the gains of a full cycle of secondary education are evaluated.
- Out-of-Primary school female population has been calculated as:

$$= (100 - \text{NER of Girls in Primary School})$$
- Out-of-Secondary school female population has been calculated as:

$$= (100 - \text{NER of Girls in Secondary School})$$

Sub-Indicator iv: Women without Basic Literacy

- Basic literacy for the population greater than 15 years of age is an important indicator of the historical importance accorded to investments in education and adult education in particular.
- As the data for this parameter is difficult to access and we have had to largely rely on the database of UNESCO's Institute of Statistics (UIS), the definition of literacy is minimalist. That is, a person who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life is considered to be literate.
- The female adult illiteracy rate has been simply calculated as:

$$= (100 - \text{female adult literacy rate})$$

Total Marks for GBE

- To compute total marks for gender access to basic education, each level of education – ECCE, primary, secondary and adult literacy – has been given an equal weight of 25 per cent.

Data Source

1. For this indicator the data source has largely been the UIS database www.uis.unesco.org (last retrieved December 2009) for the latest available year which is collated based on submissions from national official government channels. In the case of Bhutan, as an exception, we have used national data submitted by the Ministry of Education.

3. Resources and Opportunities: In and Outside the Classroom

INDICATOR 3A: EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE (EI)

What is the quality of infrastructure provided by the education system, especially sensitive to the needs of girls?

Data Analysis

Sub-Indicators i, ii and iii: *Pucca* Classrooms, Drinking Water and Toilets for Girls

- *Pucca* refers to 'all weather' or permanent, well maintained classrooms. They are the very least that children require to be able to complete their basic education.
- Availability of drinking water within the school premises is important to enable children to spend long hours in school.
- For girls in particular, the availability of separate, functional toilets are crucial within the school premises.
- Since the percentage figures have been expressed in the inverse, the marks have been computed as follows:

$$= (100 - \text{percentage of schools without } pucca \text{ classrooms})$$
- The formula used for drinking water and toilets is similar.

Total Marks for EI

- To compute total marks for education infrastructure, the physical availability of all weather classrooms have been accorded a quarter of the weighting while the availability of drinking water and toilets constitute a slightly lower weighting of one-third each.

Data Source

1. The data has been sourced from a variety of secondary sources – both national level government and civil society publications available in the public domain.

INDICATOR 3B: QUALITY INPUTS (QI)

Do countries ensure that education provided in classrooms consists of inputs of good quality? Are trained teachers adequate and regularly present in classrooms? Are sufficient learning materials provided without gender biases?

Data Analysis**Sub-Indicator i: Teacher Vacancies**

- The number of required teachers is calculated based the actual pre-primary, primary and secondary school aged population. The minimalist Fast Track initiative benchmark of 40:1 pupil:teacher ratio is used to compute the extent of teacher vacancies through comparisons with the actual numbers of teachers engaged across pre-primary, primary and secondary education.
- To represent the percentage shortage of teachers, the formula used is:

$$= \frac{(\text{Required teachers} - \text{Actual teachers})}{\text{Actual teachers}} \times 100$$

where

$$\text{Required teachers} = \frac{\text{Total student population}}{40}$$

to attain the minimalist Fast Track Initiative of 40:1 pupil:teacher ratio.

- To calculate the marks for this sub-indicator, the above formula is simply subtracted from 100 per cent.

Sub-Indicator ii: Untrained Teachers

- Untrained teachers hamper the quality of education. However, in this case it must be noted that comparable data is available only for primary education.
- The marks for this sub-indicator are equivalent to the percentage of trained teachers.

Sub-Indicator iii: Teacher Absenteeism

- Absence of teachers from school classrooms is a problem in several South Asian countries, but data is not easily available.
- To ensure that countries are adequately penalized for teacher absenteeism, the marks for this sub-indicator have been calculated as follows:

$$= 100 - \frac{\text{Teacher absenteeism}}{50} \times 100$$

Sub-Indicator iv: Free Textbooks and Learning Material

- Learning materials and textbooks also represent an important input in a classroom. Data for this sub-indicator have been gathered from a survey of national civil society coalitions.
- To compute marks for free textbooks and learning material, the following formula has been used as a response to the survey question on their availability:
= IF ('Yes' = 100, 'No' = 0, 'Yes/No – provided to some students' = 50, 'No Data' = 0)

Sub-Indicator v: Gender Bias

- Gender discrimination is often institutionalized through textbooks and learning materials. While some countries have initiated extensive processes of curriculum reform specifically to ensure gender sensitivity and avoid sex stereotyping, they have often yet to achieve universal coverage in terms of subjects, levels of education or access to all school-going children.
- To compute marks to gauge the existence of gender bias, the following simple formula has been used:
= IF ('Yes' = 0, 'Partial' = 50, 'No' = 100)

Total Marks for QI

- To compute total marks, indicators with respect to teachers have been accorded an eighty per cent weighting and curricula have twenty per cent. Teacher vacancies constitute 30 per cent, teacher training and absenteeism 25 per cent each of the total scores. The curricula-related parameters of availability of free textbooks and existence of gender bias have 10 per cent weighting each.

Data Sources

1. **Teacher Vacancies:** Data of total child population, total employed teachers at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education has been sourced from the UIS database <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/> (last retrieved November 2009). Where data has been unavailable for the most recent year 2006, data from previous years has been used.
2. **Untrained Teachers:** Data of trained teachers has been sourced from the UIS database, though it is available only at the primary level across South Asian countries.
3. **Teacher Absenteeism:** This data has been extracted from a variety of sources. For Bangladesh and India, the reliance has been on World Bank studies, cross-checked with other national surveys where available.
4. **Free textbooks and learning material:** The data has been procured from a survey of national civil society contact points and cross-checked with Kattan and Burnett (2004), *User Fees in Primary Education*, Education Sector, Human Development Network, World Bank, Washington.

INDICATOR 3C: EDUCATION INCENTIVES (IN)

Are incentives provided – both in cash and in kind including school meals – to enable all children, especially girls from poor and marginalized communities, to enrol, retain and complete their education?

Data Analysis**Sub-Indicator i: Free School Meals**

- Child malnutrition is a widespread across South Asia. School meals offer an important means to feed millions of children, many of whom from poor families come to school in the mornings without any breakfast. Free school meals are expected to improve child nutrition, health and educational achievements as well as address the malaise of high dropout rates and repetition in schools.
- To compute the marks for this indicator, we have used a grading scale to determine if the implementation of school meals has universal coverage of the school-going child population. 'Yes' implies that more than 75 per cent of the child population are served meals in school, 'Some' implies a coverage of at least half the children in schools, 'Few' at least 25 per cent coverage and 'No' being no programme to deliver meals in schools.
- The marks for this sub-indicator are implemented as follows:
=IF ('Yes' = 100, 'Some' = 50, 'Few' = 25, 'No' = 0)

Sub-Indicator ii: Cash Transfers

- Stipends, scholarships and other cash awards offer an incentive to guardians to send their children to school. Girls in particular benefit from cash awards to offset the direct costs and perceived opportunity costs to schooling.
- This indicator evaluates cash stipends which are available for both marginalized communities as a whole or specifically for girls
- To compute the marks for this indicator, the grading scale is identical to one used to evaluate school meals, though the data availability is less rigorous in terms of applicable percentage coverage and relies more on subjective inferences of their coverage.
- The marks for this sub-indicator are computed identically to those for school meals.

Sub-Indicator iii: Non-Cash Incentives to Facilitate Girls' Access to Schools

- Girls suffer from greater perceived security risk in travelling to school. Incentives like bicycles, subsidized bus passes, hostel facilities, etc. offer important means to support their participation in school.

- The marks for this sub-indicator are computed identically to those for school meals and cash transfers.

Data Sources

1. **School Meals:** The data has been largely sourced from the World Food Programme publication <http://www.lamberspublications.com/downloads/schoolfeedingbookforhousehungercaucus.pdf> (retrieved 12 December 2009).
2. **Cash Transfers and Non-Cash Incentives:** The data has been researched from a range of references available in the public domain and as far as possible cross-checked with UNICEF country offices or ASPBAE national coalitions and partners.

INDICATOR 3D: GENDER INEQUALITY (GE)

Do countries support equal gender opportunities both in the education system and beyond?

Data Analysis

Sub-Indicator i: Gender Development Index

- The education system can promote gender equality by enabling women to be active and equal participants in all spheres of life. The gender-related development index (GDI) created by the UNDP Human Development Reports aims to measure precisely this aspect.
- GDI is a composite index measuring average achievement of women in three basic dimensions: a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. The index is calculated based on life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate and estimated income adjusted to account for inequalities between men and women.
- It measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases.
- The GDI raw scores expressed as percentages represent the marks for this sub-indicator.

Sub-Indicator ii: Gender Empowerment Measure

- The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a measure of agency. It evaluates progress in advancing women's standing in political and economic forums. It examines the extent to which women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision making. While the GDI focuses on expansion of capabilities, the GEM is

concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life.

- GEM is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three basic dimensions of empowerment: economic participation and decision making, political participation, and power over economic resources. It includes:
 - Seats in parliament held by women
 - Female legislators, senior officials and managers
 - Female professional and technical workers
 - Ratio of estimated female earned income to male earned income
- The GEM raw scores expressed as percentages represent the marks for this sub-indicator.

Total Marks for GE

- To compute total marks, GDI has been given a weighting of 70 per cent and GEM 30 per cent.

Data Source

1. **Gender Development Index:** Data for this sub-indicator has been obtained for the year 2006 from the latest available Human Development Report.

4. Security: From a Gender Point of View

INDICATOR 4A: BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION (BE)

What are the specific barriers that women and girls face in South Asia to access and complete their basic cycle of education?

Data Analysis

Sub-Indicator i: Poverty

- Given that in practice education is often not free, poverty proves to be one of the most important hurdles to accessing education. Girls suffer the most as parents are less keen to fund their education.
- In 2008, the World Bank revised its international poverty line to population living on less than \$1.25 a day in 2005 PPP terms. It enables international cross-country comparability as a minimalist measure of income poverty.
- Households with income less than this international poverty line struggle to keep children in school, especially girls, if the education system charges legal or illegal user costs.
- The marks for this sub-indicator are calculated simply as:
 - = (100 – percentage of population below the international poverty line)

Sub-Indicator ii: Child Labour

- Child labour is common across South Asian countries in the form of either paid or unpaid work, undertaken by children either within the household or outside.
- Girls are particularly vulnerable to being routinely engaged in the home for sibling or childcare activities within or outside the confines of early marriages and other household chores, e.g. fetching water, cooking and livelihood activities including agriculture. Thousands of girls are also estimated to be trafficked from across the low-income areas of South Asia for domestic work and prostitution in metropolitan cities especially in India and Pakistan.
- The data for this indicator is minimalist. It only captures the percentage of children 5–14 years old involved in child labour at the moment of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and Demographic Health Survey (DHS). A child is considered to be involved in child labour under the following conditions: (a) children 5–11 years old who, during the week preceding the survey, did at least 1 hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work; or (b) children 12–14 years who, during the week preceding the survey, did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work.
- The marks for this sub-indicator are calculated simply as:

$$= (100 - \text{percentage of girls engaged in child labour})$$

Sub-Indicator iii: Child Marriage

- Forty-eight per cent of girls in South Asia are married before the age of 18 years, which often leaves their education incomplete. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as every human being below the age of 18 years, and while most national governments consider this age also as the minimum age limit for marriage, they do not enforce the same as the maximum years of free, compulsory education. This especially leaves girls even more vulnerable to be bound in the confines of an early marriage and so relinquish their education.
- The data for this indicator is based on Demographic Health Services (DHS) data which evaluates the percentage of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in union before they were 18 years old.
- The marks for this sub-indicator are calculated as:

$$= (100 - \text{percentage of girls married before 18 years})$$

Sub-Indicator iv: Freedom of Movement

- Women in the traditional societies of South Asia often face *purdah* (segregation of sexes), caste discrimination and other social restrictions to their freedom of movement and social interactions.
- This indicator of Freedom of Movement draws from the Social Institutions and Gender Equality Index and the results of its national level research analysis and coding. The indicator measures the level of restrictions women face in moving freely outside their own household, for example

by being able to go shopping or visit friends without being escorted by male members of the family. The following elements are considered: freedom to travel; freedom to join a club or association; freedom to do grocery (and other types of) shopping without a male guardian; freedom to see one's family and friends.

- High: No restrictions of women's movement outside the home
- Medium: (Some) women can leave home sometimes, but with restrictions
- Low: Women can never leave home without restrictions (i.e. they need a male companion, etc.)
- The marks for this sub-indicator are calculated simply as:
= IF (Freedom of Movement is 'Low' = 0, 'Medium' = 50, 'High' = 100)

Total Marks for BE

- Total marks for BE have been computed by giving all the sub-indicators an equal weighting of 30 per cent, except for poverty which enjoys a weighting of only 10 per cent due to lack of data in Afghanistan.

Data Sources

1. **Child Marriage and Child Labour:** This data is based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) and other national surveys sourced from UNICEF (2009), *State of the World's Children 2009: Maternal and Newborn Health*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.
2. **Freedom of Movement:** This data has been sourced from Social Institutions and Gender Equality Index: The SIGI is based on extensive information gathering and research about gender inequality in social institutions in 124 countries. In many countries of the world, traditions and social norms restrict women's empowerment. The SIGI developed by the OECD development centre available at <http://genderindex.org/> (last retrieved December 2009) offers a tool to measure these hidden instances of gender discrimination.
3. **Poverty:** Data refer to the most recent year available during 2000–06. UNDP (2008), Human and Income Poverty: Developing countries / Population living below \$1.25 a day (%), Human Development Indices: A statistical update 2008, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDI_2008_EN_Tables.pdf, (last retrieved 2 May, 2009).

Total Marks Across the Indicators

To compute total marks across the indicators, PW, EI, QI and GBE have been accorded 15 per cent each while the remaining indicators have been given 10 per cent each. Availability of data has determined the distribution of weightings and to ensure that lack of data does not unduly affect the overall scores for a country. The balance between women-exclusive and women-intensive indicators has also been kept in mind to gauge the total marks in terms of percentage.

Despite substantial progress in the South Asia region towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets and deadlines, much still remains to be done. MDG 2 requires that every child be enrolled in primary school by 2010. MDG 3 aims to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education by 2015.

This report analyses the latest cross-country comparable data available in the public domain and presents the results in the form of a Report Card for each country in the region. The data is analysed using a framework consisting of four inter-related themes:

- Governance, including political will, transparency and accountability
- Capabilities, covering various dimensions of access to basic education
- Resources and Opportunities, covering school, quality of education, incentives and equality
- Security, covering both physical and structural violence that pose barriers to education, especially for girls.

This Report Card for South Asia is the refore a call to rights-based action for governments and stakeholders. It uses a gender lens to score and grade countries across South Asia on the basis of country abilities to nurture gender equality in education. It highlights the strengths and weaknesses of countries for each indicator and sub-indicator, and thus shows the way forward to achieving equitable and inclusive education for all children, boys and girls alike.

ASPBAE Secretariat

C/o MAAPL

9th Floor, Eucharistic Congress Building No. 3

5, Convent Street, Colaba

Mumbai 400 039 India

Tel: +91 22 2202 1391 / 2281 6853

Fax: +91 22 2283 2217

Website: www.aspbae.org