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Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4

Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality

Women in contexts of crisis: gender and conflict

Jackie Kirk
2003

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Women in Contexts of Crisis: Gender and conflict
Jackie Kirk

“War magnifies the already existing gender inequalities of peace time
……..A just peace involves the reworking of the gender status quo”.

Manchanda, 2001, p. 28

Introduction

It is estimated that of the 113 million children currently not in school, over 50 % are in
countries in the midst of or recovering from conflict. Of the 17 Sub-Saharan African
countries in which enrollment rates declined in the 1990s, 6 are states that are affected by
or are recovering from major conflict\(^1\) (DFID, 2001). Although there are no clear causal
linkages between lack of education and conflict (Smith & Vaux, 2002), nor between
conflict, gender and education, as girls are disproportionately represented within the
numbers of out of school children in conflict and post-conflict situations, understanding
the linkages between gender, education and conflict is an important EFA issue. It is also a
human rights issue, and more specifically a women’s and girls’ rights issue. Of 14
countries with a very low gender parity enrollment index of between 0.6 and 0.84, two
are currently in conflict (Burundi & Liberia), two are recovering from conflict (Ethiopia
& Mozambique), and at least one has regional conflict and rebellion (Cote d’Ivoire).
Angola, Eritrea, Sierra Leone - three of the five countries with a slightly better gender
parity enrollment index of 0.85 and 0.94 - are also recovering from conflict (DFID,
2001). It is also significant that of the 25 countries targeted recently by UNICEF for
accelerated action to improve girls’ participation in education\(^2\), eight have experienced
recent conflict within their borders. Other countries have felt the impacts of nearby
conflicts, with influxes of refugees making demands on an already over-stretched system.
Of the 25 countries with the lowest levels of female adult literacy, 10 are either
experiencing armed conflicts or recovering from it\(^3\). Conflict poses particular challenges
for achieving EFA and MDG targets of gender equality in education.

Clear distinctions between pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict phases are difficult to
reconcile with the ever shifting, complex realities of modern wars, and especially with
the experiences of women and girls. Barriers to female education in the midst of conflicts
may take many years to address once peace has been reestablished, and a post-conflict
phases can also bring with it new and different issues. However, some classification can
be helpful, and Sommers (2002) uses three categories of countries or territories in which
the impact of war on education can be addressed. The table below uses the same
categories and includes UNESCO projections of EFA gender parity achievement by 2005
(Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003):

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\(^1\) Angola, Burundi, DRC, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia.
\(^2\) UNICEF’s ‘25 by 2005’ initiative is likely to happen in the following countries: Afghanistan,
Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad
Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Tanzania, Turkey, Yemen, Zambia
\(^3\) Pakistan, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Burundi, Sierra Leone
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries/ territories with major current conflicts</th>
<th>Countries with isolated conflict or rebellion</th>
<th>Countries emerging from conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Serious risk of not achieving</td>
<td>Data unavailable</td>
<td>Data unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Data unavailable</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Serious risk of not achieving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Data unavailable</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>East Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Serious risk of not achieving</td>
<td>At risk of not achieving</td>
<td>Data unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Data unavailable</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Data unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Data unavailable</td>
<td>Low chance of achieving</td>
<td>Serious risk of not achieving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Low chance of achieving</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Data unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Autonomous Territories</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: Data unavailable</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Low chance of achieving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Serious risk of not achieving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>At risk of not achieving</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: At risk of not achieving</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>At risk of not achieving</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: At risk of not achieving</td>
<td>High chance of achieving</td>
<td>High chance of achieving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Fed Rep of Yugoslavia</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Parity by 2005: High chance of achieving</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The terms ‘education in emergencies’, ‘emergency education’ and the work of the different member organizations of the International Network on Emergency Education for example, use ‘emergency’ in the broadest sense (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). The focus is on providing quality education in the midst of conflict (and other disaster) situations, whether affecting the whole or a specific region of a country, and into post-conflict phases of reconstruction and peacebuilding. A post-conflict phase can last for many years, and may require very focused attention and resources in order to achieve gender equality in education. Given commitment, resources and strategic planning, across these phases, education is a force for conflict prevention, for protection, and for peace. Educating women and girls is an important step in empowering them to participate equally in building lasting peace.
Impact of Conflict on Education

Conflict can have a very direct, negative impact on the supply and demand of education for boys and girls. State-run systems, such as education, collapse and schools themselves are destroyed. Schools can be targeted for attack, used as military bases or as places for finding new recruits (Sommers, 2002). During the Mozambique conflict in the 1980-90s, for instance, 45% of schools were destroyed (UNHCR, 2003). Violence in East Timor destroyed between 80% and 90% of school buildings and infrastructure (UNDP, 2002). In Somaliland, over 90% of the schools existing before the civil conflict erupted in 1988 were either completely destroyed or seriously damaged (Bekalo, Brophy & Welford, 2003). In some instances, teachers have been targeted by armed forces because of their levels of education and their roles in communities. In Rwanda, 66% of teachers fled or were killed (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Burundi used to rely on teachers from outside the country, but the conflict caused the number to drop substantially, leaving many schools without enough teachers (Jackson, 2000). If teachers are able to continue working through and after violent conflict, then the difficult conditions in which they do so can cause them to lose morale, and the quality of education is likely to decline as they receive little or no payment or moral support. In North Kivu, (Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)), for example, teachers received their last statutory pay in 1995 (Watchlist, 2003). Once fighting stops, the lack of schools and of teachers, the inability of authorities to rebuild the education system, and especially to train, retrain and deploy new or returning teachers are huge challenges that can take many years to overcome. In southern Sudan, where relative peace in some areas has enabled educational reconstruction to begin, neither teachers nor educational authorities receive regular salaries; the system relies for the most part on volunteers, over 40% of whom are untrained (UNICEF/AET, 2002).

As indicated in the previous table, precise and up-to-date statistics on school enrollment in conflict-affected countries can be difficult to obtain. They can also mask huge regional differences, and give little indication of the quality of the educational experience. The general imprecision of data on populations affected by war is a particular constraint on our understanding of the impact on education systems, administrators, teachers and students (Sommers, 2002) and more particularly on our understandings of the gender dynamics. This is especially the case in countries where conflict affects only certain sections of the population, for example in Uganda.

The data in the table below, however, indicate the extent to which gender disparities have to be addressed when tackling EFA challenges in conflict and post-conflict countries, and especially in sub-Saharan Africa:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi (current conflict)</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia (current conflict)</td>
<td>136.7</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola (post conflict)</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea (post conflict)</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Burundi not only has gross enrollment declined for both boys and girls in the last 10 years, but the gender parity index has also worsened (from 0.83 to 0.80). In Angola too, gross enrollment has declined significantly, and proportionally more so for girls than boys (the gender parity index has decreased from 0.92 to 0.87). In Mozambique and Ethiopia, enrollment rates have improved through conflict periods, yet the ratio of girls to boys has remained stable and very low (0.75 and 0.67 respectively). In Rwanda and Sierra Leone when measured against projected enrollment rates from before the conflict, gains have been made in enrollments through the conflict period. In Sierra Leone, the gain has been more pronounced for girls than for boys (Sommers, 2002), yet the reality is still that current figures show a 5 point difference in male and female enrollment rates, a gender parity index of only 0.93, and an estimated 54% of out of school children are girls (UNESCO statistics, 2002).

Enrollment rates may give some indication of the extent of gender disparities in conflict situations, and yet retention and successful completion rates provide a stronger test of EFA achievements. Large-scale data on retention rates in conflict situations is patchy, but studies such as International Rescue Committee’s (IRC) Where do Our Girls Go? (Rhodes, Walker and Martor, 1998) and UNICEF/AET’s School Baseline Assessment in southern Sudan (2002) indicate the extent of girls’ drop out. In southern Sudan, enrollment rates of girls in Grade 1 are already very low (an average of only 26% of total enrollment) and this drops to 21% at Grade 8 (with an absolute drop of more than 20 000 girls). Low levels of girls’ participation, as well as very low numbers of female teachers (less than 7%) can be at least in part attributed to the conflict. In the reconstruction and development of the Somali education system, gender related disparities are a key concern; only 35% of the students enrolled in Grades 1 are girls, and this proportion declines with girls making up only 29% of grade 8 pupils. The challenges of increasing this rate of participation is compounded by the fact that only 14% of the teachers are female, and that only 3% of Somalia’s primary schools are headed by women (UNICEF Somalia, 2001). In Rwanda, although there may be gender parity in enrollment, the majority of children who drop out of school are girls. Girls are estimated to manage the majority of the estimated 300,000 child headed households, and to make up the majority of the 7000 street children (UNICEF Rwanda, 2002); these girls constitute a considerable fraction of out of school children.

**The Impacts of Conflict for Women and Girls**

It is important to acknowledge that women and girls experience conflict differently from men and boys. Conflict impacts in particular ways on the educational opportunities of girls and women; school-going girls are forced to drop out, and those excluded in pre-conflict times, may have even less chance of access. In times of conflict and crisis, when resources are scarce and families are intent on survival, educational discrimination in favour of boys tends to be even stronger. Girls who are further marginalized by factors such as disability, ethnicity and location, are even more likely to miss out on education.
In conflict and crisis situations, traditional concepts and values are challenged, and divisions between adulthood and childhood often become much more blurred, thus making the linkages between education for women and education for girls especially important. Early marriage and early pregnancy are features of many conflict situations, and this has a significant impact on girls’ education, causing early drop out. Unless given specific attention, adolescent girls are often ignored, and their particular needs unacknowledged.

Although conflict can bring with it some positive changes in gender roles and expectations, the impact of conflict on education for women and girls can in many contexts be described as both exacerbating inequities and increasing vulnerabilities (World Vision, 2001). War lays bare the gender dynamics of societies, and of education systems, and the particular vulnerabilities of girls. As conflict makes living conditions more difficult, dangerous and uncertain, tentative educational and other rights-based gains made by women may be reversed. The Kosovo conflict of 1989-1999, and then the Serbian Government policy in the 1990s, for example, greatly restricted the freedom of movement of Kosovo-Albanian women. Not only did many women lose their jobs, and unemployment rose, but also gaining an education became increasingly difficult and curricular standards fell (UNFPA, 2002). The status of women in Iraq improved in the first two decades of Baathist rule, but after the Gulf War women particularly suffered from the 12 years of sanctions. Enrollment rates in education dropped from 92 % in the mid-1980’s to 69% in the 1990’s (Amr, 2003). The current conflict situation in Democratic Republic of Congo means that education is at a standstill in many areas. Enrollment figures indicate a 15 % differential between boys and girls (66% of boys, and only 51% of girls) but the actual attendance rates are likely to be much lower. UNICEF estimates that of the 3 to 3.5 million children aged between 6 and 11 without access to basic education, 2 million are girls. Conflict can exacerbate the factors which contribute to low school enrollment of girls. These include parents being unable and unwilling to spare the costs (direct and indirect) of sending girls to school, and the safety and security concerns about girls traveling the long distances from home to school, and then being at risk of sexual harassment from teachers (Watchlist, 2003). Women teachers are also prevented from attending school by insecurity and lack of safety, and economic necessity can make it impossible for them to teach. This is certainly the case in southern Sudan, where teachers receive no regular salary and women, many of whom head households, cannot afford not to be earning an income (Kirk, 2003).

Gender-aware responses are therefore critical. Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys in difficult circumstances when their labour is needed at home, or when a decreased family income means that there is no money to pay fees, or provide the necessary uniforms and supplies. Gender roles and stereotypes are often reinforced by the need to protect women and girls, and by the additional time and energy spent in traditional roles, such as collecting water. In south Sudan, the work of women and girls has doubled or trebled, and yet the situation has left boys with no new or heavier work. Whereas there is very little time or energy left for girls to attend school, schooling for boys is planned to give them something to do (Obura, 2001). Conflict and its aftermath can also be a time when gender roles have to change, and the practical and economic imperatives of survival and reconstruction take priority over education. When a husband/father is away fighting, has been killed or has fled, women and even young girls
are left heading households. After the genocide in Rwanda, the female population was for a time at 70%, and the population of southern Sudan is one third male, two thirds female (Obura, 2001). Conflict tends to result in women taking on additional responsibilities (El-Bushra et al, 2002), and economic necessity may mean that they are forced into income-generating activity rather than attending school. In post-conflict Somalia, in the absence of men, women have become increasingly involved in income generating activities, and in household decision-making. Paradoxically, however, girls’ educational opportunities have not improved with their mothers’ income-earning potential, as the daughters of working mothers have had to take on extra domestic responsibilities (Bekalo, Brophy & Welford, 2003). The pronatalist policy in southern Sudan has increased pregnancy rates at a time when food is scarce, and women’s workload has increased. Daughters have had to take on increased domestic and agricultural workloads, leaving little time for school (Obura, 2001).

On the other hand, in contexts, such as Nepal, there is evidence that conflict has had a positive impact on girls’ educational opportunities. In a region affected by Maoist insurgency, parents have sent their sons away to school in Kathmandu to avoid the politicization of schools and campuses, but girls have stayed and entered the local schools (Manchanda, 2001). In the midst of the conflict in Eritrea, women in the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front were well organized, developing pedagogical skills as educators and trainers (Hale, 2001). However, situations where the educational empowerment of women is linked to the promotion of aggressive national identity and violent struggles for liberation, are inherently problematic (Byrne, 1995). War may open up new spheres of activity to women, but spheres that are violent, repressive and abusive of human rights. Shifts in power balances and the control of resources can create tension and conflict, and exacerbate gender-based struggles (El-Bahra et al, 2002). Furthermore, the return to civilian life can mean a step back for women and girls who have experienced life with the militaries as in some ways empowering. In Eritrea, educational advances made by women were unsustained, leading to high levels of frustration and discouragement (Hale, 2001).

Protection of women and girls from sexual violence

As modern warfare has moved away from clearly defined battlegrounds, and into communities, civilians are increasingly at risk. But in addition to the dangers of gunfire, bombings and landmines, women and girls are at particular risk of sexual violence. The Machel report (1996) highlights the risks for women and girls of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation during conflict. Not only is rape and sexual violence used increasingly as a weapon of war, but in times of stress and crisis, it is women and girls who suffer most from increased domestic violence. The sort of military training offered to men often depends on aggressive and misogynous models of masculinity. In situations such as Guatemala, where up to 20% of the rural male population was in the army, being socialized into a strong macho ethic, women suffered (Byrne, 1995). The arrival of peacekeeping forces to some conflict situations can leave women and girls still very vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Machel, 2000); women and girls in need are forced into sex to obtain desperately needed food and assistance. In schools, too, cases of teachers’ sexual exploitation of female pupils are also alarmingly common (for example Watchlist, 2003). In refugee camps in West Africa it is common for teachers to trade good grades...
for sexual favours from girls (UNHCR & SC UK, 2002) Partisan, divisive and conflict-fuelling curricula, infused with violence and hatred for ‘the other’ can socialize teachers and students into violence, exacerbating existing gender divisions and inequalities.

The protection of women and girls often means a disruption in their education. Especially when armed forces are present, the walk to school can become hazardous enough for parents to prefer to keep their daughters at home. In the case of the Aboke girls in Northern Uganda, for example, one hundred and thirty-nine girls were specifically targeted, removed from a girls’ boarding school, and forced into the rebel forces (De Temmerman, 2001). Such incidents make parents understandably reluctant to risk sending their daughters to school, and force them to develop strategies to protect their women and children as best they can. In Kosovo, after 1999, many minority girls remained out of school because of fear of rape and abduction (Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). In Eastern Congo, for example, some families have sent their women and girls to a safer location, whereas some families have fled altogether (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

In other situations, early marriage can be a way for parents to protect their daughters, and to ensure that even if she is the victim of sexual violence, her future prospects will not be compromised. In Northern Uganda, families have married their daughters to militia members in order to protect themselves, the family honour, and that of the girls. The same also happened in Somalia (UNICEF, 2001). In these, and other cases, even if schools are still functioning, girls’ attendance will most likely be interrupted by early marriage. With the subsequent change in roles and responsibilities, early childbirth and childcare, it is then unlikely she will be able to return to school. In post-conflict periods, the protection of women and children remains an issue as sexual violence and exploitation of women does not necessarily abate. In Rwanda, for example, during and after the conflict, girls tended to stay close to their homes, remaining for the most part with their mothers; education was the first of their activities to be sacrificed (Oxfam 1999).

HIV/AIDS flourishes in the sorts of desperate conditions created by conflict; exacerbated gender inequalities and poverty only compound the situation. Of the 17 countries with over 100,000 children orphaned by AIDS, 13 are in conflict or on the brink of emergency (Machel, 2002). In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) it is thought that adult prevalence has risen steeply to 20 %, and that in 2001 930 000 children under 15 had lost either their mother or both parents to the epidemic. The vulnerability of women and girls to sexualized violence in situations of conflict makes them also especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection. This was indicated in a recent study in the highly affected region of North Kivu (DRC), where estimated infection rates are at 54% among adult women, 32 % among adult men, and 26% among children (Watchlist, 2003). Infection rates of military forces can be far higher than those of the local population (UNAIDS, 1998; World Bank, 2003). Teachers too are a susceptible group, with prevalence rates of 30-40 % in some Sub-Saharan countries, creating an additional risk in contexts where girls are sexually exploited by teachers. Women and girls are also disproportionately affected when family members are stricken with HIV/AIDS; reduced incomes and mobility and increased responsibilities and workloads are just some of the challenges to face. In Rwanda the situation is particularly acute, with the many girls who head households being particularly vulnerable. In such situations, girls’ and women’s access to formal education is severely limited, and non-formal alternatives have to be developed.
Beyond physical and sexual vulnerability, attention should also be given to the psychological impact of conflict. Women and girls live with multiple traumas, and the memories and fears of destruction, killing, suffering and sexual abuse (Save US, 2003). These traumas can make it hard to concentrate and to learn, especially in formal programs which may fail to acknowledge and help them come to terms with their experiences.

Adolescent girls

Adolescence is often a challenging time, but as a UNFPA (2002) report states, “when conflict erupts, the risks associated with adolescence increase for boys, but multiply for girls.” Adolescent girls are a particular target for sexual violence and exploitation, and yet their experiences and needs are often not acknowledged in the sort of policy and programming interventions which make neat divisions between children and adults. Adolescence is a tricky time of identity formation, of experimentation, but also of vulnerability. Inadequate responses to the needs of adolescents in conflict situations risk marginalizing a large section of the population, whose skills, energy and involvement are vital for post-conflict reconstruction.

Adolescent girls in Northern Uganda reported that families and communities prioritize boys’ education over girls, and that girls’ education is valued less by parents because girls are expected to marry, leave the family and live in their husband’s household (Women’s Commission, 2001). For girls who are pregnant, already mothers, or who are heading households, their ability to access educational services and resources may also be very limited. The Machel report (1996) highlights the gaps in provision of education for adolescents, and subsequent reports document the merely sporadic initiatives for them. In most contexts, resources have been focused on primary education, meaning that adolescents miss out. As Sinclair (2001) points out, in an emergency situation it is much easier to organize classes for younger children than for older youth. It is hard for any child that has dropped out of school to pick up their studies again, but for adolescent girls and young women it can be particularly so. They may have had less schooling in the first place, and so may have to restart with children embarrassingly smaller and younger than themselves. Education may not be seen as a priority for older girls, and specific interventions are required to overcome such barriers.

Drop-out can also be a significant issue for adolescent girls. In conflict situations, the economic and social pressures on adolescent girls to give up their education can be intensified, due too, for example, early pregnancy and lack of parental supervision and involvement, and scarcity of resources. In the IRC study of primary schools in Guinea, although girls represented almost 50% of students in early grades, they make up only 34% of those who complete the cycle at Grade 6 (Rhodes, Walker & Martor, 1998).

The figures for school retention through Grade 5 in some post-conflict countries where statistics are available, indicate the extent of the issue (UNESCO 2002):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Retention rate at Grade 5: boys</th>
<th>Retention rate at Grade 5: girls</th>
<th>Gender Parity Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recent complex humanitarian emergencies have resulted in huge refugee populations. Of the approximately 50 million displaced people around the world, most of these have been uprooted because of conflict in and around their homes. UNHCR cares for 21.8 million displaced people, around half of which are women and girls (UNHCR, 2002). The table below shows the main countries of origin, and countries of asylum of UNHCR refugee populations for 2001 (Source: UNHCR, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Main Countries of Asylum</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Pakistan / Iran</td>
<td>3,809,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>554,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>530,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Uganda / Ethiopia / D.R. Congo / Kenya / C.A.R.</td>
<td>489,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>Zambia / D.R. Congo / Namibia</td>
<td>470,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Kenya / Yemen / Ethiopia / USA / United Kingdom</td>
<td>439,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
<td>Yugoslavia / USA / Sweden / Denmark / Netherlands</td>
<td>426,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Rep. Congo</td>
<td>Tanzania / Congo / Zambia / Rwanda / Burundi</td>
<td>392,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>China / USA</td>
<td>353,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>333,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 An estimated 3.9 million Palestinians who are covered by a separate mandate of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are not included in this report. However, Palestinians outside the UNWRA area of operations such as those in Iraq or Libya, are considered to be of concern to UNHCR. At year-end their number was 349,100.

2 This table includes UNHCR estimates for nationalities in industrialized countries on the basis of recent refugee arrivals and asylum seeker recognition.

The percentage of children compared with the overall refugee population ranges from 57% in Central Africa to 20% in Central and Eastern Europe. Currently, there is an estimated 7.7 million children below the age of 18 under UNHCR’s care. In camps there may be opportunities for primary school education for both boys and girls, provided by NGOs, international organizations and agencies. More refugee children than ever are attending primary school (around 44% in 2000 compared to 36% in 1993), but there is still much to improve, especially for girls (UNHCR, 2002).

In most regions, women and girls of all ages constitute between 45-55 percent of the refugee population. Girls make up an average of only 39% of students in UNHCR-supported primary schools. Female enrolment in UNHCR-supported education programs in Ethiopia and Côte d’Ivoire, for example, are particularly low (less than 30%). In some refugee camps women’s illiteracy can be as high as 80% (UNFPA, 2002). With 97% of
the over 1.5 million refugees of secondary school age not in school, both male and female adolescents are missing out on secondary education (UNHCR, 2002). But accessing whatever education is available becomes particularly hard for girls as they get older. Girls’ enrollment drops to 29% at the secondary level (UNHCR, 2003), but in some camps it can be as low as 1%. Displaced adolescent girls (IDPs) may be even more marginalized.

Within crowded, stressful and under-resourced camps, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and sexually-transmitted diseases. These are reasons for parents to keep their daughters at home rather than in school. Lack of sanitary supplies, early marriage, household responsibilities and frequent movement from one location to another, are also barriers to girls’ education. In some camps there are teenage girl pregnancy rates of 50% (UNHCR & Save the Children-UK, 2002), and these young women may be especially isolated and marginalized, shunned by both other girls and older women.

UNHCR is aware of the need for intensified efforts to promote female participation in education. A new campaign will recruit more female teachers and classroom assistants, ensure that girls receive sanitary supplies, that parents are sensitized, and that girls’ scholarships are made available (UNHCR, 2003). Specific recommendations are made for girl refugees’ equal access to formal and informal education, including vocational programs at all levels, and for ensuring that learning environments provide physical security and emotional stability, and protect against possible sexual exploitation, abuse or military recruitment (UNHCR, 2002).

It may, however, be easier for international agencies to provide education to displaced populations than for devastated government departments to provide for those who stay behind. The quality of education for refugees may actually be superior, and enrollment rates far higher than in countries of origin. Afghan refugee girls in Pakistan had far better educational opportunities than girls in Afghanistan. There and in Iran, girls’ enrollment increased fivefold over the last five years, and this access to quality education is cited as a reason for the estimated 3.5 million Afghan refugees remaining in Pakistan and Iran (UNHCR, 2002). Refugee women teachers too have benefited professionally, receiving quality training. Strategies are now being developed to ensure that these women’s experiences and qualifications are recognized, and that they can become leaders in educational reconstruction in Afghanistan.

In long term, protracted refugee situations it is important to ensure that local populations have access to the same quality of education and other services available to refugees. In northern Uganda, for example, specific interventions to promote education for local women and girls are required, as for Sudanese refugees living in the area.

**Ensuring Women’s and Girls’ Access to Education**

Unless given specific attention, women and girls tend to be marginalized from humanitarian aid (Nordstrom, 1999) and less likely to benefit from different interventions because of multiple barriers to their participation. Many will be busy with domestic, agricultural and income-generating responsibilities and less visible as they are kept close within families. Because of this, women and girls tend to be less aware of possible
programs and activities and also more restricted than men and boys by gendered
expectations of suitable activities. Men and boys are generally more likely to come
forward for programs, and are less likely to be restricted in their participation (Obura,
2001). This is especially the case with education. Although in the last 10 years, the
number of functioning schools in Somaliland has increased from almost zero to 171,
these serve only 17% of the country’s children, and very few girls attend at all (Bekalo et
al, 2003). In southern Sudan, although women are most in need of extra English training
in order to become teachers, programs offering intensive English have failed to recruit
many women at all (Obura, 2001). Here, as in other contexts, once girls marry and
become mothers, whatever their age, there are social and economic constraints on their
returning to school as either student or teacher. In post-conflict situations where other
jobs are scarce, there are examples of men taking over jobs that were previously held by
women, such as primary school teaching in Haiti. In Kenyan refugee camps, Somali men
enrolled in training programs to become child health workers (Byrne, 1995).

Despite such challenges, solutions are being found to ensure women and girls’ rights to
education in conflict situations. Responsibility lies at multiple levels; the international
community, national governments, NGO’s, as well as communities and families.
Effective partnerships are required to address the complex barriers which prevent women
and girls gaining education at a time when it might be of the most use to them.

Table 1 indicates a number of possible strategies. It is important to recognize that
unfortunately little consistent evaluation of the effectiveness and the sustainability of
such measures exists. Some examples of locations and organizations are provided,
although some strategies are used in a number of different contexts, and it would be
impossible to list all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers for girls and women</th>
<th>Strategies for access and retention</th>
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<tr>
<td>Young wives, mothers and pregnant girls</td>
<td>Strong re-entry policies for teen-mothers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over age girls</td>
<td>Special intensive, accelerated basic education classes for adolescent girls (eg Africa Educational Trust’s Somali Educational Incentives for Girls and Young Women (SEIGYM) program)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific classes for young wives, teen mothers and pregnant girls, with food, child-care, and space for young women and their babies (eg FAWE Sierra Leone)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second, afternoon shifts in schools specifically for girls (eg in Burundi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innovative distance and home-based education, eg with radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent study centers /Buddy systems and study groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Gender–based violence and HIV/AIDS | Careful location of schools close to women and girls  
| Sexual abuse and exploitation | UNICEF model of child-friendly spaces/environments for child protection (see McClure, 2003)  
| | Provision of secure, school dormitory accommodation for girls and young women  
| | Specific attention to ‘safe spaces’ and ‘safe schools’ for girls and women  
| | Placement of female classroom assistants where there are mostly male teachers (UNHCR supported IRC program in Guinea)  
| | Organized, accompanied and safe travel to and from school  
| | Community sensitization on gender-based violence (Guinea)  
| | Clear disciplinary guidelines and procedures for girls’ protection  
| Inhospitable, girl-unfriendly facilities | Separate toilets for women and girls  
| Gender-insensitive school environment | Recruitment and support of women teachers (USAID program in southern Sudan)  
| | Teacher education on gender-sensitive teaching and learning strategies  
| | Gender sensitive curriculum, teaching and learning materials (FAWE Rwanda)  
| | Young girls’ clubs to promote peer education and support  
| Cultural barriers | Home visits to talk with parents and community members  
| | Media, radio and community campaigns (eg UNHCR campaign for Sudanese girls in East Moyo refugee schools, Uganda)  
| | Distance and home-based educational programming (eg UNICEF programs for girls in Afghanistan)  
<p>|</p>
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<tr>
<th>Community participation in decision-making and planning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Economic necessity of domestic or other labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caring for siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources to pay for school fees and associated costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible school schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs which combine literacy and numeracy with vocational skills and training which allow women to generate income (eg PROMOTEEN, Liberia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early childhood education provision for siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of uniforms, sanitary supplies, school books and supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food incentives for girls and their families (eg UNHCR program for vulnerable refugees in Freetown, Sierra Leone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships targeted for girls (eg UNICEF in southern Sudan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income generation projects for mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to reduce time spent on household tasks (eg. closer water and firewood)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Girls in armed forces (In a box)

It is estimated that in the 1990’s approximately 100,000 girls participated directly in conflicts in at least 39 countries around the world. In terms of absolute numbers, Africa is the region with the highest numbers of children involved directly in conflict, with estimates of 120,000 (McKay & Mazurana, 2000). Although regional analysis indicates that during 1990-2000 it was the Americas where girls were most likely to be involved, the issue is clearly a global one. Precise data is limited, but in countries such as El Salvador, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Uganda, it is estimated that 30% of child soldiers are girls. The Peruvian Shining Path has one of the highest female participation rates. In Asia, young girls are recruited by the Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelaam (LTTE), 900-1000 girls are participating in armed conflict in the northeast Indian state of Manipur, and large numbers of Nepali girls are involved in the Maoist insurgents’ ‘People’s War’ (Coalition, 2000).

The term ‘girl soldier’, however, tends to deflect attention from girls’ multiple roles, not only as fighters, but also as cooks, porters, spies and as ‘wives’, servants and/or sex slaves. Disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programs tend to assume male experiences, and to ignore the quite different ways in which boys and girls participate in armed forces, and reintegrate into communities. In Angola, for example, when the surrender of weapons was a criterion for eligibility, girls who had been involved with the military, but not as fighters, were excluded. Programs including...
girls tend to ignore the gender issues that led to girls’ participation. Little attention may be given to addressing the complex shifts in gender identities, roles and responsibilities created by conflict (Strickland & Duvvurny, 2003). Also potentially problematic is the tendency to channel girls only into gender-typical activities, such as soap-making, dress-making (Barth, 2002).

The stigma of being involved with armed forces and their various atrocities may be stronger for girls than for boys. There are high rates of pregnancy, and for young mothers, there are serious practical, cultural and psychological barriers to school attendance and reintegration (Mazurana & McKay, 2003). Communities can be particularly hostile to girls who have had a child of the enemy. Traditional schools rarely have childcare provision and the curriculum can fail to address girls’ experiences and needs. Girls who are breaking military dependency are often rejected by their families and therefore need to earn an income. Otherwise they can be very vulnerable to prostitution, trafficking and to re-recruitment.

Very little is known about the long-term effects of girls’ participation in conflict (McKay & Mazurana, 2000). They may well feel that they were better off with the armed forces, where they had emotional attachments, status and power (McConnan & Uppard, 2001). The return to civilian life can represent a step backwards, and a traditional, authoritarian school system with little opportunity for individual agency and creativity can be very difficult to adapt to.

UNICEF, FAWE, Caritas-Makeni, Christian Children’s Fund, World Vision, and other faith-based organizations such as the Silesians, have developed educational programs for ex-combatant girls and young women, especially in Africa. These aim to ease reintegration through basic education skills, survival and home arts, training for trades and income generating activities, such as tailoring, farming, building and mechanics. Also important is building self-esteem and self-confidence, and reaching out to teen mothers. At the end of programs such as Sarah’s Daughter and PROMOTEEN in Liberia, girls are given start-up kits and small grants to enable them to return to their villages with a sustainable livelihood (FAWE, 1999).

Although there is little formal evaluation of such projects, recommendations for girls who have been involved with armed forces suggest that educational provision should:

- Acknowledge different roles and responsibilities taken on and the shifts in gender identities created by conflict
- Validate and build on positive skills, and the sense of power and agency of military life
- Address the potential loss of freedom of returning to traditional communities, schools etc
- Be accessible and welcoming to pregnant girls and girl mothers
- Help girls to generate income, teaching a range of relevant skills and not only typically female activities
Help them to reintegrate into families and communities (including working with communities, schools and teachers to change attitudes about stigma attached to returning girls)

Provide access to information and care for reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS

Provide psycho-social support and develop self-esteem and self-confidence

Be in proportion to support provided for non-combatant girls in order to avoid tensions within communities over resource allocations

**Mitigating the Impact of Conflict through Education for Girls and Women**

In her landmark report, Graca Machel (1996) stressed the importance of education for all children in times of conflict; “education gives shape and structure to children’s lives. When everything around is chaos, schools can be a haven of security that is vital to the well-being of war-affected children and their communities.” This is even more important for girls, as she states, “education, especially literacy and numeracy, is precisely what girls need during and after armed conflict. Education can help prepare adolescent girls for the new roles and responsibilities that they are often obliged to take on in conflict situations.”

It has to be acknowledged that education, and formal schools in particular, can play a role in fuelling and perpetuating conflict (Bush & Salterelli, 2000). However, education is a crucial element in the sort of complex humanitarian response required in times of conflict. This is especially so for women and girls. Coping with conflict in its different stages and forms requires new information and skills, as do the inevitably changed economies and communities of post-conflict times. Education has an important role to play in protecting women and girls who have particular educational needs to help them come to terms with their experiences, catch up on missed schooling and to develop the skills necessary for active participation in peaceful communities. Female teachers too can greatly benefit from being actively involved in schooling, from helping their community, and from using their income to support their own family.

Education offers hope for positive change and more peaceful futures, and initiatives implemented in different contexts do suggest potentially effective strategies for ensuring that women and girls have access to educational opportunities that are preventive, protective and participatory. The specific focus of interventions will be different according to the context, and as the educational needs of women and girls change. It may be that prevention-focused strategies will be particularly relevant in pre-conflict times, but they are also equally relevant as tentative steps are made towards peace. Similarly, protection-focused strategies may be particularly important for women and girls during conflict, but also important in the post-conflict period. Meeting both immediate, practical, protection and survival needs and longer-term, preventive and strategic needs of women and girls, is an imperative for the education sector. Gender-aware post conflict reconstruction of the education system that addresses the specific constraints to girls’ enrollment, retention and achievement can make an important contribution to peacebuilding.
Prevention

As Machel (2000) states, “the principles of gender equality and inclusion are fundamental values on which every attempt at democracy and peace-building must be based.” In fact evidence is emerging that cultures in which women’s access to resources and decision-making power are limited and domestic violence is unchallenged are more inclined towards conflict and violent repression (Schmeidl, 2002). Striving for gender equality in education is therefore a vital conflict prevention strategy in itself. But this entails much more than women- or girl-targeted interventions and programs. Research indicates that apparently gender sensitive peacebuilding initiatives have met with limited success precisely because they have failed to address the underlying norms that define gender relations and power dynamics in specific contexts (Strickland & Duvvurny, 2003). It is the role of educators not only to ensure that the women and girls have free and equal access to quality education, but that education for them, and for boys and men too, can start to address some of the underlying relationships between gendered identities, masculinities and femininities, exclusion and marginalization, violence and conflict.

Although for some experts in the field, peace education remains highly problematic, it has become an increasingly important element of educational programming in conflict situations (Sommers, 2002). But as conflict is not a gender-neutral phenomenon, neither can peace education be a gender-neutral subject. Women and girls’ rights are critical elements, as is the deconstruction of dominant masculinities which perpetuate both conflict and gender-based discrimination. Educators need to be sensitive to girls’ and women’s perceptions and experiences of conflict, and of their different peacebuilding strategies (Kirk, 2002). In teacher education, the experiences and perceptions of women teachers may be an important starting point for developing gender-sensitive pedagogies for peace. Gender–sensitive teaching methods should encourage girls to participate in classes, and to engage in peace-oriented activities which reflect their own perceptions and are based on their strategies.

Protection

When policies and measures are in place to ensure safety and security, education can become a protective force in itself. Appropriate formal and non-formal education can provide important alternatives to social and cultural alienation, to violence and destruction, to child soldiering and other forms of exploitation (Sommers, 2002).

Education – whether formal or non-formal – can provide women and girls with the vital lessons of survival in difficult conditions. How to identify landmines, how to keep healthy, how to look after young children, are all important skills to develop, especially for the many young girls who head households. Schools can also be sites to provide nutrition and health information and care. Organizations such as Catholic Relief Services use ‘food assisted education’ programs targeted at girls not only to meet their short term nutritional needs, but also as an incentive for enrollment and retention, and as a long term strategy in leveraging community engagement in school quality improvement (Janke, 2001).

Reproductive health education is a vital element of a girl-focused curriculum. Schools and educational systems should also provide HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and care during emergencies, including life skills and other curricula which ensure that all children...
learn necessary hygiene and domestic skills (Machel, 2000). In the case of Rwandan refugees in the Benaco camp in Tanzania, adolescent girls were found to be at the greatest risk of acquiring STDs and HIV/AIDS, but the most difficult to reach with educational messages (Benjamin, 1996). Flexibility and creativity is therefore needed in creating programs which reach and impact on these girls. Examples of innovative approaches include radio programs, ‘girl-to-girl’ education using theatre and puppets etc, independent study groups and discussion sessions in people’s homes. Evidence exists that especially for girls, staying in school offers protection against HIV/AIDS; in Sub-Saharan Africa infections rates have been falling among girls with secondary education (World Bank, 2002). Education can help girls develop the confidence and the skills to avoid and resist exploitation, and provide alternative perspectives and possibilities.

Education in conflict and post-conflict situations must acknowledge the vulnerability of women and girls to gender-based violence, and must address it with preventative and protective measures, and with appropriate support for victims. In refugee camps in Guinea, a new International Rescue Committee project has recruited and trained female classroom assistants to work alongside the mostly male teachers. These women act as special resource people for girls and have important roles, such as managing the grades (to avoid male manipulation of female students based on grades), making follow-up visits to girls’ homes, and reporting incidents of misconduct. The project is in the early stages of development, but is seen to be a means of meeting the immediate protection needs of girls, and a strategic initiative for women’s empowerment. Once they have completed their on-the-job training, and their high school diplomas, the assistants have the opportunity to become teachers themselves.

Education is a stabilizing force that is essential for maintaining and re-establishing a sense of normalcy during and after destruction (Machel, 2000); it is a force that is important for community development, but also for individual psychological protection, well-being and social healing. As yet, little attention has been given to the psychological impact of conflict on women and children (Save the Children USA, 2003), but for women and girls who may otherwise be isolated, the emotional support to be gained from being in a learning situation with others may be quite significant. It is important to understand how women and girls themselves perceive their situation, and to implement strategies that they see as appropriate. Working with groups, such as girls of a particular age, or mothers with children of a particular age, may be an effective approach that avoids individual stigma.

Participation and Peacebuilding

Transformation from conflict to peace is not just about external changes and conditions, but also about internal changes in individual consciousness (Meintjies, Pilay & Turshen, 2001). Education that addresses women’s rights, deconstructs gender roles and stereotypes is an important force for transformation. Post-conflict reconstruction can, in some instances, create openings for widespread transformation, and for the incorporation of innovative strategies into the system. This is certainly the case with education. Advances may be made for women and girls, and in the mainstreaming of gender issues by capitalizing on some of the impacts of the conflict, such as the increased participation of women in the public sphere. Community mobilization for gender equality in education can be an important rallying of energy and hope for the future. Literacy and education are
important resources upon which women and girls can draw in post-conflict situations when jobs are scarce (Save the Children US, 2003).

Active participation in education, involving women and girls not only as program beneficiaries, but also in decision-making and planning, can inspire and empower them for more positive individual and collective futures. Women’s literacy is key to empowering them to participate in decision and policy-making, and an investment that has high social and economic returns (ARC, 2001). Educational programs can help to develop the necessary skills for identifying and articulating priorities, and for taking an active part in the community’s transformation towards peace. Girls’ participation is also highly linked to girls’ protection, as their involvement helps to uncover situations in which they are particularly vulnerable, and to develop appropriate protection measures (World Vision International, 2001). Girls and boys can become the researchers of their own lives, exposing the gender inequalities of conflict situations that affect their lives (Women’s Commission, 2001a). In the FAWE Rwanda girls’ school, a theatre for development workshop has led to a girls' club called "Tuvuge" (which means "let us speak out"). Through the clubs, girls are able to become active participants in identifying and solving their problems, with a special emphasis on peace education. These clubs have now been replicated in 24 other schools in Rwanda.

At international, national, and local levels, there is increasing attention to grassroots, community and people-centred peace-building processes. Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) asserted the importance of women’s roles in building peace, and the need for explicit, effective strategies to ensure this. Machel (1996) stated that young people are key contributors in planning and implementing long-term solutions for peace. Listening to children’s views on peace and involving them in peace conferences and other initiatives is also becoming increasingly evident in places such as Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Colombia (UNICEF, 2003). Such initiatives usually include girls, and may be sensitive to the challenges of child participation, but as yet little work has been done to specifically and critically address the active participation of girls (Kirk & Garrow, 2003, forthcoming). A World Vision report recommends consistent and intentional program design for girls’ participation but is equally aware of the challenges this presents, especially in the context of peacebuilding (World Vision International, 2001).

Women may have particular experiences of peacebuilding at the very local level in families, and communities, and education has the potential to recognize, validate and develop their capacities. Although the essentializing of women as natural peacemakers should certainly be avoided, and the over-burdening of women and girls with additional responsibilities and pressures too, the courage of women, and their commitment to individual, community and societal reconstruction should be highlighted (Sales, 1997).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Focus of Education Intervention</th>
<th>Possible Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Curricula and activities developed with active participation of community and young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>Discussion and deconstruction of dominant gender identities</td>
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<td>Participatory activities oriented towards peace, social justice and positive futures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peace education curricula that acknowledge gendered perceptions and experience of conflict and peace</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus on communication and negotiation skills</td>
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<td>Training for staff (including teachers) on child protection issues and strategies with an emphasis on girls’ rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowering life skills curricula with attention to sexuality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS (eg CARE Intl program in Benaco Rwandan refugee camp in Tanzania; IRC program for Sierra Leonian and Liberian refugees in Guinea)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attention to self esteem and confidence building for girls (IRC program in Guinea)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative activities to work through trauma, sadness, grief (eg Save the Children training program in West Bank and Gaza)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counseling services easily available for all girls (eg FAWE Rwanda’s girls’ school with permanent counseling desk)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of mentor or someone girls can turn to when needed (chosen by girls)</td>
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<td>Income generating activities</td>
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Participation

Specific measures to ensure women and girls' involvement in education committees, policy development (eg Girls' Advisory Committees in Ethiopia)

Ongoing consultation with girls and women on all education issues

Girl-specific groups & clubs in school (eg FAWE Rwanda, World Vision Guatemala’s ‘Shalom Promoters’, National Movement of Children for Peace in Colombia)

Girls mobilized and trained as researchers (eg Women’s Commission study in northern Uganda)

Male sensitization to the equal participation of women and girls

**Moving Ahead**

Through recent UN resolutions, agency and organizational policies on gender and peacebuilding, the international community is showing increased commitment to addressing the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Especially in the field of emergency education, there are a number of different initiatives taking place, and programming specifically oriented to meeting the needs of girls is being advocated and implemented.

There is a concern, however, that in conflict situations, women and girls risk being marginalized into specific programs for them (Strickland & Duvvurny, 2003). Such programs may be an important means to ensuring, for example, access to education, but to move towards long-term systemic gender equality, gender mainstreaming strategies will also be required to transform institutions for women and girls (Women’s Commission, 2001). Gender perspectives that extend beyond the provision of women- and girl-specific interventions are important. Education has an important role to play in moving from conflict to peace, yet this may be impossible to achieve without sufficient attention to deconstructing dominant and destructive notions of masculinity and femininity. Gender strategies are important for education in conflict situations, yet they have to go beyond issues of access.

Attention to evaluation is particularly important as very little evidence exists of the effectiveness of the many different emergency education initiatives (Pigozzi, 1999). It is particularly hard to assess the effectiveness of measures taken to encourage girls into school (Sommers, 2002). In particular, more detailed gender and age-desegregated data are required to facilitate better understandings of the specific educational needs of girls and women in conflict situations. How the needs of women and girls during and after
conflict can be met both practically and strategically also warrants much more research and evaluation.

There is now a growing recognition of education as ‘the fourth pillar’ of humanitarian response (Midttun, 2000), but moving ahead and ensuring better access to quality education for girls and women in conflict situations requires further commitments at different levels. As progress is made in ensuring that education is made available as soon as possible in emergency situations, we also have to ensure that it is equally accessible to girls and women, and is empowering for them. Research shows that targeting girls and women’s education benefits boys too, and is a key strategy in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of school systems (UNESCO, 2000) and can be particularly relevant in post-conflict reconstruction. Clearly articulated in the Dakar Framework for Action is the need to focus on girls’ access to free, quality primary education, to improve women’s literacy rates and also to, “meet the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability”. More challenging is to look at the intersections and the interconnections of the thematic elements of the Framework, and to consider firstly how education systems affected by conflict can be supported to meet the needs of girls and women, and secondly how gender strategies in education can be a force for peace.
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UNHCR: www.unhcr.org
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Female Education in Southern Sudan

Over four decades of conflict have decimated the educational infrastructure and resources in Southern Sudan to such an extent that only about 40% of primary aged children are actually in school, and only 26% of these are girls. In some areas, the percentage of girls in school can be as low as 15%. The conflict, combined with devastating floods, droughts and famines, has had a heavy impact on boys’ education, but girls are particularly disadvantaged owing to different factors relating to both demand and supply.

Traditionally, the bride price paid for a girl is the same whether she is educated or not, and so there is little perceived incentive for parents to invest in her education; the demands sending a girl to school might make on the family can become impossible to surmount when girls and women have to replace as the breadwinner men who have been killed or disabled, or who are away or missing with the fighting. The lack of female teachers is also a considerable barrier to girls; only approximately 7% of teachers are female, and the proportion is even less at the secondary level. Girls’ security is a constant concern for parents, and so they can be reluctant to send girls to school who may vulnerable to gender-based abuse and exploitation. Bush schools account for approximately 45% of Southern Sudan’s schools and in these girls and women are particularly absent; typically there will be only 2 or 3 girls, with an all male staff and no buildings, furniture or equipment, textbooks or curriculum, nor water or latrines. Even in the larger, slightly better resourced schools, there are rarely any girls past Grade 4, with female teachers greatly outnumbered by men.

With such low levels of female participation in education there is a vicious cycle of few role models of educated women for girls to aspire to, and so a lack of motivation and security for girls to enroll and stay in school. In the reconstruction of Sudan’s basic education system, efforts are being made to develop integrated strategies which will promote higher levels of girls’ education, and will also support higher numbers of women teachers to become teachers.

Sources: UNICEF n.d.; USAID, 2002