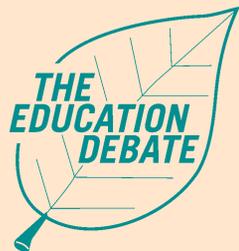


## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING: DOES IT HAPPEN IN EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA?**

**Chandra Gunawardena  
Swarna Jayaweera**



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**Chandra Gunawardena  
Swarna Jayaweera**



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Regional Office for South Asia; and  
United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)  
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# CONTENTS

Series Foreword .....	v
Acknowledgements .....	vii
Acronyms .....	viii
Summary .....	x
<b>1. Introduction – The International Context.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Concept of Gender Mainstreaming.....	1
1.2 International Commitments to Gender Equality in Education .....	3
1.2.1 Rights commitments .....	4
1.2.2 The MDGs and EFA ‘Dakar’ Goals.....	7
1.2.3 Other global initiatives .....	9
<b>2. National Policies from a Gender Perspective in South Asia .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Constitutional Commitments .....	10
2.2 National Policies on Education and Girls’ Education .....	13
2.3 Gender Mainstreaming .....	14
2.4 Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in South Asia.....	17
2.5 Sector-Wide Approaches and Other Major Programmes in Education .....	20
<b>3. Effectiveness of Policies and Processes in Education – A Gender Perspective .....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Access to Education.....	24
3.2 Impact of Policies, Processes and Implementation Strategies on Mainstreaming Girls in the Education Process.....	28

3.2.1	Afghanistan .....	29
3.2.2	Bangladesh .....	30
3.2.3	Bhutan .....	33
3.2.4	India .....	34
3.2.5	Maldives .....	36
3.2.6	Nepal .....	37
3.2.7	Pakistan .....	39
3.2.8	Sri Lanka .....	41
<b>4.</b>	<b>Barriers to Girls' Education .....</b>	<b>44</b>
4.1	Poverty .....	44
4.2	Socio-economic Disparities .....	45
4.3	Sectoral/Regional/Geographical Disparities .....	46
4.4	Family-Related Factors .....	48
4.5	Conflict and Natural Disaster .....	49
4.6	School-Related Factors .....	51
4.7	Gender-Specific Factors .....	52
<b>5.</b>	<b>Enabling Factors and Good Practices .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Lessons Learned .....</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>About the Authors .....</b>	<b>73</b>

## SERIES FOREWORD

There is a growing sense of momentum around education in South Asia. Governments are engaged and a lot has been done. The Millennium Development Goals have added an additional spur to action as indeed have greater awareness on gender disparity and the need for educated workers. There is though a long way to go if the rights of all children are to be realized.

Providing access to education is only part of the story. Once children are enrolled and attending, the quality of their education must make it a worthwhile experience. The special needs of girls in the social and cultural context of South Asia call for special measures, as do the needs of all children in situations of conflict and emergency. South Asia has many rich, positive examples of success in advancing basic education. It is important that these are shared and built on if there is to be an overall improvement throughout the region.

This series of papers aimed at promoting better education in South Asia grew out of collaboration between the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and the newly formed UN Girls' Education Initiative, and had its genesis at a Regional Meeting on Accelerating Girls' Education in South Asia in February 2005.

Essentially the series is intended to be a forum that allows debate, exchange of ideas and to break new ground. It will aim to capture the momentum and extol good practice to all engaged in educational policy and implementation.

The series does not seek to represent a specific viewpoint, but rather is intended to enable specialist contributors to present issues in greater depth and breadth than is often the case in official documents.

Initially the series will focus on girls' education but it is hoped that eventually it will broaden into a platform for more general education issues related to South Asia, with a particular emphasis on social inclusion. Contributions and feedback are invited from academics and practitioners from throughout the South Asia region and beyond. The series editors are particularly interested in submissions which offer new ideas and strategies that can assist those needing answers, and which can add impetus to the ongoing efforts in the region to provide quality education for all.

**Come, join the debate!**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chandra Gunawardena  
Swarna Jayaweera

## ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIE	Alternate Innovative Education
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CENWOR	Centre for Women's Research (Sri Lanka)
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSSP	Community School Support Project
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EFA	Education for All
EGS	Education Guarantee Schemes (India)
ESDFP	Education Sector Development Framework and Programme
ESR	Education Sector Reform
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GDI	Gender Development Indicator
GMS	Gender Management System (Maldives)
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Indicator
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MS	Mahila Samakhya (India)
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs (Afghanistan)

MWCA	Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs (Bangladesh)
MoWD	Ministry of Women's Development (Pakistan)
NAP	National Action Plan (Bangladesh)
NCW	National Commission for Women (India and Sri Lanka)
NCWC	National Commission for Women and Children (Bangladesh)
NEC	National Education Commission (Sri Lanka)
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NESPA	National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation
NPE	National Policy of Education (India)
NPEGEL	National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (India)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBA	Programme-Based Approach
PEP	Primary Education Programme (Bangladesh)
POA	Programme of Action (India)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
ROSC	Reaching Out of School Children (Bangladesh)
SESP	Secondary Education Support Program (Nepal)
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
UNICEF ROSA	United Nations Children's Fund, Regional Office for South Asia
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UPC	Universal Primary Completion
WFP	World Food Programme

# SUMMARY

## 1 Introduction – The International Context

The concept of gender mainstreaming emerged in the 1980s when the international women's movement became concerned that women-specific programme strategies had not achieved significant results. This issues paper analyses the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been effected in the countries of South Asia, and identifies the successes achieved, in order to enable sharing of good practices. Feasible policy options, practices and processes are identified to counter persisting issues of gender inequality in education and contribute to the achievement of education and gender-related goals of EFA and MDG within the framework of a rights-based approach. The paper complements and reinforces an earlier paper in this Education Debate series, 'Mainstreaming Gender for Better Girls' Education: Policy and Institutional Issues' by Ramya Subrahmanian.

Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects by governments, NGOs and the private sector. At the same time, considering that specific gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming are complementary

strategies and must go hand-in-hand to reach the goal of gender equality, such policies and programmes are also examined.

A number of International Rights Conventions and Declarations commit signatory countries to addressing social exclusion and inequality and ensuring that both men and women have access to education as a right without discrimination. Among these are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989), the Millennium Development Goals, the EFA Dakar Goals, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. All the South Asian countries have ratified the two conventions CEDAW and CRC, and have committed themselves to the achievement of the MDGs.

## 2 National Policies from a Gender Perspective in South Asia

Countries in the South Asian region have made varied provisions in their Constitutions, such as: right to equality; equality of men and women; non-discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds; and special provision for women and children. All of these impact on the provision of education to girls. Commitment to providing access to education is spelled out in the Constitutions of some of the countries in the South Asian region, but only India and Sri Lanka emphasize universal education in their Constitutions. Compulsory education has been accepted or is in the process of being accepted by legislation in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

National machinery for women's affairs in each country is expected to promote gender mainstreaming in institutions. However, the extent to which this machinery is effective is uncertain. Analysis of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in South Asian countries indicates that Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have incorporated gender into the PRSP; in Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, while attention has been focused on gender or women, mainstreaming is less evident. In Afghanistan it is felt that effective mainstreaming of gender could be a challenge.

In the case of SWAps, while all countries focus on equity in access only India has made a specific reference to bridging gender gaps as an objective. The Maldives and Sri Lanka, which have already achieved gender parity, appear to place less emphasis on gender issues than the other countries in the region in which providing gender equality is still a challenge.

### 3 Effectiveness of Policies and Processes in Education – A Gender Perspective

The impact of educational policies, processes and factors on education has been contingent on the type of policy interventions and on effective implementation.

Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan have adopted policies of systemic mainstreaming in education based on resource distribution and institutional provision that have had a positive impact on girls and boys. Stemming from political will, these policies were also a response to social demand in countries which had attached a high value to education. Consequently gender parity has been achieved rapidly, contributing to features of gender equality in some sectors beyond the limits of educational institutions. Expected outcomes of universal education have not been realized in a context of macro-economic policies that did not reduce poverty substantially in Sri Lanka, nor reach 'hard-to-reach' islands and mountainous terrain in the Maldives and Bhutan respectively. Complacency created by positive indicators of education participation have contributed to weak implementation and monitoring of progress. While there has not been gender differentiation in curriculum organization, complacency and lack of gender sensitivity among many policy makers have led them to undervalue the role of education in transforming structural inequalities in society that have a negative impact on girls and women and limit their life chances.

Before 1990, in Bangladesh and India education policies which purported to ensure universal education were seen to have been unsuccessful in mainstreaming gender issues as they were not supported by resource allocation or provision of adequate facilities, while gendered norms limited demand for education. Since 1990 international commitments and purposeful policies to achieve gender parity, and in India to remove constraints to the participation of disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and the interface of supply and demand factors have resulted in substantial progress in enrolment. The approach has been to introduce special programmes for girls to supplement national policies in the context of wide gender imbalances in education indicators. Bangladesh has introduced stipends at primary and secondary levels but conditionalities and problems in targeting, as opposed to universal application, have prevented the poor from maximizing benefits with resultant high dropout rates. India has used social mobilization to empower girls and women but has limited policies chiefly to primary education and thereby reduced incentives. In these countries too the incidence of poverty and weak implementation of programmes have affected progress and gender equality is perceived in terms of quantitative indicators rather than changes in gender relations and related structures.

In Nepal and Pakistan a plethora of policy statements on compulsory and free education have been confined largely to documents. Since 1990, however, international commitments have brought gender into the policy domain and several special programmes have been proposed to reduce the gender gap in participation in education. They have had limited impact without support from political will, legislation, allocation of adequate resources, and effective delivery of services. They have expected poor communities to share costs and, in Pakistan, have relied on the private sector to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups such as girls and women in non-affluent families. Hence mainstreaming has not taken place in policies or in curriculum development.

War-torn Afghanistan is seeking to restore normalcy. In consonance with its international commitments it proposes mainstreaming gender in education and other programmes. At present the donor community appears to be influential and it is unclear how national programmes will take shape in an unstable environment.

It is to be noted that two common trends in all eight countries have been the positive impact of international commitments with regard to education indicators and the failure to envisage policies that will extend beyond achieving gender parity to mainstreaming in programmes that will contribute to transforming gender roles and relations to ensure gender equality.

#### **4 Barriers to Girls' Education**

Education does not function in a vacuum and factors other than policies have facilitated or impeded gender mainstreaming. A confluence of multiple contextual factors surfacing from the political, economic and social environment has contributed to the success or failure of policies.

Several barriers have individually and cumulatively delayed the process of mainstreaming. Poverty is the major determinant of non-schooling and premature school leaving. Its hardships are seen even more clearly in the educational experiences of marginalized groups who are victims of social discrimination and/or exclusion – caste groups, tribes, minorities, plantation communities, children with disabilities, child labour and sex workers, children living or begging on the streets and destitute children, as well as those living in mountainous areas and small islands and in conflict-affected and disaster-affected areas.

Living conditions in families with respect to economic status, family support and attitude to education have determined the extent to which girls have had access to education. For instance, as a consequence of poverty, using child labour as an economic asset and the domestic tasks imposed on girls involving long hours in search of water and fuel for the household have denied girls their right to education. School-related factors such as distance to school and safety concerns influence the decisions of parents to send girls to school. The poor quality of school infrastructure and facilities, low competence of unqualified teachers, lack of women teachers, the negative or indifferent attitude of teachers to the poor and to girls, and the unfriendly learning environment have affected retention in and completion of primary and secondary education.

## 5 Enabling Factors and Good Practices

Factors that have helped to overcome or reduce the impact of barriers are observed in all countries. Political will has been a force that has accelerated the process of mainstreaming in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Since poverty has been a major barrier, incentives such as free education, scholarships/stipends, free textbooks, subsidized transport and midday meals or food assistance have reduced the costs of education, stimulated social demand irrespective of sex and reduced the gender gap in access to education.

Overt gender discrimination has been less pronounced in some countries, but where it has been strongly manifested gender sensitization programmes such as the Mahila Samakhya in India have contributed to changing negative attitudes of parents and communities to the education of girls.

In Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan non-governmental and community-based organizations have been proactive in establishing schools for out-of-school children in which girls have been major beneficiaries. BRAC in Bangladesh has organized institutions from pre-primary to university levels. International commitments have motivated states to accelerate policies to move towards universal primary education. They have also increased the quantum of donor assistance since the 1980s.

Examples of good practices relate to (i) political will and incentives, (ii) overcoming barriers to the education of girls in countries in which there is a high social demand for education, (iii) gender sensitizing and empowering women to change negative attitudes to the education of girls, (iv) the contribution of very large NGOs (e.g. BRAC) and (v) an innovative programme in Pakistan on Frontier Schools by UNICEF to facilitate the access of girls to education in a remote area.

## 6 Lessons Learned

Lessons learned from this overview are presented for consideration in formulating and implementing education policies and programmes to ensure gender mainstreaming:

- Limitations caused by the absence of a holistic approach to mainstreaming based on a rights-based perspective, offering adequate incentives that are not limited to primary education and are supported by legislation and institutional development.
- Limited success of special programmes for girls such as stipend programmes that require cost sharing by families enmeshed in poverty.
- Failure to envisage the goal of mainstreaming as gender equality and not gender parity.
- Over-estimating the potential of non-formal education as a substitute for formal education and at the same time undervaluing its role as a complementary strategy to facilitate mainstreaming.
- Absence of a results-based monitoring system at local levels to ensure effective implementation.
- Consequences of a lack of political will to universalize education as a fundamental right.
- Barriers reinforced by macro-economic policies that bypass the poor and perpetuate socio-economic and gender inequalities and ineffectiveness of poverty reduction strategies that are compartmentalized and are not mainstreamed in national policies.
- Lack of focus on reducing through education policies disparities such as urban–rural, provincial/district, geographical, socio-economic, socio-cultural cum gender, and those created by conflict and natural disaster.
- Impact of the failure to eliminate gender role stereotypes in educational materials, gendered behavioural expectations in educational institutions and gender insensitivity on the part of teachers and other educational personnel.

- Impediments created by inadequacy of conscientization programmes at all levels to counter adherence to son preference and to oppressive social practices that disempower girls and women and reinforce gender inequalities.
- Negative results of transfer of international goals to national policies without adequate consideration of contextual factors in each country.

## INTRODUCTION – THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

### 1.1 Concept of Gender Mainstreaming

The concept of gender mainstreaming emerged in the 1980s when the international women's movement became concerned that women-specific programme strategies had not achieved significant results. Until then mainstreaming had a number of meanings, such as including women in development planning or ensuring that institutional budgets included significant resources for 'main activities'. The international community has since come to some agreement about the common use of the term, so that mainstreaming now generally refers to a comprehensive strategy that involves both women-oriented programmes and the integration of women/gender issues into overall existing programmes, throughout the programme cycle.

Gender mainstreaming assumes enhanced significance in the context of the current initiatives of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAs) that are being developed in most countries. While PRSPs recognize that no development can take place unless poverty (which acts as the major cause of exclusion on all fronts – economic, political, socio-cultural and educational) is reduced significantly, the attempt of SWAs to achieve greater policy coherence, scope for evidence-based planning and more effective targeting of resources to where needs are greatest is regarded as having the potential to strengthen equity and inclusion. Moreover, the fact that PRSPs and SWAs target the MDGs, among which gender equality is a goal in its own right as well as having an overarching impact

on other MDGs, makes it pertinent to inquire the extent to which gender mainstreaming is visible at macro levels of planning as well as in the education sector to ensure gender equality.

The Council of Europe (1999) defines gender mainstreaming as the '(re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policy-making.' It maintains, however, that gender mainstreaming cannot replace specific policies which aim to redress situations resulting from gender inequality. Specific gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming are complementary strategies and must go hand-in-hand to reach the goal of gender equality.

UN agencies, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of OECD and other international bodies have developed comprehensive guidelines for mainstreaming gender, at national, sector and institutional levels, and many governments and development agencies have committed to such an approach:

***'Gender mainstreaming means the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. In the education sector, this would include not only the activities of governments, but also those of schools, colleges, education***

***institutions and, where appropriate, of NGOs and the private sectors as well ... Rather than adding on a women's component to existing policies, plans, programmes and projects, a gender perspective informs these at all stages, and in every aspect of the decision-making process. Gender mainstreaming may thus entail a fundamental transformation of the underlying paradigms that inform education.'* (DAC, 1998)**

As Moser et al. (2004) explain, gender mainstreaming is 'the internationally agreed strategy for governments and development organizations to achieve the commitments outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action.' Gender mainstreaming is seen as a necessary strategy to prevent the repeated marginalization of women's needs and to address inequalities in power relations between women and men, not just in society but also within development institutions. Thus gender mainstreaming has been and continues to be seen as a necessarily 'transformative' strategy (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1996).

For the United Nations, gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation,

resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.

This paper complements and reinforces an earlier paper in this Education Debate series, 'Mainstreaming Gender for Better Girls' Education: Policy and Institutional Issues' (Subrahmanian, 2006). In that paper, Subrahmanian points out issues that have in reality emerged in relation to gender mainstreaming. A key criticism has been the 'narrowness' of the strategy despite the complexity of gender relations and the contextual variations in the processes and outcomes related to gender inequalities. Most 'mainstreaming machinery' looks the same irrespective of the country; most are localized at the national level, rarely reaching the sub-strata levels where development change may become more manageable and may more closely reflect the needs and priorities of particular subgroups. It is pointed out that institutional coverage of mainstreaming actors and effort has also been narrowly focused on particular departmental units or sections. Among the common barriers identified are:

- Lack of political will
- Under-funding of units and ministries given responsibility for mainstreaming efforts
- Marginalization and frequent shifting between units with bureaucratic structures
- Institutionalization of patriarchy in the laws, rules and practices of organizations
- Deep-seated resistance by different

divisions to taking on cross-cutting issues such as gender that would encroach on their budgetary allocations.

For the purpose of this paper, the definition of gender mainstreaming as stated by DAC above, 'the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects' will be applied. As pointed out therein, in the education sector this would include not only the activities of governments, but also those of schools, and, where appropriate, of NGOs and the private sectors. At the same time, considering that specific gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming are complementary strategies, such specific gender equality policies also will be examined. This approach is especially relevant for those nations which need to move faster towards gender equality.

## 1.2 International Commitments to Gender Equality in Education

The term 'Gender Equality' has been defined in a variety of ways in the context of development: in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity), and equality of voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process). The UNIFEM

perspective is that the definition of gender equality stops short of equality of outcomes, because, firstly, different cultures and societies can follow different paths in their pursuit of gender equality, and secondly, equality implies that women and men are free to choose different (or similar) roles and different (or similar) outcomes in accordance with their references and goals.

In order to promote gender equality, policies for institutional change and economic development need to take cognizance of existing gender inequalities in a society. These inequalities prevail in the areas of Rights, Resources and Voice. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) thus declared: 'Governments and other actors

should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are made, an analysis is made of the effects on women, and men respectively.'

### 1.2.1 Rights commitments

A number of International Rights Conventions and Declarations commit signatory countries to addressing social exclusion and inequality and ensuring that both men and women have access to education as a right without discrimination.

One key example is the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** (1979).

## CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

### ARTICLE 10

- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:
  - (a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training.

The ratification of CEDAW by the South Asian nations is shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Ratification of CEDAW by South Asian Countries**

Country	Date of signature	Date of receipt of the instrument of ratification, accession or succession
Afghanistan	14 August 1980	
Pakistan		12 March 1996
Bhutan	17 July 1980	31 August 1981
Bangladesh		6 November 1984
India	30 July 1980	9 July 1993
Maldives		1 July 1993
Nepal	5 February 1991	22 April 1991
Sri Lanka	17 July 1980	5 October 1981

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** (1989) reiterated that every

child should be ensured an access to good quality, relevant education as a right.

## EDUCATION IN THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

### ARTICLE 28 (ACCESS TO EDUCATION)

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and, with a view to achieving this right *progressively* and *on the basis of equal opportunity* they shall, in particular:
  - (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free for all.
  - (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.
  - (c) Make higher education accessible on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means.
  - (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children.
  - (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.
  
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international co-operation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

#### **ARTICLE 29 (EDUCATIONAL CONTENT)**

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
  - (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.
  - (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
  - (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own.
  - (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups, and persons of indigenous origin.
  - (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.
2. No part of the present article or Article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions. (Subject to certain principles and minimum standards regulations.)

#### **OTHER ARTICLES**

Article 13 (Freedom of expression), Article 17 (The media), Article 23 (Disability), Article 24 (Health), Article 31 (Play, recreation and leisure), Article 32 (Child work) and Article 33 (Illicit drug use) also have implications for the *right to* education and the *content and purpose* of that education.

The South Asian nations have also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Table 1.2).

**Table 1.2 Ratification of CRC by South Asian Countries**

Country	Date of signature	Date of entry into force	Amendments*
Afghanistan	27/09/90	27/04/94	
Pakistan	20/09/90	12/12/90	Acceptance of amendment to art. 43 (2); 19.01.2000
Bhutan	04/06/90	02/09/90	Acceptance of amendment to art. 43 (2); 17.3.1999
Bangladesh	26/01/90	02/09/90	Acceptance of amendment to art. 43 (2); 23.04.1997
India	11/12/92	11/01/93	Acceptance of amendment to art. 43 (2);
Maldives	21/08/90	11/02/91	Acceptance of amendment to art. 43 (2); 02.01.1998
Nepal	26/01/90	14/10/90	Acceptance of amendment to art. 43 (2);
Sri Lanka	24 Jul 1990	Aug 1990	

\* Article 43 (2) refers to the composition of the Committee charged with examining the progress made in achieving the realization of the obligations undertaken in the Convention.

### 1.2.2 The MDGs and EFA 'Dakar' Goals

The Millennium Development Goals, developed in 2000, constitute the set of international commitments that currently drive the 'development agenda', with 'poverty reduction' holding centre stage in the current dominant development discourse. In

many countries, the MDGs act as the basis for poverty reduction strategies and sector-level plans. Meanwhile, many development agencies have revised their policies and priorities around the meeting of these goals. Among eight MDGs, three have direct bearing on education.

## UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (2000)

### GOAL 1 ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

### GOAL 2 ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Target 3. Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

### GOAL 3 PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.

The **EFA Goals** were also developed in 2000, at the Dakar World Education Forum. They constitute a

considerable strengthening and revision of the earlier EFA goals (developed in Jomtien, 1990).

## THE EFA 'DAKAR' GOALS (2000)

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that **by 2015** all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete **free and compulsory primary education of good quality**.
3. Ensuring that the **learning needs of all young people and adults** are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. Achieving a **50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015**, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. **Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015**, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the **quality of education** and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The EFA goals do not contradict the education-related MDGs, but do considerably expand on them. There is a stronger emphasis on the quality and relevance of education, an expanded concept of gender equality including the concept of 'equity in quality', and a more explicit mention of socially excluded groups (namely 'vulnerable and disadvantaged children', 'children in difficult circumstances' and 'those belonging to ethnic minorities').

### 1.2.3 Other global initiatives

Recognizing the failure of nations to make significant progress on narrowing the gender gap in education, in 2000 a new initiative, the **United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)**, was launched. Since then, UNGEI has been effective in:

- positioning girls' education on the global agenda for education and development, through action within the UNESCO-coordinated EFA Working Group and involvement in the Fast Track Initiative (FTI);
- establishing UNGEI focal points at regional level;
- organizing multi-agency activities at global and regional levels to explore good practices in support of girls' education;
- setting up a Global Advisory Committee and UNGEI Secretariat;

- setting up UNGEI partnerships at country level; and
- involving young people in promoting girls' education through the Young Champions in Education model.

Yet another global initiative in support of education was launched in 2002, the **Education for All Fast Track Initiative**. The FTI is founded on the commitments made at Dakar and the Monterrey Consensus (2002) that no country that has made commitments and credible plans for achieving the MDGs should be thwarted by a lack of resources. The FTI lays particular emphasis on achieving the MDG of Universal Primary Completion (UPC). Its stated goals are:

- More efficient aid for primary education
- Sustained increases in aid for primary education
- Sound sector policies in education
- Adequate and sustainable domestic financing for education
- Increased accountability for sector results
- Mutual learning on what works.

However, Seel and Clarke (2005) point out that there is a notable absence of any specific reference to gender in the Goals and Guidelines principles outlined in the opening section of the FTI Framework.

## NATIONAL POLICIES FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN SOUTH ASIA

The analysis in this chapter reveals that the emphasis on gender varies across the countries in the region. Countries such as the Maldives and Sri Lanka which have already achieved gender parity appear to place less emphasis on gender issues than the other countries in the region, in which providing gender equity is still a challenge.

### 2.1 Constitutional Commitments

Countries in the South Asian region have made varied provisions in their Constitutions which impact on provision of education to girls (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Provisions in Constitutions of South Asian Countries Related to Education**

	<b>Country</b>	<b>Article</b>
Right to equality	Afghanistan	Article 22.1
	India	Articles 14 and 15
	Nepal	Article 11.1
	Sri Lanka	Article 12.1
Equality of men and women	Afghanistan	Article 22.2
	Bangladesh	Article 19

Non-discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds	Nepal Sri Lanka	Article 11.2 Article 12.2
Special provision for women and children	India Nepal Sri Lanka	Article 15 (3) Article 26 (9) Article 4

Yet some of these nations have included stipulations:

- 'Nothing in this Article (15) shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children.' (India (Article 15 (3)))
- 'Provided that special provisions may be made by law for the protection and advancement of the interests of women, children, the aged or those who are physically or mentally incapacitated or those who belong to a class which is economically,

socially or educationally backward.' (Nepal (Article 26 (9)))

- 'Nothing in this Article shall prevent special provision being made, by law, subordinate legislation or executive action, for the advancement of women, children or disabled persons.' (Sri Lanka (Article 4))

Similarly, the commitment to providing **access to education** is spelled out in the Constitutions of some of the countries in the South Asian region (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2 Commitment to Providing Access to Education**

Country	Provision	Constitution
Afghanistan	'The State shall adopt necessary measures for promotion of education in all levels, development of religious education, organizing and improving the conditions of mosques, madrassas and religious centres'	Article 17
Bangladesh	'The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of a. establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law'	Article 17

Bhutan	'The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality'	Article 9:15
India	'The State shall within the limits of its economic capacity make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education ...'  'The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years'	Article 41  Article 45
Maldives	'Persons shall be free to acquire knowledge and to impart knowledge provided that such acquisition and imparting of knowledge does not contravene law'	Article 19
Nepal	'The State shall pursue a policy of raising the standard of living of the general public through the development of infrastructures such as education ...'	Article 268
Pakistan	'Remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period'	Article 37 (b)
Sri Lanka	'the complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels'  'to promote with special care the interests of children and youth so as to ensure the full development, physical, mental, moral, religious, social and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination'	Article 27 (2) h  Article 27 (13)

Table 2.2 indicates that only India and Sri Lanka emphasize universal education in their Constitutions. Other countries have only made provision to reach out to those who have not yet been reached in education. Thus the Constitution of Afghanistan under its Article 44 states, 'The State shall devise and implement effective programmes for balancing and promoting of education for women, improving of education of nomads and elimination of illiteracy in the country', and in Article 26 (7) pledges that 'The State shall pursue a policy of making the female population participate to a greater extent in the task of national development by making special provisions for their education, health and employment.'

Under **protection of special groups**, countries have pledged that:

'The State shall endeavour to take all appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exploitation against women including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, harassment and intimidation at work in both public and private spheres.' (Bhutan, Article 9:17; India, Article 23; Nepal, Article 20 (1))

Protection is guaranteed in Bhutan and Pakistan by other provisions such as:

'The State shall endeavour to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all

forms of discrimination and exploitation including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, degrading treatment and economic exploitation.' (Bhutan, Article 9:18) and

'make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex.'

(Pakistan, Article 37 (e))

Provisions regarding **prohibition of employment of children** in factories etc. that 'No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or in any other hazardous employment' is written into the Constitutions of some countries (India, Article 24; Nepal, Article 20 (2); Pakistan, Article 11). Sri Lanka enacted Regulation No.1116/5 of 26 January 2000 stipulating the Minimum Age of Employment as 14 years.

These provisions all help, to some extent, in ensuring access to education for vulnerable groups.

## 2.2 National Policies on Education and Girls' Education

Compulsory education has been accepted or is in the process of being accepted by legislation in many countries in South Asia:

- **Afghanistan** proposes to 'ensure that all girls and boys complete

compulsory education (9 years) and have opportunities to continue at higher levels, with particular attention paid to the inclusion of girls who have been prevented from access to education.' The benchmark for 2010 is to ensure that net enrolment in primary school will be at least 75 per cent and 60 per cent for boys and girls respectively.

- In **India**, provision of universal elementary education has been a salient feature of national policy since independence. This resolve has been spelt out emphatically in the National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986, and Programme of Action (POA) 1992. India hopes to achieve the following objectives through its Sarva Shikshan Abhiyan:
  - All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007.
  - All children complete eight years of schooling by 2010.
  - Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
  - Bridge all gender and social gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.
  - Universal retention by 2010.
- **Pakistan** proposes compulsory and free primary education of girls by 2010; free secondary education with progressive targets setting by 2020 (White Paper on Education, 2006).
- In **Sri Lanka**, compulsory education regulations for the 5–14 age group were approved by the Parliament and made effective from 1998. The National Education Commission's (NEC) 'Proposals for a Framework for General Education' (2003) recommended the extension of compulsory education to 16 years and this proposal was endorsed by the National Plan of Action for Children (2004) and the National Plan of Action for Women (2007).

### 2.3 Gender Mainstreaming

The national machinery for women's affairs in each country is expected to promote gender mainstreaming in institutions. However, the extent to which this machinery is effective is uncertain. Table 2.3 shows the institutions responsible for gender mainstreaming and their responsibilities in individual countries.

**Table 2.3 Gender Mainstreaming in South Asian Countries**

Country	Responsible institutions	Responsibility	Action taken and/or planned
Afghanistan	Ministry of Women's Affairs	Leading and coordinating government efforts to advance the role of women	A 10-year National Plan of Action for Women to support gender mainstreaming
	Gender Focal Points	Liaising with the MoWA on issues and policies relevant to women; assisting the mainstreaming efforts in their respective ministries	Emphasis to be given to monitor the gender-related MDGs and targets  Capacity building to include enhanced efforts to improve the collection and use of sex disaggregated data to inform policy, planning
	Gender Unit in Ministry of Education		Pilot studies to address gender gaps in education, health and other priority areas
Bangladesh	1998 – Women's Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee headed by the Minister of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs	Regular monitoring of the NAP  Monitoring the progress of related gender mainstreaming initiatives  Formulation of a PBA on gender mainstreaming; ensuring national capacity is built to prepare a long-term plan for achieving the MDG and gender goals of PRSP  Support to and strengthening of the	1997 – National Policy for the Advancement of Women includes commitments to eliminating discrimination against women and girls in all spheres, and promoting women's equality in areas such as education and training, health and nutrition  1998 – A National Action Plan (NAP) for implementing the policy as well as meeting commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA)

		capacity of the MWCA to fulfil its function as a policy-making ministry for gender mainstreaming; allowing MWCA to support other sectors in formulating plans and implementing them to lead to a cohesive and coordinated gender mainstreaming approach across the government agencies
Bhutan	Ministry of Women's Affairs	Overall coordination of gender affairs
	2004 – National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)	Coordination and Monitoring, Reporting and Social Mobilization of the activities related to women and children
	2001 – Planning Commission Secretariat	Coordination of gender matters in the country
India	Ministry of Women's Affairs	Overall coordination of gender affairs
	1992 – National Commission for Women (NCW)	Investigate, examine and review all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution; review both women-specific and women-related legislations and suggest amendments wherever needed; function as an agency for surveillance and for facilitating redress of grievances of women
Maldives	2003 – Gender Management System (GMS) – Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Security	Mainstreaming efforts to address gender issues for effective inclusion of gender concerns in all policies, programmes and projects to ensure gender equity in political and socio-economic development, eliminating all existing gender disparities; active promotion of gender equity and equality and, where necessary, affirmative action; establishing gender equity and equality in all spheres

Nepal	Ministry of Women & Social Welfare	Gender mainstreaming in national development through encouraging gender equality and the empowerment of women; gender advocacy and inter-ministerial coordination; formulation of a national women's development policy and ensuring its integration in national development policy	
Pakistan	Ministry of Women's Development (MoWD)	Amendments to Rules of Business of MoWD and selected Ministries to update their mandate for a proactive approach towards gender equality	
	Women and Social Development (W&SD) sections in five ministries	Create capacity for gender analysis, planning and mainstreaming; establishment of an inter-ministerial gender mainstreaming committee for gender accountability	
Sri Lanka	National Committee on Women (NCW)	Responsibility for implementing the Women's Charter (Sri Lanka) as state policy	
	1993 – Ministry of Women's Affairs	Catalysing government and non-government organizations in mainstreaming gender; functioning as the national focal point for gender and development	National Plan of Action – 2007

## 2.4 Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in South Asia

Effective poverty reduction strategies should focus on four elements: comprehensive poverty analysis; clearly specified priorities for planned structural economic reforms and social programmes; adequate targets and indicators for the process of implementation and monitoring; and description of the participatory process that has led to the preparation of a PRSP

(Rodenberg, 2002). In the analysis of the PRSPs developed for the countries of South Asia, we will examine the extent to which these concerns are satisfied. India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka do not have PRSPs, so other equivalent documents (the Tenth Five Year Plan of India, the Five Year Development Plan of the Maldives, the Tenth National Plan of Nepal and Mahinda Chinthana: Vision for a New Sri Lanka (the Ten Year Plan)) focusing on poverty reduction will be examined.

Table 2.4 presents the analysis of PRSP and equivalent document content in the South Asian countries.

**Table 2.4 Analysis of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (and Equivalent Documents) in South Asian Countries**

Country	Elements considered				Overall evaluation
	Comprehensive poverty analysis	Clearly specified priorities	Adequate targets and indicators	Participatory process	
Afghanistan	A need for comprehensive disaggregated poverty data	A closer relation between prioritization of investments/programmes and overarching growth and poverty reduction goals needed	Targets need to be realistic	Positive indication of participatory consultation but women's participation not clear	Effective mainstreaming of gender in the ANDS could be a major challenge
Bangladesh	Poverty data disaggregated by sectors, regions, consumption disparities, gender; various dimensions of poverty examined	Priorities identified giving emphasis to poverty reduction and achievement of key social development goals	Feasibility of target achievement in some areas such as poverty dubious	Wide consultations with various stakeholders including women at all levels reported	A significant level of gender mainstreaming evident in vision, goals and targets
Bhutan	Some disaggregated poverty data used, but not comprehensive	Priorities identified giving emphasis on poverty reduction, health and education and infrastructure	Specific targets identified for some sectors	Consultation mainly with officials, elected representatives but women and their organizations less visible	Specific attention paid to women but gender mainstreaming less evident
India	A comprehensive disaggregated database used for the development of the Plan	Priorities established giving a balanced weightage to economic and sectoral objectives	Specific, achievable and monitorable targets identified	No specific mention of the consultative process used	Effective gender mainstreaming in the overall Plan as well as through

							a chapter on women and children
Maldives	A need for comprehensive disaggregated poverty data	Priorities need to be established	Specific targets need to be identified	No specific mention of the consultative process used	Gender equality is a guiding principle but no evidence of gender mainstreaming		
Nepal	Some gender-disaggregated poverty data used, but not comprehensive	Priorities established giving a balanced weightage to economic and sectoral objectives	Specific and monitorable targets (some of which might be ambitious) identified	Wide consultations with various stakeholders including women at all levels reported	Gender mainstreaming in the overall Plan as well as through a specific objective		
Pakistan	Considerable amount of disaggregated poverty data including gender-wise used	Priorities established giving a balanced weightage to economic and sectoral objectives	Specific, achievable and monitorable targets identified	Consultation carried out at different levels but women and women's organizations less visible	Gender mainstreaming in the overall Plan as well as through a section on employment, gender and environment		
Sri Lanka	Some gender-disaggregated data on education and employment used, but not comprehensive	Priorities established giving a balanced weightage to economic and sectoral objectives	Specific, achievable and monitorable targets identified	No specific mention of the consultative process used	Some attention paid to women but gender mainstreaming not evident		

## 2.5 Sector-Wide Approaches and Other Major Programmes in Education

During the last decade, international development assistance has sought to move away from separate donor projects towards sector-wide approaches (SWAs) in which donors seek to harmonize their support to a government-led development and implementation of a costed, coherent policy framework and programme plan. These approaches are increasingly being linked into national multi-sectoral poverty reduction strategies, in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). SWAs aim to improve systemic efficiency and effectiveness and thus to achieve better outcomes in terms of access, completion, quality and equity (Seel, 2006). Sector Investment Programmes (SIP) were conceived as a means to accelerate progress towards overall poverty reduction in the medium term. As Seel (2006) explains, SWAs aim to support governments in planning coherently for the whole sector within the context of an overarching realistic and costed policy framework, backed by concurrent attention to macro-economic stabilization and public service reform. It has been argued that:

***'SWAs can ensure sufficient attention to operational procedures within a supportive policy environment to ensure that resources reach those for whom they are intended ...' (Harrold et al., 1995)***

DAC (2000) identifies seven promising practices and opportunities to make SWAs gender-focused. These are:

- Wider policy environment
- Multi-level gender analysis
- Policy and strategy development processes
- Management and implementation structures
- Capacity
- Monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- Donor coordination in support of gender equality.

Because sector-wide approaches involve shaping an entire sector with the objective of enhancing long-term development, attention to gender equality is critical if the SWA is to be successful in meeting the goal of equitable and sustainable development.

While countries in South Asia are moving towards SWAs, there is no single model for these, nor is there consistent terminology for the naming of the programmes. Table 2.5 examines the operation of SWAs and other major programmes in the countries of South Asia.

**Table 2.5 SWApS and other Major Programmes in South Asia**

Country	Name of Programme	Programme scope	Described as a
Afghanistan	National Education Strategy Plan through a unified vision of the educational needs of the country with targets established for achieving specific goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increasing access</li> <li>■ Improving the quality of education</li> <li>■ Improving governance and management standards in the Ministry and devolving greater authority to the schools</li> </ul>	General and Technical and Vocational Education	NESP
Bangladesh	Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) II (2003–09) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Quality improvement through organizational development and capacity building</li> <li>■ Quality improvement in schools and classrooms</li> <li>■ Quality improvement through infrastructure development</li> <li>■ Improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling</li> <li>■ PEDP-II implementation, management and monitoring</li> </ul>	Primary Education Sector excluding NFE	SWAp
Bhutan	Education Development Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Extend access to primary and secondary education</li> <li>■ Improve quality and relevance of education at all levels</li> <li>■ Institutional strengthening</li> </ul>	Primary and secondary education	Education Development
India	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2002–10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Providing elementary education to all children (6–14)</li> <li>■ Disparity reduction among focus groups in education</li> <li>■ Bridge all gender and social gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary level by 2010</li> <li>■ Universal retention by 2010</li> </ul>	Primary education	SWAp

Maldives	<p>Third Education and Training Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Education quality improvement</li> <li>■ Equitable access to be increased through the expansion of secondary schools</li> <li>■ Institutional strengthening</li> <li>■ Training for selected professionals</li> </ul>	Primary and secondary education	
Nepal	<p>Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP) II and EFA 2004–09</p>	Primary and basic education Adult education	PBA progressing to a SWAp
Pakistan	<p>Education Sector Reform Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improvement of literacy rate</li> <li>■ Universalization of primary education</li> <li>■ Improvement in the quality of education through better teachers, reformed curriculum, and efficient examination system</li> <li>■ Introducing a third stream of gender and area-specific technical vocational education in tehsil and district levels</li> <li>■ Empowerment of district education authorities</li> <li>■ Promotion of public–private partnerships</li> <li>■ Diversification of general education</li> </ul>	Literacy, general education and quality of education	ESR
Sri Lanka	<p>Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Equity in access to education</li> <li>■ Improvement in the quality of education</li> <li>■ Efficient and equitable resource allocation</li> <li>■ Strengthening governance and delivery services</li> </ul>	Primary and secondary education	SWAp

While all programmes focus on equity in access, only India has made a specific reference to bridging gender gaps as an objective.

## EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICIES AND PROCESSES IN EDUCATION – A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Gender mainstreaming was perceived as a component of the Beijing Platform for Action and a desirable objective chiefly after the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. It appears, in fact, to have replaced the oft-repeated slogan of 'integrating women in development' of the International Decade for Women that began in 1975. Despite the advocacy programmes conducted over the last ten years there is a pervasive sense of disappointment that gender mainstreaming is apt to be rhetoric rather than a reality. It is opportune therefore to examine the contextual factors in terms of policies, processes and the socio-cultural, economic and political environment that contributed to the success or failure of gender mainstreaming.

The Beijing Platform for Action envisages gender mainstreaming as an

'organizational change'. This would imply a process of providing opportunities and ensuring outcomes within a framework of gender equality rather than a goal to be achieved by adding 'gender' to programmes. Some of the core elements of the concept are non-discrimination, redistribution of resources (rather than separate budgets), enabling institutions to provide opportunities and to facilitate change, and overall, a transformative education system that addresses gender-related inequalities in the education process.

Two complementary approaches are necessary – (i) systemic mainstreaming; and (ii) targeting girls – as in many countries boys and girls do not start from equal positions or from a level playing field.

### 3.1 Access to Education

Gender parity is not synonymous with gender equality, as parity could be achieved without qualitative improvement. Nevertheless, the first level or preliminary indicators of the extent of mainstreaming that has taken place in countries are net enrolment and completion rates, the percentage of girls of the total enrolment and literacy and learning achievement levels.

Table 3.1, Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 present the available data pertaining to these indicators. As clearly demonstrated by the gaps in the data, a major constraint has been the lack of such data in the publications that are available in the public domain. An important caveat is also the fact that some of this data is unreliable and inconsistent in the view of leading researchers in some of these countries.

**Table 3.1 Education – Indicators**

Indicators (2004)	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
HDI Rank (175 countries) (2004) [1]	173	173	135	126	98	138	134	93
HDI Value (2004) [1]	NA	0.530	0.538	0.611	0.739	0.527	0.539	0.755
GDI Rank (145 countries) (2004) [1]	143	102	NA	96	NA	106	105	68
GDI Value (2004) [1]	NA	0.524	NA	0.591	NA	0.513	0.513	0.749
Education Index (2004) [1]	NA	0.46	0.48	0.61	0.87	0.51	0.46	0.81
Literacy:	(2003) [1]	(2001) [2]	(2000) [2]	(2001) [2]	(2001) [2]	(2003) [2]	(2001) [2]	(2003) [3]
Total	28.6	48	54	65.4	96.3	50.6	48.0	92.5
Female	14.1	41	54	54.2	96.4	38.9	36.8	90.6
Male	43.2	54	80	75.8	96.3	63.5	61.3	94.5
<b>Net Enrolment Rate (NER)</b>								
5–10 yrs	(2003) [4]	(2004) [6]	(2004) [5]	(2004) [5]	(2006) [1.1]	(2004) [5]	(2001/02) [5]	(2003) [3]
Total (Primary)	54	84.0	50.7	87.5	70.5	59.1	59.1	98.0
Female	40	85.7	48.0	84.8	98.0	66.9	50.0	97.8
Male	67	82.4	53.3	90.0	98.0	74.6	67.5	98.1
11–14 yrs	NA	(2004) [6]	(2004) [9]	(2004) [18]	(2005) [2]	(2005) [5]	(2001/02) [1.3]	(2003) [3]
Total (Junior Sec.)		45.0	86.0	82.4	68	46.5	27.0	96.2
Female		50.6	90.0	79.2	78	43.1	23.0	96.6
Male		39.6	82.0	84.7			30.0	95.7

15-18 yrs	NA	-	-	-	-	(2005) [5]	(2001/02) [13]	(2003) [3]
Total (Senior Sec.)		-	-	-	-	32.4	17.0	68.6
Female		-	-	-	-	29.2	14.0	70.5
Male (2001-04)		-	-	-	-		20.0	66.6
<b>Completion Rates</b>								
Primary	(2003) [4]	(2004) [16]	(2004) [9]	(2002) [18]	(2005) [11]	(2005) [15]	(2005) [14]	(2006) [12]
Grade 5/6	35.0	52	96	63	99.0	45.0	46.0	98.2
Total					99.0		41.0	98.7
Female					99.0		49.0	97.6
Male (2001-04)								
<b>Junior Sec.</b>								
Grade 9/10		(2004) [16]	(2004) [9]			(2005) [15]		12]
Total		16.6	86	-	-		-	86.2
Female		13.7	82	-	-	18.0	-	89.4
Male (2001-04)		19.5	90	-	-		-	83.1
<b>Percentage of girls of total enrolment</b>								
Gr. 1-5	(2005) [4]	(2006) [17]	(2004) [9]	(2006) [10]	(2005) [11]	(2005) [15]	(2006) [7]	(2006) [12]
Gr. 6-8/9	34.6	49.6	48.4	46.5	(Gr.1-8/9) 49.0	47.4	43.3	49.0
Gr. 9/10-11	26.7	54.1	-	44.0		45.7	41.2	50.9
Gr. 12-13	22.5			43.0		45.7	41.4	56.7

Sources:

- [1] UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report*
- [2] Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal: National Census in all countries (2001)
- [3] Consumer Finance and Socio-economic Survey of Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2003/04)
- [4] Ministry of Education, Afghanistan
- [5] UNICEF (2005) (*The Gap Report: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan*)
- [6] Education Watch (Bangladesh)
- [7] Economic Survey 2006/07, Pakistan
- [8] MDG Report – Afghanistan
- [9] MDG Report – Bhutan
- [10] Subrahmanian (2006)
- [11] MDG Report – Maldives
- [12] School Census, Sri Lanka
- [13] Pakistan Integrated Household Survey
- [14] Pakistan, Ministry of Education
- [15] Nepal, Ministry of Education
- [16] Bangladesh, Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
- [17] Bangladesh, Ministry of Education
- [18] India, Ministry of Human Resources

**Figure 3.1 Primary School (5–10 yrs) Net Enrolment Rate (NER)**

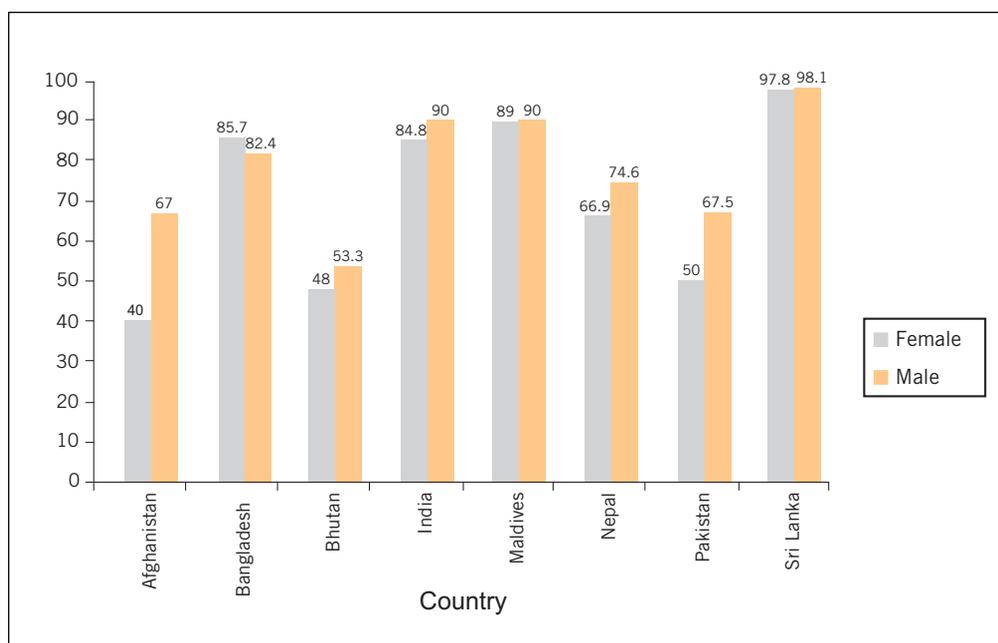
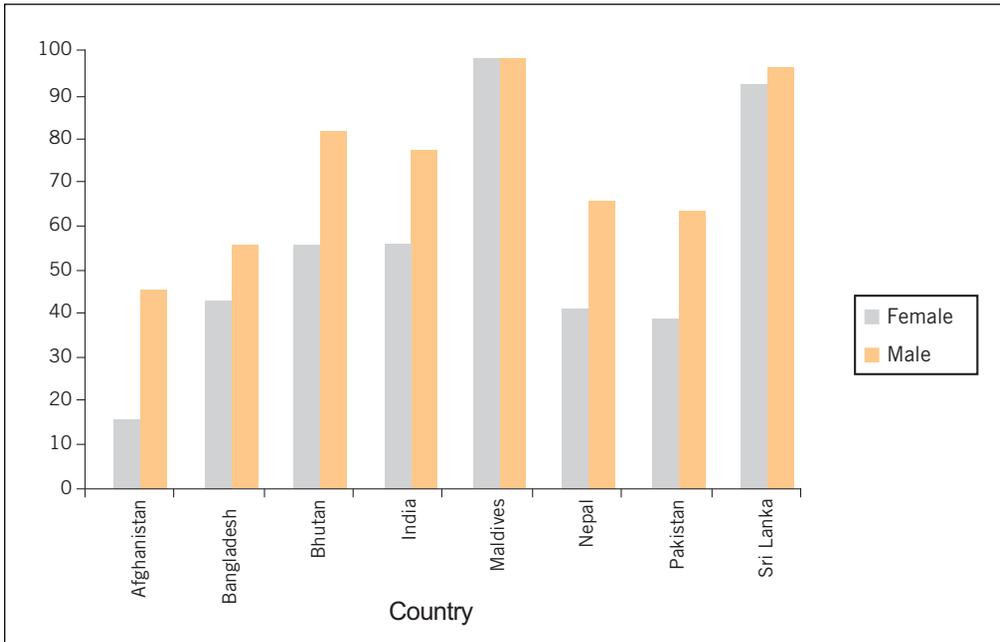


Figure 3.2 Literacy Rate by Sex



The statistics in Table 3.1 are useful in that they permit a grouping of the eight countries in South Asia according to their progress over the years and their current situation in order to facilitate analysis of policies, processes and barriers to change:

- i. Sri Lanka and the Maldives have net enrolment and completion at primary level and literacy rates of over 90 per cent and have parity in enrolment at primary and junior secondary education levels and more girls than boys in secondary grades.
- ii. Bangladesh and India have made substantial progress in recent years

- iii. Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan and Afghanistan have net enrolment rates of 40 per cent to 65 per cent at primary education levels and wide gender gaps except in Bhutan.

### 3.2 Impact of Policies, Processes and Implementation Strategies on Mainstreaming Girls in the Education Process

Legislation, policies and implementation processes can promote and support the

inclusion of girls in all population groups and socio-economic strata in education processes and practices or can restrict their participation and create or perpetuate an ethos of social exclusion.

Two common trends in all eight countries discussed below are the positive impact of international commitments with regard to education indicators and the failure to envisage policies that extend beyond achieving gender parity to mainstreaming in programmes that will contribute to transforming gender roles and relations to ensure gender equality.

### 3.2.1 Afghanistan

The Constitution of 1964 provided for equal rights for women and men, and women had access to education and to upward mobility by 1980. However, the long-drawn-out civil war over the last two decades has destroyed infrastructure and schools to such an extent that the enrolment rate in primary education (7–12 years of age) was reported to have been 3 per cent when the country started limping back to a semblance of normality in 2002. Girls and women were even more disadvantaged as the Taliban had followed a policy of prohibiting girls from participating in education and had burnt down girls' schools.

Positive developments have taken place since 2001. CEDAW was ratified in 2003. The new Constitution (2004) declared that men and women had equal rights. The Declaration issued at the

Afghanistan International Conference organized in Berlin in 2004 which mobilized donor support for the recovery of the country underscored the participation of women in all aspects of society and the need to ensure gender mainstreaming in policies, plans and programmes in all sectors. A Ten Year National Action Plan for Women is expected to be developed to address gender gaps in all areas, including education, and to facilitate gender mainstreaming.

The first National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan (NESPA) was developed in December 2006 as a framework for education programmes over the next five years. The education of girls has been integrated in all priority programmes to achieve national enrolment rates of 60 per cent and 75 per cent respectively for girls and boys in primary grades by 2010. The situational analysis of girls' education – the Afghan Girls' Education Initiative – identified and discussed challenges to accelerate the access of girls to education.

In the education sector, all girls and boys were to complete nine years of compulsory education by 2010 and to be provided with opportunities to proceed to secondary and further education. The EFA targets, MDGs and the perspectives of poverty reduction were to be incorporated in policies. Functional literacy, accelerated education, non-formal education and the

use of mosque schools are some of the strategies to be utilized. Special attention was to be given to the education of girls who had been prevented from access to education. Most primary schools, higher education institutions and after-school classes were coeducational. Religious leaders were to be made aware of the rights of girls and women and the importance of female education. The curriculum and textbooks were to have a gender balance in representation of content and illustrations.

The Ministry of Education reports that almost 4.9 million children and youth were enrolled in school in 1384 (2005); an increase of nearly four million children since the fall of the Taliban in 1381 (2002). Of the total number of 8397 state schools, 44.4 per cent are boys' schools, 34.2 per cent are mixed schools and 19.2 per cent are girls' schools, indicating clearly unequal access to schools and, inevitably, lower enrolment rates among girls. The vast majority of students (73%) are enrolled in Grades 1–4 of the six primary years, and enrolment dramatically decreases at the beginning of Grade 5. The gap in enrolment between boys and girls widens as students get older. In some districts, food incentives have been used to encourage increased enrolment, especially for girls. WFP's Food for Education programme dispersed food supplements to 1.2 million children in 2003.

Among the alternatives for students who do not attend state formal schools are community-based schools and home-based classes that are perceived to be an acceptable mechanism for the education of girls and were a safe haven for girls during Taliban times. The Ministry of Education developed guidelines for community-based education in 2006 and donors support community-based classes in areas where girls are unable to access state schools. However, these schools provide only primary education.

Although gender is a cross-cutting issue in the NESPA, the limited facilities for the education of girls can be seen to reinforce the lack of a supportive environment. It is felt, too, that currently the educational scene is dominated by a large number of separate projects by international donors supported by local NGOs, including many women's organizations, and that coherent policies are necessary to undertake the onerous burden of achieving difficult targets in the midst of continuing violence.

### **3.2.2 Bangladesh**

After independence the Government of Bangladesh took over all primary schools in 1973/74 but had subsequently to permit non-state participation in the provision of education as very limited progress had been made by the state in providing educational opportunities. Education was decentralized to districts and sub-districts. There was no effort

made in those two decades to focus on the disadvantaged situation of girls in education, and female literacy rose from 17.6 per cent in 1971 to 35.3 per cent in 1990 and to only 41 per cent in 2001 with a gender gap of 13 percentage points.

Since 1990, however, there has been a significant spurt in enrolment rates and also reduction in the hitherto wide gender gap which appears to have been a response to international commitments and related specific policies, and to a concomitant increase in the demand for education in a society that was observed earlier to be indifferent to or even antagonistic to the issue of educating girls. At the same time, studies by organizations such as Education Watch have noted shortcomings that have constrained progress.

In 1990 the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act was introduced with penalties for non-compliance. The Act was enforced in 68 upazillas (sub-districts) in 1992 and throughout the country in 1993. Results did not meet expectations as penalties specified in the Act were not enforced. Free textbooks were provided to all students and exemption from fees given to children in vulnerable groups. A Food for Education project provided free monthly allocations of rice for around 40 per cent of poor families to assist economically disadvantaged children to have access to education but was withdrawn in 2002 as

it was found to be costly and difficult to implement.

Two specific projects targeting (i) the poor and (ii) only girls were introduced in a context of inequalities that seemed to call for positive discrimination. The Primary Education Stipend Project introduced in 2003 targeted children of primary school age in around 40 per cent of poor rural households. Stipends were sent to parents through designated banks, but to remain eligible for these stipends students had to have 85 per cent class attendance each month and to achieve at least 40 per cent marks in term examinations. It was reported that while enrolment increased, the quantum of the stipend was inadequate as an incentive and that children in poverty groups found it difficult to meet the eligibility criteria for continuing stipends, resulting in dropping out of school. As a result of manipulation and corruption the majority of the poor were reported to have been excluded from the scheme and affluent children to have benefited, and some students to have been deprived of the full stipends.

The Nationwide Female Stipend Programme of stipends for girls from rural homes who enrolled in secondary schools introduced in 1994 has increased the enrolment of girls sharply as 54 per cent of those enrolled were stipend recipients, while after a few years there were more girls than boys enrolled in secondary grades – a reversal

of the earlier situation. Stipend recipients had to have 75 per cent attendance, achieve 40 per cent marks at the examination and be unmarried – the last condition as a strategy to prevent early marriage. Beneficiaries were exempted from tuition fees and were given allowances for school materials and examination fees. Nevertheless there was minimal reduction in dropout rates as stipends were considered inadequate to counter the constraints of poverty and it was found that more boys than girls completed secondary education. The stipend scheme has been considered to be a burden on budgetary resources and a policy of targeting stipends to the disadvantaged has been proposed.

In addition to these specific incentives the National Plan for Education for All and the Poverty Reduction Strategy are reported to have assisted in reducing the gender gap. The ongoing Primary Education Programme II (PEDP-II) funded by ADB and other donors has adopted a sector-wide approach in educational planning and implementation focusing on access, participation and quality and a child-centred approach. Gender issues are not specifically identified but 20 per cent of new schools are to be constructed in remote and unserved areas.

The Reaching Out of School Children project (ROSC) funded by the World Bank has been conceptualized as a complementary strategy to PEDP-II, which is limited to public sector

institutions. It proposes the establishment of Learning Centres in low enrolment areas to bring out-of-school children within the ambit of the education system, to provide education allowances to enable these children to complete primary education, and to mobilize families and communities to support the programme. This is indicative of the fact that the state is for the first time reaching out in their own communities to children whose circumstances deny them access to education.

The two recent secondary education projects – the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project and the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project – have incorporated gender-sensitive components. The former implements a stipend programme for girls in rural secondary schools in 53 sub-districts and the latter has incorporated a Gender Action Plan.

Clearly Bangladesh has focused on gender inequalities and on urban–rural differences more than on vulnerable groups such as street children, working children and children with disabilities. Enrolment rates of girls are estimated to have doubled at primary education level and to have tripled at secondary education level. By 2005 net enrolment rates at primary education level were over 80 per cent for girls and boys and the gender gap was reduced to three percentage points in favour of girls.

Nevertheless, dropout rates are still high and consequently completion rates were only 52 per cent at the end of primary education and 13.7 per cent at the end of secondary education. It is likely that malpractices in targeting stipends and conditionalities that were imposed reinforced the exclusion of the poor in a context in which the poor could not meet or share the costs of education. While the demand for education is reported to have spiralled, pockets of resistance are likely to exist despite attempts at community mobilization. There is no evidence too that it is intended to use education processes such as curricula and teaching to effect a transformation of gender roles and relations.

In the overall national context the National Plan of Action for Women (1998) envisages a coordinated gender mainstreaming approach by all state agencies and a UNDP project is supporting the formulation of a gender mainstreaming policy and the strengthening of national capacity (the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs) to implement it.

### 3.2.3 Bhutan

Bhutan's late entry to the contemporary educational scenario after years of isolation and its location in a most difficult mountain terrain have been responsible for its current low net enrolment rates in primary education of 53.3 per cent for boys and 48.0 per cent for girls. While it has a long path to

universalizing even primary education, policy makers have given priority to education, accepted free basic education as a universal and inalienable right and have incorporated the goals set for Education for All in national policies.

Under the Education Sector Strategy implemented since 2003, Bhutan has made a higher investment in education than many other countries – 7 per cent of GDP and 14.6 per cent of total public expenditure. Programmes include extending educational opportunity to remote rural areas where the mountainous terrain and absence of roads and transport facilities have prevented children from enrolling in schools. The issue of poverty is addressed by implementing a school feeding programme. However, facilitating mobility, in particular for girls, remains a critical issue.

The pressure from primary school leavers has created a demand for secondary and higher education. The demand for education is reflected in high completion rates of over 90 per cent at the end of primary education and over 80 per cent at the end of secondary education with relatively small gender gaps. Further, the absence of many specific programmes for girls indicates that mainstreaming is a basis for policies. At the same time the focus is on universalizing educational opportunities through promoting access and not reaching beyond to examining issues of gender relations in society.

### 3.2.4 India

The Constitution of independent India was committed to equal opportunities and absence of discrimination on grounds of sex, race or religion, and free and compulsory education to 14 years to be achieved by 1960. However, no progress was made in view of the lack of policies and programmes to achieve these goals. It was only the National Policy of 1986 that decentralized educational planning and proposed basic education for all and gender equality.

This policy statement was followed by a social mobilization drive for over ten years under the National Literacy Mission from 1988 in collaboration with non-state organizations. The Mahila Samakhyas, initiated in 1989, was specifically oriented to promote the empowerment of women to be actors in promoting gender equality. As a part of this programme formal and non-formal education programmes, condensed courses, upgrading programmes and vocational training were undertaken in thousands of villages. Small schools were expanded and supported. Midday meals were introduced in primary schools in 1995 and cooked meals provided from 2001.

Two specific programmes were launched in the 1990s to reduce the gender gap in enrolment. The National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) built model schools, trained teachers, provided remedial teaching, and organized Early Childhood Care and

Education Centres to enable girls with responsibilities for care of young siblings to attend schools. Free uniforms were supplied to around 20 million children in educationally backward areas. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya provided residential facilities for girls at post-primary level in underprivileged communities, and Scheduled Tribes and Muslim dominated areas.

Alternate Innovative Education programmes (AIEs) were introduced including Education Guarantee Schemes (EGSs) that provided residential and non-residential courses such as back-to-school camps, seasonal hostels and drop-in centres. Some of these centres were upgraded to formal primary schools by 2005 but had the disadvantage of providing access to only the first two or three primary grades. These special programmes for girls or other disadvantaged groups were implemented to complement national initiatives and programmes.

The Constitutional Amendment of 2002 declared that free and compulsory education from 6 to 14 years was a fundamental right and the Supreme Court has upheld this right. The Constitution also provided space for positive discrimination and special incentive schemes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights pursuant to the ratification of the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child developed two National Plans, one for all children and one for the girl child, adopting a rights-based approach to providing eight years of elementary education to all inclusive of vulnerable groups such as street children, working children, children with disabilities, child sex workers, and children affected by conflict. The National Plan for Education for All had the goal of universal primary education and the elimination of all forms of child abuse.

The District Primary Education Programme initiated in 1994 was followed by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2002, which adopted the SWAp approach and sought to reach unreached girls and children with disabilities and those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and minorities and to reduce gender gaps. Elementary education was to be provided to all children in the 6–14 age group and universal retention to be achieved by 2010.

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002–07) underscored the objective of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all sectoral policies, plans and programmes, eliminating discrimination, creating an enabling environment of gender justice and implementing women-specific interventions to bridge existing gaps within the framework of education as a fundamental right. The 2005 policy proposals announced several incentives: free education to

reduce costs especially to girls in single-child families and families with two girls to control population growth and to counter son preference; providing school facilities within one kilometre of homes, free/subsidized hostel facilities for girls, and incentives such as uniforms, textbooks, exercise books, free bus passes, and attendance scholarships; recruiting more teachers to work in rural areas by providing accommodation, requiring lower qualification and training them; and mobilizing public opinion to primary education and the education of girls and conducting awareness programmes for rural parents on the importance of educating girls.

All recent policies in India have highlighted concern for increasing enrolment and reducing the gender gap. While these objectives have been achieved to a significant extent and there has been a significant increase in enrolment resulting in net enrolment rates of around or over 80 per cent in the 5–14 age group and reduction in the gender gap to around 5 percentage points, dropout rates remain high, completion rates are relatively low and gender parity has yet to be achieved. It has been suggested that this disappointing performance relative to policy pronouncements is the result of failure to deliver the proposed services effectively and the absence of a policy of free secondary education which would be a strong incentive for the completion of primary education.

From a gender perspective, constraints that still militate against the full participation of girls in education have been attributed to reliance on increasing numbers through access to formal or non-formal education without giving adequate attention to structural inequalities that need to be addressed by a strong programme of conscientization and mobilization at all levels. In terms of policy too it has been pointed out that despite the decision made in 1965 to eliminate gender role stereotypes in curricula and materials, gender bias in curriculum development continues to impede the empowerment of girls through the education process.

### 3.2.5 Maldives

The Maldives, like Sri Lanka, has not had an overt gender policy till recent years but has followed a similar policy in providing access to education irrespective of sex or socio-economic status. As a small country with a population of around 300,000 scattered in atolls and islands, the Maldives' administration has faced constraints in reaching the population in the islands. Despite a late start in providing educational opportunities the administration has provided free primary and secondary education, first in Male', the capital located in the main island, in boys' schools and girls' schools staffed by chiefly by expatriate teachers from India and Sri Lanka, from the 1960s. Subsequently, with donor assistance, two primary schools providing free education were opened in each atoll in the 1980s

to meet the demand for education. The policy of providing free education in state institutions has accelerated enrolment. Consequently the number of schools doubled between 1995 and 2005 and primary schools were available in all the 199 inhabited islands. Regional secondary schools have been established in major atolls.

In the context of the small population and the dispersed atolls and islands, the Maldives has constraints in providing access to senior secondary education and tertiary education. Expatriate teachers have filled the earlier vacuum in qualified teachers in Male' but local teachers are unwilling to serve in atolls and an adequate scheme of incentives has yet to be implemented. Lack of resources is a lesser problem than in other countries in South Asia but the Maldives has yet to develop a modernized transport system to facilitate communication with all the islands.

Nevertheless, as a consequence of political will and the demand for education, gender parity has been achieved as 49 per cent of students in primary schools are girls, net enrolment rates at primary education level of both girls and boys are 99 per cent in Male' and 90 per cent in the atolls, net enrolment rates in lower secondary grades are 89 per cent and there are more girls than boys in lower secondary schools. Hence mainstreaming has been achieved in terms of access to educational opportunity through absence

of gender differentiation in distribution of resources and provision of opportunities. However, neither the quality of education nor the need for a gender-sensitive curriculum to effect social transformation in a wider context has received priority in policy formulation.

In 2003, the Maldives developed a Gender Management System based on the Commonwealth model to mainstream gender in all national policies, reduce disparities and ensure gender equity in national development.

### 3.2.6 Nepal

Nepal came out of its isolation and began to introduce modern education institutions in 1950. Since then the goal has been stated to be universal primary and basic education and literacy and primary schools were opened in the 1950s and 1960s. Targets, however, were lowered after 1960 in the context of slow progress in expanding opportunities. Private schools were taken over under the National Education System Plan but were permitted again in the 1980s as the state could not meet needs. Free primary education was proposed in 1976. The Constitution of 1990 proposed community-managed schools. Free secondary education was planned, grade by grade, from 1992 to 1996. In 1997 compulsory education was introduced in five pilot districts but abandoned as it was unsuccessful, and Educational Regulations in 1992 enjoined that female teachers should be appointed in primary schools. None of

these policy proposals were eventually enforced as there was no legislative provision for compulsory education or for free education. There was also no articulation of concerns regarding the disadvantaged situation of girls and the wide gender gap in educational enrolment. From 1996 the civil conflict created political instability and an environment of violence although an Education Committee recommended quality primary education for all children.

The Amendment to the Constitution in 2001 stipulated free primary education to children in households falling below the poverty line, scholarships for all Dalit children and for 50 per cent of girls in poverty households, free textbooks in Grades 1–5, and payment of 100 per cent of teacher salaries but permitted secondary schools to levy fees. The Dakar meeting on Education for All in 2000 introduced concepts of gender parity and the EFA National Plan 2004–09 also supported education in the poorest districts and for ethnic minorities as well as the recruitment of female, Dalit and janajati (ethnic minority) teachers. The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) made several provisions to guarantee equal opportunity for both women and men in state policy.

The Tenth National Development Plan (2002–07) was influenced by the poverty alleviation focus of the poverty reduction strategy and suggested free education to Grade 10 to children in families below

the poverty line. Gender mainstreaming was proposed to remove legal, economic and social constraints and to empower women. A sector-wide approach was used to promote equity in access to education and quality in education. The Secondary Education Support Programme (2003–09) proposed free secondary education, scholarships, textbooks and food for education programmes. Additional strategies were planned through donor funded projects such as scholarships for one child or one girl child in poor families and recruitment of almost all women teachers from the locality.

The Education for All Core Document 2004–09 has been prepared as a five-year strategic programme within the framework of the fifteen year National Plan of Action for Education for All, 2001–15. It has the following three objectives:

- i. Ensuring access and equity in primary education
- ii. Enhancing quality and relevance of primary education
- iii. Improving efficiency and institutional capacity.

The Strategic Implementation Plan for Gender Equality in Education prepared as an overarching document to achieve the goals of EFA and the National Plan of Action 2001–15 focuses on a wide range of gender-specific issues:

- A rights-based policy as the basis of planning for basic and primary

education that seeks to ensure free primary education, free textbooks, and to include Dalit caste and ethnic group children, working children, street children and children with disabilities.

- The expansion of primary education using a mapping exercise to ensure universal access to education. Social mobilization to accelerate access among marginalized groups.
- Scholarships to be provided for all Dalit caste children and children with disabilities and for 50 per cent of girls selected on the basis of poverty.
- Additional grants to schools that enrolled and retained 45 per cent of girls of total enrolment.
- Priority to be given to girls in the distribution of scholarships under the Secondary Education Support Programme and the Community School Support Project.
- Additional grants to schools that recruit women teachers up to 50 per cent of teachers and scholarships for 2500 women belonging to Dalit caste and disadvantaged ethnic groups to receive pre-service teacher training.
- Provision of remedial support for girls with low levels of school performance.
- Mandatory appointment of women as members of District and Municipal Education Committees and School Management Committees.

The increasing demand for education in recent years has led to an expansion of schools and an increase in participation.

The result of all these initiatives was that although female net enrolment rates in primary education rose to 66.9 per cent and the gender gap reduced to eight percentage points, female enrolment rates were only 43.1 per cent in lower secondary education and 29.2 per cent in secondary education while completion rates were 45 per cent in primary education and 18 per cent in junior secondary education.

Researchers explain that the difference between policy intentions and actual results was inevitable in view of the lack of legislative provisions for compulsory education and the dilution of free education policy by providing space for cost-sharing in primary and secondary education in a country with a high incidence of poverty. In fact there appears to be a plan being developed only now to introduce compulsory education from Grades 1 to 8 by 2012. Further, it was felt that policy statements were not supported by concrete plans pertaining to equitable distribution of schools and teachers, positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged groups including girls and women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities, extension of educational opportunities to other vulnerable groups such as street children and working children, and implementation of non-formal education. Poor delivery of services also has had a negative impact on outcomes. Reforms to develop a gender-sensitive curriculum that will promote more equitable gender relations

and empower girls are not included in policy documents.

### 3.2.7 Pakistan

Pakistan's early focus was on higher education and technical education to develop an independent state but it was envisaged also by the National Commission and in the three Five Year Plans from 1955 to 1970 that universal compulsory education would be achieved by 1970. This target was not achieved and schools were nationalized in 1972 to provide free and equal access to education without concrete results.

The 1990s saw the Islamization of education and the development of Mosque schools, Madrassas and the Mohalla schools for girls to extend basic education to disadvantaged communities. The policy focus was to use community-managed schools and private schools to reach girls and rural and disadvantaged communities. The Primary Education Development Project (1989–99) had a female rural focus and the Girls' Primary Education Project (1991–96) aimed to provide female teachers and infrastructure to rural schools. The Five Year Plan 1993–98 also had as a target increasing the participation of boys and girls in education. The Social Action Programme (1992–2002) was intended to increase the access of rural girls to primary education by opening schools in disadvantaged areas with the collaboration of communities. It has been reported that none of these

programmes achieved their targets or improved significantly indicators of participation as a result of weak implementation and failure to provide adequate and consistent incentives.

Since 2000 policy makers appear to have been influenced by international commitments to Education for All targets and Millennium Development Goals and to the pressure for Poverty Reduction Strategies. The National Education Policy (1998–2010) recommended a revised target of compulsory and free primary education by 2010 and progressive targeting of free secondary education, extending elementary education to out-of-school children, encouraging non-formal schools, mosque schools, schools established and managed by communities and private schools, providing more opportunities for female vocational and technical education and provision of sex-disaggregated data. The Poverty Reduction Strategy considered gender issues, the Ten Year Perspective Development Plan (2001–11) has a section on Gender and Development, and the EFA Plan of Action (2001–15) specified targets. Pakistan is attempting also to change organizational structures in state agencies to facilitate gender mainstreaming and has created an Inter-Ministerial Gender Mainstreaming Committee.

The Education Sector Reforms (ESR) (2001–06) was an action plan which drew on all these documents and the

MDGs. The programme adopted a sector-wide approach and focused on access, equity and quality improvement. Inter alia, compulsory primary education was to be introduced gradually, secondary and higher education was left largely to the private sector, public expenditure was to be supplemented by cost sharing by parents, scholarships, student loans, vouchers, and self-financing schemes, and governance and management in education was to be decentralized to district levels.

Over the years there has been an awareness of the importance of education for boys and girls and the need to universalize primary education. Targets have not been achieved, however, at any time and net enrolment rates are still low with not more than 50 per cent for girls in primary education, as seen in Table 3.1. The reasons for these shortfalls have been examined in studies which point to: unrealistic targets; ineffective and inconsistent strategies; failure to allocate adequate resources to meet targets and to use funds effectively; expectations of the private sector and communities to establish schools in disadvantaged communities where cost sharing is beyond the resources of families; non-availability of comprehensive and reliable statistics for planning; and lack of political will. In this context and in view of the attitudinal base of resistance to gender equality, it is not surprising that attention has been focused only on entry to primary schools.

### 3.2.8 Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, education policy makers in the transition years from colonial rule to political independence introduced seminal education policies in 1945, such as free education in primary, secondary and tertiary education including university undergraduate education in state institutions, on the principle that every child had a right to education. Further, education was to be an instrument to reduce inequalities in education, such as those created by colonial policies of social class and linguistic differentiation in access to education, and to provide every individual with the opportunity to achieve upward mobility to the highest positions. In consonance with these goals Central Schools were opened and Grade 5 scholarships were provided to enable able children from low income families to have access to secondary and higher education. The mother tongue was made the medium of instruction in primary schools.

The policy of state free education meant that parents from non-affluent families had no longer to choose to invest only in the education of sons as daughters had now an equal opportunity to be equipped through education with the same skills to be 'bread winners'. The Sri Lanka policy and its immediate implementation through the state school system were consonant with the principles of non-discrimination and resource allocation irrespective of sex, ethnicity, caste or socio-economic class, supported by

creating and extending a network of primary and secondary schools to meet the demand for education created by policies, all buttressed by political will. These transformative policies were intended explicitly to mainstream all population groups, including girls, in the education process although the term 'gender mainstreaming' was unknown at that time in development or gender literature. Education became a major agent in promoting gender parity in enrolment as the net enrolment rates of boys and girls at the 1963 Census were 76.2 per cent and 72.0 per cent respectively, increasing to 83.1 per cent and 82.4 per cent by 1981. By the early 1970s there were more girls than boys in secondary grades while the percentage of women students in universities increased from 10.2 per cent in 1942 to over 50 per cent in recent years.

Around 96 per cent of schools have been coeducational institutions in recent decades as a result of the practice of establishing such schools, particularly in the rural sector.

This policy and processes of mainstreaming continued in the post-independence decades resulting in the relatively high age-specific participation and literacy levels recorded in Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1. At the same time, universal primary education has been only 'nearly achieved' as a result of shifts in policies and weak implementation. A startling omission has been the failure to introduce compulsory education

legislation over six decades despite the provision in the 1939 Education Ordinance leading to the conclusion that Sri Lanka's enrolment rates are the outcome of social demand for education from families and communities. Macro-economic policies slowed economic growth and limited the absorptive capacity of the labour market creating a massive unemployment problem that affected negatively in particular the employment prospects of girls and young women in secondary schools and universities. Human capital theories influenced policy makers and structural adjustment policies implemented in the 1980s reduced public expenditure on education drastically by the early 1980s.

The 1978 Constitution prohibited discrimination on grounds such as sex, race or ethnicity, and Directives for Policy proposed the eradication of illiteracy and universal access to education at all levels. The second phase of positive policies was introduced from 1990, partly to meet international commitments demanded by ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, the endorsement of Education for All goals in 1990 and 2000, and the reforms introduced by the National Education Commission in 1997 which included long overdue regulations for compulsory education for the 5–14 age group from 1998. Further incentives were provided over the years to facilitate access to education such as the provision of free textbooks to all students from Grade 1 to 11 in 1980, free school

uniform materials in 1993 and subsidized transport to schools – all 'universal' and 'mainstreamed' policies – and midday meals to needy students. The Grade 5 scholarships were extended to larger numbers and placement offered in the best state schools in the country. Scholarships have been offered to students from Grade 9 to senior secondary grades to prevent dropping out of school, and Mahapola scholarships to universities strengthened these incentives. Consequently the gender gap in enrolment almost disappeared among even conservative Muslim rural families and plantation families in which children, and particularly girls, had had a legacy of educational disadvantage since the colonial era.

Nevertheless, administrative negligence limited positive results outside the frame of 'universal' policies. For instance, the committees created at local levels to enforce and monitor compulsory attendance were inactive and the targeting of poverty alleviation policies to strengthen the resource base of families was reportedly flawed by manipulation and corruption.

However, a fresh commitment to equity and equal education opportunity is reflected in the policy statement of the government elected in 2005 – Mahinda Chintana – which replaced the earlier Poverty Reduction Strategy and assured continuity in free education and the incentives provided so far and the reduction of disparities by focusing

programmes on disadvantaged communities and locations. A sector-wide approach was introduced in the Education Sector Development Framework Programme (ESDFP) implemented in primary and secondary schools island-wide since 2005/06. This programme endorsed the provisions in the state policy statement with respect to free education, the continued provision of incentives, providing midday meals for needy students in early primary grades, and reactivation of the compulsory education committees and special programmes for two vulnerable groups – children with disabilities and children who live on the streets – through the non-formal education machinery which had received low priority in policy for decades. The programme also underscores improvement in the quality of education, an aspect that has been neglected over the years. The ESDFP has been incorporated in the Ten Year Horizon Development Framework (2006–16).

Policy-wise, the National Education Commission in its report in 2003, the National Plan of Action for Children (2004–08) and the National Plan of Action for Women which has just been announced (2007) have recommended raising the age for compulsory education to 16 years. In terms of progress, Sri Lanka has nearly achieved the second Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education and is likely to achieve universal junior secondary

education in the next ten years, while it has achieved the third MDG of gender parity in enrolment in primary, secondary and higher education as a result of six decades of inclusive policies.

A major lacuna remains to be filled. Amidst the aura of complacency that gender parity in access to education is a fait accompli there is an implicit assumption that gender equality has been achieved, and there has been no interest articulated clearly in countering through the content and processes of education the negative gendered social norms that are in-built in the social construction of gender or in promoting the empowerment of women except through equal access to primary, secondary and higher education. The ESDFP does not even mention gender, but the Ten Year Plan refers to gender equity and the elimination of gender role stereotypes and promotion of gender equality through the curriculum and education processes, while the Skills Development Programme points to the need to reduce gender imbalances in vocational-related education. It remains to be seen how effectively these policies are translated into action as neither CEDAW (ratified in 1981) nor the Sri Lanka Women's Charter (1993), which underscore the right to education and equal educational opportunities as well as a gamut of other critical rights, have had an overt impact on education policy, largely because policy makers and administrators have the strong perception that girls and women have no constraints to access to education.

## BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION

Education does not function in a vacuum, and factors other than policies have facilitated or impeded gender mainstreaming. A confluence of multiple contextual factors surfacing from the political, economic and social environment has contributed to the success or failure of policies.

### 4.1 Poverty

In terms of poverty indicators South Asia ranks only above sub-Saharan Africa with differences in poverty levels between and within countries. Country-wise, the incidence of poverty ranges from over 50 per cent of the population in Afghanistan according to national poverty lines, to less than one per cent living below the level of one US dollar a day in the

Maldives. Average GNP per capita varies from a reportedly very low level in Afghanistan and around US\$ 252 in Nepal to US\$ 2,345 in the Maldives.

Irrespective of the extent of poverty and despite relatively effective systemic mainstreaming education policies in Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan, at least a proportion of children in poverty groups in all countries have not had access to education or have dropped out from schools at an early stage. It appears therefore that education has not compensated fully for the impact of severe poverty.

In Sri Lanka, the gap in participation increases with each level of education – 95 per cent in the lowest income

quintile and 97 per cent in the highest income quintile in primary education, 62 per cent and 71 per cent in junior secondary education, 32 per cent and 47 per cent in senior secondary education and 2 per cent and 12 per cent in tertiary education. In Bangladesh, in spite of a substantial increase in enrolment in recent years in the 6–10 age group, 25.2 per cent in families in the food deficit category of income levels and at the other end of the spectrum 3.5 per cent in the food surplus category have never been to school, while enrolment rates in secondary education are 29.1 per cent girls and 21.2 per cent boys in the former category and 64.0 per cent girls and 54.2 per cent boys in the latter category. In Nepal, 48 per cent of the children in families in the lowest income quintile and 5 per cent in the highest income quintile are reported to be denied access to education, and enrolment rates in secondary education are 2 per cent in the lowest income quintile and 54 per cent in the highest income quintile. In Afghanistan the poor suffer from food insecurity and consequently girls have been forced into early marriage. Poverty, therefore, clearly bedevils progress in mainstreaming education.

## 4.2 Socio-economic Disparities

The population in South Asia also comprises groups that have been disadvantaged by traditional social structures and oppressive social practices or by the creation of new economic enclaves and have been victims of social discrimination. Perhaps the largest of such groups are the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India and their counterparts in Nepal. Despite policies and programmes of positive discrimination implemented in India and Nepal particularly in recent years to assist Dalits to emerge from years of social exclusion and oppression by providing them a window of opportunity through, inter alia, education, social discrimination still exists in these two countries with nuances of segregation. Tribes in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and nomads in Afghanistan and yak and cattle herders in Bhutan who are a legacy of history, live in isolation, unable to access schools. A multiplicity of small groups of ethnic minorities as in India and Bangladesh are disadvantaged by the fact that their mother tongue differs from the official language.

### BARRIERS TO EDUCATION OF DALIT GIRLS IN NEPAL

- Parents and guardians generally illiterate, with little awareness of the importance of education, particularly for girl children.
- Financial constraints, including avoidance of Dalit government scholarship because of the stigma attached.
- Pull factor of domestic responsibilities, coupled with ability to earn money from 13–14 years of age.
- Difficulty to reconcile situation at home with need to study, i.e. no parental support, densely populated houses with bad lighting.
- Peer pressure from non-school-going friends.
- Lack of aspiration as the only professional option is the traditional sweeping job.
- Discrimination, or the perception of discrimination, by higher caste peers and teachers at school.
- Finances drained by other sources (religious festivals and in some cases alcohol) rather than education of children.

*Source: UNESCO (2005).*

Plantation enclaves in Sri Lanka created by the import of immigrant South Indian labour families by the British colonial administration had a history of educational disadvantage until they were brought within the ambit of the state education system. Girls in the conservative plantation community were more disadvantaged than boys. Currently, however, gender parity in enrolment in primary education has been nearly achieved and there are more girls than boys in secondary schools in the plantation sector thus conforming to the national pattern of enrolment in secondary education. The tea gardens in Bangladesh are a similar economic enclave.

These disadvantaged communities have relatively high visibility in their countries

and have received the attention of policy makers. In contrast there are vulnerable groups in all the countries, such as children with disabilities, child workers (labour), street children, child beggars, child sex workers, and destitute children, who have tended to be invisible in official policy. However, recent education policies have proposed special programmes to extend educational opportunities to children with disabilities, child workers and street children as in Sri Lanka, India and Nepal.

### 4.3 Sectoral/Regional/Geographical Disparities

The majority of the population in South Asia live in the rural sector, and uneven economic development in the urban and

rural sectors and in provinces or districts and disparities in the provision of education are barriers to mainstreaming, while sectoral and regional or district-wise differences in enrolment, completion and learning achievement reflect the extent to which mainstreaming has taken place.

In Sri Lanka, free education has virtually eliminated urban–rural disparities in enrolment at all levels from primary grades to universities and are minimal in literacy levels, but the impact of disparities in the quality of education facilities and the inequitable distribution of science education facilities is seen in wide gaps in learning outcomes for instance between some urban districts and economically and educationally disadvantaged districts. In India, almost all children are enrolled in schools in the state of Kerala while only around 50 per cent are in schools in the state of Bihar. Female literacy rates were 87.9 per

cent in Kerala and 33.6 per cent in Bihar in 2001. There are similarly wide differences in enrolment rates in Pakistan between relatively prosperous Punjab and Sindh and educationally backward Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province, and between Kathmandu and the Far Western Region in Nepal.

Geographical constraints operate as barriers to effective mainstreaming and South Asia is replete with examples of such problems. Bhutan is said to have one of the most difficult terrains with high altitude schools that function only six months a year, with swollen streams and no roads and transport in these areas that will enable children even to walk to school. In Nepal the population is distributed in three 'zones' – mountains, hills and the Terai plains, and 24 per cent of the children in the mountain districts on the slopes of the Himalayas and 28 per cent in the Terai districts are reported to have no access to education.

### GEOGRAPHICAL BARRIERS IN BHUTAN

The rugged terrain and long walking distances also discourage parents from school enrolment. The swollen streams during the monsoon make regular school attendance very difficult and sometimes children are carried away by the streams. The high altitude schools above 400 metres can function for only six months a year. Many students from these schools drop out as soon as they are physically fit to help their parents.

*Source: Government of Bhutan, National Report on the Development of Education.*

In Pakistan, access to education continues to be a problem in the remote villages in the foothills of the Hindu Kush in the North West Frontier Province where schools are closed in winter.

Afghanistan is a mountainous country with few accessible roads or transport and in rural areas children are required to walk around four hours a day to attend a state school. In a different scenario, the Maldives consists of a large number of small islands in the Indian Ocean of which 199 are inhabited and are clustered as atolls. Transport and communication to and from the largest island and capital Male' and the scattered atolls and their islands are difficult and time consuming, so that the provision of education facilities in these islands is a costly exercise.

In all countries girls are more vulnerable to insecurity created by lack of transport and distance. There is no doubt that these problems of access need to be a focus of mainstreaming strategies if universal access is to be achieved.

#### 4.4 Family-Related Factors

Most of these barriers are specifically located in the poverty status of families, family structures and the gender ethos in the family environment. Economic constraints, low parental educational levels and dysfunctional families, and consequently lack of support for the education of their children, do not provide a conducive environment for optimal utilization of educational facilities in low income families in all countries. In fact, the incidence of child labour in varying proportions reflects parental perceptions of opportunity costs and the reliance on children as economic assets for family survival. Tasks such as those involving long hours in search of water and fuel for the household, domestic chores and care of siblings have denied girls their right to education. In some communities in Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Afghanistan girls have been traditionally more vulnerable to negative social norms and harmful cultural practices upheld by families and the consequent low value attached to the education of girls. Girls are more likely to be denied the right to education and to be exposed to traumatic experiences in employment as domestic labour and child sex workers.

### CASE STUDY: COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS IN SRI LANKA

*Sample:* 19 boys were from the tourist areas in Galle and Kalutara; 23 girls from three locations of Galle, Kalutara and Anuradhapura and Colombo.

The majority of the girls in the Colombo sample were in brothels, almost all the girls in Galle and Kalutara were in massage parlours and three-quarters of the girls in Anuradhapura were engaged in their activities at home. All the boys and 87 per cent of the girls were literate and all the boys and 95.7 per cent of the girls had attended schools. 30.4 per cent of the girls were primary school dropouts and 65.2 per cent were secondary school dropouts and one girl had never been to school. No one had completed even the General Certificate in Education – Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) examination and had, therefore, minimal chances of stable employment.

The girls had sought to escape from the poverty and abuse in their homes and had been persuaded by friends to migrate to the city for employment. The reality was that they were inveigled into lodges or brothels and were trapped in that life as a consequence of quick financial benefits, lack of other options and inability to return home with the stigma of sex activities. Predisposing factors for involvement in sex activities were poverty, dysfunctional families, and lack of other options of earning a livelihood without education and skills.

*Source: Jayaweera (2005).*

## 4.5 Conflict and Natural Disaster

South Asia has had its share of the negative impact of long years of armed conflict and political instability in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and in parts of India and Pakistan. Land mines, for instance, endanger the lives of school children in locations where conflict is virtually endemic. Continued armed conflict deprives children of educational opportunities and conditions in welfare camps for internally displaced families lack facilities for study and privacy for girls. Threats to the education of girls are

a continuing barrier in Afghanistan. In Taliban-controlled areas women teachers have been murdered and schools in a large number of provinces have been attacked even in the last few years.

In December 2004, a tsunami unexpectedly devastated the southern and east coast of Sri Lanka, 69 of the 199 islands in the Maldives and parts of western India. Earthquakes and landslides take a heavy toll of life and lead to economic and social deprivation including disruption of education. The worst affected were low income families

who lost their livelihoods in the low-skill informal sector thereby exacerbating poverty and dropping out of school. Shifts in schools that were not damaged meant overcrowding with minimal facilities.

All these disasters caused loss of lives, loss of family members – particularly parents – displacement of families, destruction and damage to housing and infrastructure, and disruption of basic services including closure of schools.

### CHILDREN AFFECTED BY NATURAL DISASTERS AND CYCLICAL EVENTS IN BANGLADESH

Disasters are annual events in Bangladesh. These disasters range from ravaging tornadoes to devastating floods.

Whilst the enrolment rate of children in primary schools in these areas is 75 per cent, their attendance rate is low and the dropout rate is as high as 65 per cent (UEO Office, Jamalganj and Derai Upazillas, Sunamgang district, April 2005; and *Need Assessment Report*, Shaba, a UK-based NGO, May 2005).

In the *haor* areas, most of the people are economically and socially deprived, and the children and teachers find it difficult to go to school during the flood and monsoon season because they cannot cross the canals, rivers and *haors*, and as a result attendance from both is erratic.

Another difficulty is that the children of these areas are needed to work during the harvesting season (April to June and October to December) and it is found that only 20–25 per cent of the children attend schools during this time. As a result of these difficulties, in these areas the dropout rate is high at approximately 67 per cent and the completion rate is only 33 per cent.

The numbers of out-of-school children, combined with those that have dropped out and those non-enrolled, is 87 per cent (Shaba, 2005).

Disasters affect women and children more than others, especially those who are living in the hazardous areas. It is evident that during floods many schools remain closed for several months and those are used as shelters and relief camps. No alternative has been offered for children's education to be continued during this period.

*Source: Nasreen and Tate (2007).*

A pervading sense of insecurity reinforces the psychological trauma created by loss and violence. The worst affected are the child soldiers and the young suicide bombers in Sri Lanka who are embroiled in armed conflict and lose their normal childhood.

The conflict situation in Afghanistan affects access to education for all children, especially for girls, due to the resistance to girls' education by the Taliban.

#### 4.6 School-Related Factors

As a result of weaknesses in policy and programme implementation, a constellation of school-related factors compound the political, social and economic forces that impede the process of gender mainstreaming. Compulsory education has not been enforced effectively in all countries. The provision of free education is limited except in Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan. The number of schools available is inadequate, even when there are parallel systems of state and non-state schools as in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India; and in Pakistan where girls are not permitted to enrol in coeducational schools, there are insufficient girls' schools. Distance to school is a major barrier in remote areas. Small schools, the schools of the poor, are ill-equipped and do not have the capacity to retain children. Many schools are overcrowded and lack electricity and separate toilets for girls and boys. The quality of education leaves much to be desired in terms of equipment, such as for science education and Information Technology, and teaching and learning processes.

#### CHILDREN IN CONFLICT AREAS IN SRI LANKA

Case studies of child soldiers indicate how they were not only deprived of the right to education and development but also underwent psychological trauma. Children reported how they were abducted and were not given to the mother when she came to take them home, how they underwent extensive training, participated in village massacres, tortured informants, were forced to kill own friends and bury them and how they had been ordered to commit suicide. Some of them had tried to 'escape' from unbearable circumstances in the family but later faced traumatic consequences several times more horrendous.

*Source: Somasunderam (1998).*

The deployment of teachers is inequitable as most teachers are reluctant to work in the areas in which the need is greatest. The percentage of women teachers is 70 per cent in Sri Lanka where 96 per cent of schools are coeducational but is low in countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Afghanistan where the presence of women teachers would be an incentive to increase the participation of girls. Criticism has been reported of teacher absenteeism, use of corporal punishment, lack of empathy for the poor and poor teaching skills in all countries

as well as the negative attitude of teachers to the education of girls in countries with low enrolment of girls. Correspondingly, students have been discouraged by experience of failure in studies, the absence of a child friendly environment and, in some instances, sexual harassment and abuse.

#### 4.7 Gender-Specific Factors

The rhetoric of gender mainstreaming is articulated in policy statements of countries in which the gender gap is wide, but it appears that policies have focused merely on achieving gender parity. It is possible to conclude also that the attitudinal basis of gender bias against equal educational opportunity has been a significant barrier to gender mainstreaming in some countries in South Asia. Two overarching premises stand out clearly: (i) gender ideologies cut across all socio-economic groups thereby influencing the attitude of policy makers and often explaining the lack of political will; and (ii) girls are enmeshed in multiple disadvantages such as poverty, location, and social and gender discrimination.

Underpinning education policies often is the social construction of gender reflected in gender-specific societal norms. Classic patriarchal structures are dominant in some countries and communities and are less inflexible in others, and gender relations tend to determine the education status of girls and women. Son preference is manifested strongly in the majority of the

countries in South Asia resulting in giving priority to the educational needs of boys.

Gender role stereotypes are embedded in the content and methodology of education and in the behavioural expectations of girls and boys by teachers, schools and society. Consequently there has been relative under-investment in the education of girls in India and Bangladesh till recent years and in Pakistan and Nepal, and the prohibition of education for girls during the Taliban experience in Afghanistan confined girls to 'underground' home-based classes where feasible. Clearly such factors have militated against progress in gender mainstreaming in education programmes.

At the household level, families in some countries tend not to consider education important for girls, and even see it a liability as girls are perceived to be limited to domestic functions and to move out of their families on marriage while educated boys are believed to be assets as future breadwinners and heads of families. It has been claimed that parents prefer to send sons to formal or private schools and daughters to community, non-formal or informal education programmes.

Other social norms that have had a negative effect on the integration of girls in formal education systems have been the belief that girls should marry at an early age and restrictions imposed on spatial mobility, confining girls in some communities to their family domain or to the village.

Conservative Afghan culture, for instance, is said to be based on a code of honour manifested largely in the behaviour of women so that moving out of the home for schooling is perceived as inappropriate and as a social cost of the education of girls.

Outcomes have been that more boys are enrolled in schools and more girls drop out of school in these countries whereas the reverse seems to occur in countries such as Sri Lanka, the Maldives and perhaps Bhutan, and very recently in Bangladesh, where parents have equal educational aspirations for girls and boys and more girls than boys tend to continue secondary education. A more liberal socio-cultural environment for girls in

these countries has facilitated mainstreaming them in education policies and programmes.

In all countries, however, efforts at mainstreaming have been limited to access to education as measured by enrolment and completion rates. Hardly any purposeful attempts have been made at the level of national policy or practice through incorporation in national programmes to introduce changes in the curriculum or in the 'hidden' curriculum to achieve the objective of mainstreaming of gender equality in the multifaceted lives of girls and women, thereby contributing to the reinforcement of ideologies that disadvantage and discriminate against women in education.

## ENABLING FACTORS AND GOOD PRACTICES

Factors that have contributed to overcoming or mitigating the impact of barriers can be identified in all countries.

Primarily, there is **political will** that moves policies and programmes as has been seen in, for instance, Sri Lanka at different times, the Maldives, and recently Bangladesh and perhaps India.

At policy level also, as poverty has been a major barrier in all countries, **incentives** such

as free education have made education affordable to the poor, and scholarships/stipends, free textbooks, uniform materials, subsidized transport and midday meals or food assistance have reduced the costs of education and motivated parents in poverty situations to send their children, and particularly girls, to school. Incentives have had a strong impact on reducing gender difference in access to education as they tend to stimulate the social demand for education irrespective of sex.

### POLITICAL WILL AND INCENTIVES – SRI LANKA

Free education was introduced in recognition of the universal right to education and as a prerequisite of a democratic society, with the concomitant objectives of reducing social inequalities and promoting upward socio-economic mobility for all. This initiative was taken before International Declarations, Covenants and Conventions were promulgated and nearly five decades before 'Education for All' became an international norm.

Education became a major agency for the reduction of poverty. Significantly it also became an agent of gender equality in access to general education as parents in low income families had no longer to invest their scarce resources only in the education of their sons.

By the early 1960s around 75 per cent of boys and girls in the 5–14 age group were enrolled in schools and the rapid expansion of educational opportunities in a low income country transformed Sri Lanka into an 'outlier' among economically developing countries. Most importantly, rising educational expectations and public consciousness of the value of free education became a social force that, through the vicissitudes of time, exerted pressure on policy makers to prevent deviation from or dilution of the right to free state education.

*Source: Jayaweera and Gunawardena (2007).*

A relatively **liberal socio-cultural environment** in countries such as Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bhutan has precluded overt gender discrimination in access to education.

### BHUTAN: ASPIRATIONS TRIGGER A SOCIAL DEMAND FOR EDUCATION

Chandra, 9, Tika, 8 and Lela, 7 are sisters attending Beteni Community School in the district of Tsirang in south-central Bhutan. Because their home is a 6-hour walk from the school, their father, a farmer, has built a small hut for them to live in during the week. The hut is near the school and is made of mud and sticks, with an iron sheet as the roof.

The hut has no windows other than slits in the walls. The interior is dark even during the day. Chandra, Tika and Lela live, cook, eat, study and sleep in the hut during the week, only seeing their parents on weekends, walking home to their village, Pakhey, on Saturdays and returning the next day with food for the following week.

'I like studying,' Chandra says, 'but I don't like staying here, away from mother and father. I want to study and live with my parents.'

All three girls want to go to school, despite the conditions they face in doing so. Whatever life goal she finally decides on, Chandra is definite in saying that she wants to be educated. Tika and Lela aspire to become officers in the Government.

The sisters are far from the only pupils at Beteni Community School who live in temporary huts. Children and parents alike seem determined that the opportunity for learning must be used.

*Source: Kuchita, P.*

At the same time the experience of India with the Mahila Samakhya programme indicates that **gender conscientization**

**programmes** have contributed to changing recalcitrant attitudes of parents and communities to the education of girls.

### EDUCATING WOMEN THROUGH AN EMPOWERMENT APPROACH: MAHILA SAMAKHYA IN INDIA

The Mahila Samakhya (MS) experience since 1989 offers an example of the importance of empowerment of women as a critical precondition to facilitate greater inclusion of women and their daughters into education. This programme of the Department of Education, Government of India, funded with external support in its first sixteen years, has provided an important alternative approach to women's mobilization and empowerment. It eschewed economic development as the entry point in favour of political mobilization through awareness-generation and collective strategy development.

The vision of empowerment entailed an explicit commitment to the redefinition of education as an enabling and empowering tool, as a process that would enable women to 'think critically, to question, to analyse their own condition, to demand and acquire the information and skills they need to enable them to plan and act collectively for change.' Education, it was agreed, must therefore help women to question rather than accept, enable them to affirm their own potential and sustaining processes that would enable them to move from situations of passive acceptance of their situation, to assertion and collective action – in short to take control of their lives; and building conscious and independent collectives of women (*sanghas*), which would initiate and sustain social change processes.

The greatest impact of women's mobilization has been in the area of girls' education. Often, women have taken the difficult decision of withdrawing children (especially girls) from work and providing them an opportunity for education. Many women have been motivated to bring a change in the lives of their daughters, to ensure that they have better opportunities and a different life from that of their mothers. Sending children/girls to schools or residential learning centres established by the programme means, in several cases, acting against long-standing social norms (such as child marriage) by postponing marriage for several years. Women are also actively engaged in ensuring that the education system is effective, through the monitoring of schools, and actively participating in school bodies (such as the village and school education committees).

*Source: Jandhalya (2003).*

In Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, a large number of **non-governmental and community-based organizations** have been proactive not only in implementing advocacy programmes but also in providing direct

assistance to children outside the ambit of the formal education system to have access at least to primary education. The notable example is Bangladesh where NGOs are reported to have opened around 30,000 schools with at least one room and a teacher, catering to over a million students, while the largest NGO, BRAC, has virtually a parallel system of institutions from pre-primary to university level.

### BANGLADESH'S BRAC SCHOOLS

BRAC's education activities began in 1985, with 22 one-room primary schools serving 700 children in three places. Now BRAC runs some 34,000 non-formal primary schools serving some 1.1 million students throughout Bangladesh – about two-thirds of whom are girls. BRAC focuses on poor children, particularly girls, in conservative rural areas who have not gone to school or who have withdrawn. With serious safety issues especially for girls in rural areas, BRAC works with small, village-based schools, renting space where necessary. It offers flexible schedules, which parents help decide locally, so that children can keep helping out at home. It works with communities to recruit teachers from the communities they serve and trains them so that parents and children feel confident about the teachers. Almost all BRAC teachers are women, compared with about one-third of teachers in government schools, which in Bangladesh's culture has helped to increase girls' enrolment.

*Source: Herz (2006).*

**International commitments** in Conventions and other instruments have motivated states to accelerate policies to move toward universal primary education. These commitments have brought also to the education scene an increasing quantum of multilateral, bilateral and international NGO **donor assistance** since the 1980s. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have conducted studies and made substantial loans available to countries. The World Bank has promoted the sector-wide approach (SWAp) in formulating and implementing education programmes that has provided scope for a holistic perspective of mainstreaming and has converted loans to grants. UNICEF (pre-primary and primary education), ILO (vocational education), WFP (food assistance), bilateral agencies such as NORAD and the Swedish Development Agency, and INGOs such as Save the Children have been active over many years in supporting national programmes or special programmes to promote the concept of mainstreaming.

### PAKISTAN: FRONTIER SCHOOLS BLAZE A TRAIL FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

The students of Pitao Banda Primary Feeder School are among the trailblazers for girls' primary education in the remote hamlets that are scattered throughout the foothills of the Hindu Kush, in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province.

Many of the villages in the province are not easily accessible. UNICEF is assisting 21 existing community schools and has helped to establish another 28 schools for girls in these remote areas. Pitao Banda Primary Feeder School is one such UNICEF-supported school. For most students the hike along ridge and valley shaded by mulberry and walnut trees takes half an hour, but some must leave home at 6 a.m. to be on time when school starts at 7:30 a.m.

Many of the students arrive in tattered clothes, unable to afford a uniform. Some walk barefoot along the stony goat paths, saving their thin-soled plastic shoes for the colder weather. Ranging from five to 12 years old, 140 youngsters sit shoulder to shoulder on the dirt floor of an open-sided classroom to learn the alphabet, basic counting, the calendar and the translation of Koranic prayers.

These giggling pre-schoolers are the first generation of women in their families to have the opportunity of learning to read, thanks to a UNICEF initiative that provides support for villagers in less advantaged communities in establishing primary schools. Education is opening doors in their minds, a fact that is clearly demonstrated when they are asked who wants to continue school beyond primary level: a sea of eager hands shoots up into the air.

*Source: Fitzgerald, M.-A.*

Analysis shows that while political will, appropriate incentives and international commitments have contributed substantially to gender mainstreaming, programmes such as the Mahila

Samakhya in India and BRAC in Bangladesh have been particularly effective in countries where the gender gap has been relatively wide.

## LESSONS LEARNED

It is possible to identify some 'lessons learned' from the overview of education policies, processes and practices as well as barriers to achieve mainstreaming. These lessons are presented here for consideration by policy makers and relevant agencies.

### Approaches to Mainstreaming

- i. It is clear that both the complementary approaches – (i) systemic mainstreaming and (ii) targeting girls – are necessary as in many countries boys and girls do not start from equal positions or from a level playing field.
- ii. It appears from the experience of South Asia that a holistic and non-discriminatory approach to mainstreaming that encompasses gender, class, ethnicity, location of residence and other locally relevant variables, based on a rights-based perspective and supported by legislation, resource allocation and institutional development to meet the demand for education, has been the most successful strategy. Most girls and women in Sri Lanka and the Maldives have been beneficiaries of such policies.
- iii. Incentives are most productive when free education is extended beyond primary education as parents do not envisage any significant outcomes that would improve the life chances of their children by limiting them to primary education.
- iv. Specific programmes, particularly of positive discrimination in favour of girls, have salience in a context of long years of continuing disadvantage as they include ingredients such as free tuition, scholarships/stipends,

and free textbooks in consonance with (i) and (ii). Nevertheless, targeting such programmes to sections of the disadvantaged on conditions that are likely to exclude the poor or relying on cost sharing practices in poor communities have been seen to reduce prospects of positive outcomes. 'Targeting the poor' has been seen to provide space for manipulation, corruption and consequently waste of resources.

- v. Mainstreaming has tended to be limited to ensuring gender parity in enrolment and completion rates and to undervalue the concomitant need for access to quality education for girls and boys in all segments of the population. It has tended to overlook the transformative role of education in promoting gender equality as underscored later in this section.
- vi. While BRAC's well structured, extensive and virtually parallel non-formal education system in Bangladesh has had positive outcomes, by and large, non-formal education has not been a successful substitute in most countries for optimal use of the formal education system. At the same time its potential as a useful complementary strategy in reaching the out-of-school population appears to have been underutilized.
- vii. A major weakness in all countries has been the absence of a results-based monitoring mechanism at local levels to ensure effective

implementation of policies and corrective action where relevant.

### **Political Will**

Perhaps the strongest factor that has facilitated gender mainstreaming has been the presence and influence of political will at the highest level of decision making to promote universalization of education as a fundamental right.

### **Macro-Economic Policies**

- i. Poverty is a major barrier to successful mainstreaming and universalizing primary and secondary education in all countries. Economic development policies in South Asia have tended to be biased against the poor and thereby to have bypassed less developed regions or districts and poor communities and households. Macro-economic policies need to accelerate economic growth to provide resources for educational programmes and to increase family resources to facilitate utilization of opportunities. At the same time they need to have a pro-poor orientation and to ensure the equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth among all population groups.
- ii. Poverty reduction strategies have been developed and compartmentalized as a separate programme that tends to be vulnerable to the vicissitudes of changes in the political power structure and not inbuilt in national policies and programmes in all sectors

and imbued adequately with a gender perspective.

### Reducing Disparities

- i. Urban–rural, regional/district-wise, topographical, socio-economic and socio-cultural disparities, the social exclusion of vulnerable groups of children and the impact of armed conflict and natural disasters have impeded mainstreaming. Cognizance of the impact of such inequalities on families and focusing on inclusive strategies has tended to receive relatively lower priority.
- ii. Social and community mobilization have been adopted as strategies, particularly in countries where deep-seated social discrimination prevails, but with few exceptions Freire's conscientization approach has not been used to catalyse social change.

### Promoting Gender Equality

- i. Access of girls and women to education has been perceived to be synonymous with gender parity, thereby foreclosing strategies to transform gender roles and relations through education to achieve the substantive gender equality that is the objective of mainstreaming.
- ii. While gender differentiation in curriculum development is no longer a common practice, gender role

stereotypes that reinforce inequalities are found in textbooks and education materials and a gender bias is reflected in the 'hidden curriculum' in the behavioural expectations of girls on the part of educators. The lacunae in conceptualizing gender equality and in empowering girls through the content and processes of education have yet to be filled.

- iii. Teachers in all education institutions are powerful agents of socialization within the education system but engendering teacher education to equip them to perform a catalytic role in promoting positive attitudes and transforming gender relations has yet to be integrated in policies at national level.
- iv. Advocacy programmes for policy makers and social mobilization programmes can provide space for gender sensitization programmes at all levels to counter adherence to son preference and to oppressive social practices that disempower girls and women and reinforce gender inequalities.
- v. Sex-segregated data is not always easy to access and gender analysis and gender impact assessments of education policies are virtually unknown. These can be incorporated in monitoring tools used to evaluate progress in the implementation of education policies.

### International Commitments to Gender Mainstreaming and Equality

- i. International commitments pursuant to the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the endorsement of Education for All targets and Millennium Development Goals have had a salutary effect on governments in accelerating the pace of achieving such goals. It appears that CEDAW, which subscribes to a rights-based approach, and the Beijing Platform for Action, which prioritized gender mainstreaming, have been
- overshadowed by the greater visibility of other international instruments.
- ii. International goals and targets are transferred to national policy documents without consideration of the adequacy or inadequacy of these goals and targets and the likely failure of unrealistic targets in the context of the ground situation in countries.

These 'lessons' could be inputs to facilitating the process of formulating policies and programmes to achieve gender equality.

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