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Accelerating the Education of Girls and Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Development Imperative

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Author

Edda Gachukia

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**ACCELERATING THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A
DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVE
BY EDDA GACHUKIA**

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FOREWORD

In a 1980s issue of *Sauti ya Binti Saad*—a Tanzanian magazine published in Swahili by women and devoted to issues of importance to women in Africa—there appeared a sort of editorial cartoon of a woman configured to depict the shape of Africa—Mother Africa. In one hand she was holding a child along with a box of medicines and books, in the other she was breaking a shackle which encircled her right foot. The caption read *Mkono Ubebao Mwana Ndio Uleao Taifa*, “The hand that carries the child is the one that nurtures the nation.” The picture with the woman, the child, the books, medicine, and the broken shackle speaks for itself.

Every two years the James S. Coleman African Studies Center memorializes its founding director, Professor James Smoot Coleman, 1919 - 1985, by celebrating his life and accomplishments by honoring a person who in similar ways has dedicated her or his life to developing Africa’s institutions and human resources. As we begin a new millennium, we find it fitting to honor Dr. Eddah Gachukia, a singular woman who has spent most of the last forty some years involved and committed to others. Like Jim Coleman before her, she is honored not so much for the books or articles she has written, the organizations she worked through and founded, nor for her many accomplishments, but rather for the lives that have been changed through hers, and the people who truly have achieved a higher level of personal freedom and emancipation because of her.

Most of our presenters in the James Smoot Coleman Memorial Papers Series have talked about development and/or education, both subjects which were at the heart of Coleman’s life-long efforts on behalf of Africa. Dr. Gachukia’s visit while UCLA was hosting the Institute for the Study of Gender in Africa thus focuses us on the nexus between development, education, and the role of women, not just in breaking the chains of ignorance and underdevelopment but in providing the resources and tools for children, especially girls, and unschooled women, to empower them in recreating a stronger Africa.

In her long career as student, teacher, and parliamentarian, Dr. Gachukia has accomplished much. Her work spans years of involvement in many areas of Kenyan public and private life, too many to fully catalog here. Many of us first heard of Dr. Gachukia as the founder of FAWE, the Forum for African Women Educationalists, an international organization dedicated to furthering the education of girls and women in Africa with representation in 31 African countries. One might view this as a culmination of her career, and in many respects it is, but in fact it is just one of many achievements. Her career started modestly enough, as most do. In 1960 she began teaching and has never really stopped. She started as a secondary school teacher after receiving a

Diploma in Education from Makerere University in Uganda. After finishing a Certificate in the Teaching of English at Leeds University in England, she began working for the Ministry of Education at the Kenya Institute of Education, while she continued her education at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, receiving a B.A. (First Class Honors) in 1971 and the M.A. in 1972. In between doing other things, including being a wife and mother, and answering her country's call to serve on this commission or that committee, she managed to finish her Ph.D. in 1982 in Literature at the University of Nairobi. Her public life began in earnest in 1974 when President Jomo Kenyatta appointed her as a National Member of Parliament to represent women's interests. She served in this capacity until 1983 when she moved back, for a few years, to the University of Nairobi as Senior Lecturer and Chairperson in the Department of Literature.

Dr. Gachukia has represented Kenya in many capacities, e.g., as national advisor to UNESCO and to the National Council for Population and Development on Information, Education and Communication (IEC) in the field of population, and as leader of Kenya's delegation to the UN Conference on the International Women's Year in Mexico City. She has served as Chairperson of the African Women Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), as national secretary and vice-chair of *Maendeleo ya Wanawake*, the largest national women's organization in Kenya, and she is an active member of many other Kenyan and international organizations. Although, in 1990, Dr. Gachukia moved into the private sector to serve as a development consultant dealing with issues of gender and development, population, and education, she continues her active public life. She is currently a member of a Kenyan commission of inquiry into the nation's education system, and is a member and rapporteur of the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts dealing with educational matters.

Dr. Eddah Gachukia is an icon in her own right, a symbol of what individuals can accomplish in life. For her, education, especially the education of girls and women, is the key to personal and national development, the tool which shapes and forms social, economic, and cultural progress. Her presentation, which is published here, is a sobering analysis of the problems which impact education in Africa, but it also offers hope in personally challenging all of us, especially during the Jubilee Year 2000, to make a personal commitment: "The process of globalization demands that we all work together for the welfare of us all."

Thomas J. Hinnebusch

April 2000

JAMES S. COLEMAN – AN APPRECIATION

It is a great honor and privilege for me to be invited to deliver the 7th James S. Coleman Lecture, in 1999. This is also an honor to the *Forum For African Women Educationists* (FAWE), the organization I served as the founding Executive Director for six years. Your invitation provides a unique opportunity for me to share with a distinguished audience some of the challenges facing education in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in particular the need to accelerate the education of girls and women as a prerequisite for Africa's development.

Allow me to acknowledge Professor Thomas J. Hinnebusch for extending the invitation to me, Doctor Vijitha Eyango who identified me, and all other individuals who were involved in the not too easy a process of getting me to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

1 INTRODUCTION

In any discussion on development in Sub-Saharan Africa one must, at the outset, be wary of too much generalization, which can turn simplistic. Africa is a very large continent. We are dealing here with a region characterized by enormous diversities, and individual nation states, each unique in its own way. There are, however, numerous common characteristics that demand a united front in order to enhance cooperation and collaboration in overcoming some of the problems that continue to hinder Africa's development. The continent is characterized by armed conflict, civil strife, declining economies and high rates of population growth which all have implications for development.

1.1 CONCERN WITH EDUCATION

Compelling evidence is today available to link education with numerous benefits, which combine to contribute to the popular view that education is the foundation of development. This is like stating the obvious but just as a reminder: The World Conference on Education for All, held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, underlined the role of education for ensuring a safer, healthier, more environmentally sound world. The conference also identified education as a crucial contributor to social, economic and cultural progress, tolerance, and capacity for cooperation, among other benefits.

In its World Development Report (1998/1999), the World Bank cites various studies that link basic education with the fostering of agricultural innovation and productivity, improving resource management and utilization, promoting the use of new technologies, and enhancing the capabilities of people to harness the knowledge they need for their own and their countries' development. The Delor's Report, "Learning the Treasure Within" (1996), adds yet another dimension of education – that learning is no longer an activity merely preparing one for a productive life; it is a requirement throughout life, a continuous process for each human being, of adding to and adapting one's knowledge, skills, judgment and capacities for action. The report has identified the four pillars of education as: 1- Learning to know, 2- Learning to do, 3- Learning to live together; learning to live with others, and 4-Learning to be.

Investment in human knowledge, skills and capacities is, and must therefore remain, a priority for all nations, especially the poor countries if their economies are to improve. Through its effects on productivity and other aspects of life such as health, and population growth, education influences and determines the well-being of the individual, the nation, and indeed the world.

Awareness is, however, not a goal in itself. This awareness leads to increasing concern over the status of education in Sub-Saharan Africa which, as we demonstrate later, is characterized by low access, retention and completion, and low quality, which leads to poor achievement.

1.2 THE AFRICAN DREAM

Awareness of the intimate relationship between education and development characterized the African dream of each nation at independence. With the end of colonial rule, political independence was expected to open the gates to development, equity, justice, and material well-being. Newly independent African countries, without exception, loudly declared their commitment to fight ignorance and disease, and to eradicate poverty, besides eliminating inequality and repression. Development was viewed as the process of giving back to Africans control of their lives. In addition, it was intended to enable people to improve, in a sustained manner, their ability to keep healthy, to provide basic needs for their families, and to acquire knowledge and information pertinent to their well being. It would also enable them to participate in making decisions about crucial issues of survival and, above all, to anticipate and influence for a better life for their children. Within this context and vision, education for all children was identified as a priority of all countries. Some stated in their initial development plans and manifestos the goal of providing free, compulsory and universal primary education, and relative increases at other levels of education. Such was the optimism characterizing the dawn of independence.

As we approach the new millennium, the dream of achieving education for all in Sub-Saharan Africa remains elusive. There is no doubt that significant progress has been made in Africa's development, with phenomenal growth in education and health services in some countries, in addition to the development of infrastructure and communication systems. Investment in education by governments, communities and other stakeholders during the last three decades has led to impressive expansion of access to education.

For example:

Only 25 percent of children were enrolled in primary school in 1960 in Sub-Saharan Africa with twice as many boys as girls attending primary school. By 1980 over 60 per cent were enrolled. More recently, the enrolment of girls has increased but not in sufficient numbers and there is significant variation between countries and regions within each country. It is, nevertheless, clear that even as progress has been recorded in some sectors, there have emerged strong negative forces that continue to militate against Africa's development.

1.3 FACTORS HINDERING EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Several factors continue to hinder development in the education sector. The rate of economic growth is very slow and at times stagnant, hindering development of all the sectors. No country can achieve expansion in education without economic growth. A consequence or reflection of this negative trend is the rising level of poverty at the household level, which reduces the capacity of families to provide for the basic needs of their children. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes is often accompanied by the policy of cost sharing. A concerned poor parent with serious interest in her children's education recently asked, "How can you share what you don't have?"

The burden of debt servicing has crippled growth in most countries, consequently paralyzing the social sector. Some African governments are currently spending 40% or more of their revenue on debt servicing. Countries with heavy debt burdens cannot raise income. The poor research base leads to lack of accurate projections and development of reliable indicators for monitoring progress and achievement. Various international and regional documents compiled by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the OAU frequently indicate blank marks for several African countries with the footnote: "data not available". This leads to poor planning. Moreover, the frequency of political upheavals and emergencies contributes to the impoverishment of Africa, with valuable resources being lost in wars and conflicts. Twenty African countries have experienced such upheavals since 1996. Wars are destructive and the education systems of countries in conflict take a long time to recover. More resources are allocated to defense in preparation for, or in response to such wars, resources that could have been used for development.

At an average rate of over 3 percent, the Sub-Saharan Africa population growth rate is the highest among the developing countries. Coupled with economic decline, this growth rate has caused major reversals in schooling rates since the 1980s. It threatens to decrease education enrolment rates in the future, since the rate of increase in education facilities is not sufficient to respond to the level of need to stem the growing numbers of out-of-school children.

The rising incidence of HIV/AIDS is already eroding the gains made in education and it threatens future opportunities for schooling. The death of parents leads to child-headed households with no hope of schooling for such children. Resources that could have been used for education are used for caring for the sick. Any accumulated savings are spent on medication, which further impoverishes any survivors. Girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school in order to take care of the sick, and younger siblings. Some traditional cultural practices and negative attitudes and beliefs continue to hinder the education of

children, especially girls. Among these are early or forced marriage, initiation rites and circumcision. In most traditions, girls are viewed and treated as inferior to boys. Above mentioned and other factors combined justify a call for alert on the status of education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

1.4 THE CURRENT SITUATION

The “State of the World’s Children 1999” report, (UNICEF 1998), estimates that nearly a billion people will enter the 21st Century unable to read a book, or sign their names – much less operate a computer or understand a simple application form. Their numbers are growing. In addition, over 130 million children of school age are growing up without access to basic education, 81 million of whom are girls. Of the 100 million children who drop out of primary school before completing four years, two thirds are girls. The gender gap in school age children and adult literacy is widest in the poorest countries, the majority of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Except for a few countries, education in Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by low enrolment, high rates of wastage due to high drop out, repetition and absenteeism, and low achievement, retention and completion rates. Poor performance is a result of the low quality of education caused by poor teacher preparation and motivation, inadequacy of infrastructure and learning materials, and examination oriented education systems. Progress towards the eradication of illiteracy has been consistently low especially because of the inability of the school system to prevent children from growing up illiterate. The number of illiterates increased by 3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1990. The shortage of resources has resulted in the near collapse of technical, vocational and university education in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Current projections cast a very gloomy picture of accelerated marginalization of Sub-Saharan Africa on the global scene, with an increase of 9 million in the number of children out of school between 1995 and 2015.

The World Conference on Education For All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, galvanized global consensus that education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth. The conference expanded the concept of basic education to include early childhood care and development, and learning through adolescence and adulthood. It also made the education of girls a major priority. New goals and targets were set and new partnerships identified at all levels, aimed at making Education For All (EFA) a reality.

Evaluation of progress so far, though not a shining example of success, demonstrates that the situation is not without hope. When Malawi introduced free primary education in 1994, primary school enrolment increased to over 80 per cent. In 1997 Uganda made primary education free for four children per family, two of whom are girls, a measure that doubled enrolment from 2.6 million to 5.2 million. Such courageous efforts need to be encouraged and replicated, if Sub-Saharan Africa is to get over the current gloomy projections in educational achievement.

2 THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

2.1 WHY EMPHASIZE GIRLS' EDUCATION?

The education of girls is today widely recognized as the most effective development investment a country can make. Girls' education raises economic productivity, reduces fertility rates, lowers infant and maternal mortality, improves the health, nutrition and well-being of families, and ensures better prospects of education for children. It promotes sound management of environmental resources and is closely associated with the reduction of poverty, by enabling women's absorption into the economy as employees and in self-employment. Education increases the participation of women in community and national affairs and in the democratization of societies. The education of girls and women is of particular significance to Sub-Saharan Africa, where economic and social development is grossly constrained by rapid population growth and inadequate development of the human resource base. Women are the foundation of life in Sub-Saharan Africa due to their multiple and critical roles in the family as homemakers, caretakers, workers, producers and managers of food, and managers of environmental resources such as water and fuel. Their education does, therefore, act as a springboard for sustainable development.

In the light of this reality, is it not distressing that over 30 million girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are missing from school? Those who are enrolled in school are frequently so poorly served that by the end of the fourth year, more than half have dropped out without acquiring functional literacy. The completion rate at the primary school cycle in Kenya, for example, remains at 35 percent for girls compared to 55 percent for boys. As we go up the education ladder, the gender disparities widen radically. In some countries, only 10 - 15% of girls compared to 35 - 45% of boys attend secondary school.

In Kenya and Tanzania, the undergraduate student population at the public universities consists of 30 percent females and 70 percent males. The drop out rate at both secondary and tertiary levels is also

higher for girls than it is for boys. In qualitative terms, it is well established that given equal opportunities, girls perform as well as and sometimes better than boys. For example in 1996, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) revealed that in most countries, girls and boys had approximately the same average mathematics achievement. However in many instances, and for a variety of reasons, in Sub-Saharan Africa, girls' performance is lower than that of boys, especially in crucial areas such as mathematics, science and technical subjects. Poor performance at primary and secondary levels hinders girls' entry into higher levels and shuts them out of careers that are more lucrative in the African environment. Knowledge of mathematics and science is particularly supportive to the dominant roles of women in agricultural production and the informal trade sector, where the majority of women in Sub-Saharan Africa derive their sustenance.

2.2 ENRICHING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

The good news is that we have made progress. In the last two decades, a wealth of knowledge has been generated on the constraints hindering girls' participation in education. Advances have also been made in the development of successful strategies for addressing these constraints. Although within countries, efforts are still needed to convince some sectors of the population of the importance of girls' education, concerted efforts are now focused on ways of ensuring that all girls enroll in education, that they persist and complete each cycle of the education system, enabling them to reap full benefits from such education. Several efforts are underway in the various countries to enrich the knowledge base on girls' participation and to provide examples of what needs to be done, in a comprehensive manner, to accelerate their participation. This is a result of combined efforts of national governments, national and regional non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development and donor agencies, research organizations, communities and parents. The Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) has been at the fore-front of these efforts, contributing to the growth of knowledge, and as an active participant in identifying solutions. FAWE is a membership organization that brings together African women who are ministers in charge of national education systems and female vice-chancellors of African universities. FAWE's purpose is to facilitate concrete actions and national policy debate on female education within Sub-Saharan Africa, and between African countries and the international assistance community. FAWE members believe in their capacity to make a difference in the education of girls in their countries. They do this by supporting innovative action and experimental strategies for overcoming obstacles to girls' education, mobilizing civil society associations and society as a whole, to pay more attention to the needs of girls and women in the planning and implementation of national education policy, and encouraging dialogue with governments and other stakeholders to improve investments in female education. FAWE

members stimulate demand for research on issues affecting the education of girls, and ensure that national education policies are informed by research – thereby creating essential linkage between research and practice. The network has a membership in 31 Sub-Saharan Africa countries.

2.3 CONSTRAINTS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION

The barriers that FAWE has identified as hindering girls' education can be categorized into four areas: household related factors, socio-cultural factors, school related factors and policy related factors.

Household Related Factors

These include:

1. Poverty which is a major factor in determining the parents' ability to meet direct and indirect costs of education – tuition fees, cost of textbooks and other learning materials, activity fees, the cost of uniforms, transport, building fees etc. Girls are primary casualties when education becomes unaffordable to families.
2. Opportunity cost of schooling, which is higher for girls than for boys because of their multiple roles as household workers and assistants to mothers. Late enrolment, absenteeism and drop out among girls are closely associated with these roles.
3. Household size, which may determine how many, and which children, will be educated.
4. The level of education of parents, especially the mother, which is a determinant of who goes to school and for how long. The parental perception of the value of education is influenced by the level of education and awareness of benefits of education.

Socio-Cultural Factors

These include:

1. Perception of the school versus the society's cultural norms. The school is sometimes seen as an alienating force that undermines cultural values.
2. Traditional attitudes towards marriage that view investment in girls' education as "watering another man's garden" – after all any benefits will go to another family!
3. Socialization patterns that assume girls should be docile, passive and modest while boys are aggressive, adventurous and out-going. This leads to girls' disadvantage when they have to learn and share learning facilities and equipment with boys. Girls would also be expected to suppress their brilliance, or be subjected to ridicule.

4. The social status of women in society and negative attitudes towards women as subordinates, influence decision-making on investment in girls' education.
5. Traditional practices, e.g., early marriage and initiation rites, interfere more with the education of girls than that of boys.

School Related Factors

These include:

1. Inadequacy of facilities in school which hinders access, with particular reference to rural and urban areas, arid and semi-arid lands. Many classrooms lack furniture, with children sitting on the floor or on stones, a factor that disadvantages girls due to their mode of dress. Lack of sanitary facilities impacts more on girls than boys.
2. Gender bias in the curriculum – teachers, syllabus, textbooks and deliver systems.
3. Low quality of education, lack of relevance and practical application.
4. Hostile learning environment characterized by exploitation of girls' labour and sexual harassment.
5. Lack of female role models.
6. School management practices that discriminate against girls.

Policy Related Factors

These include:

1. Policies of exclusion, e.g., of pregnant school girls and adolescent mothers.
2. Lack of articulation in policies for the achievement of gender equity.
3. Inequitable policies and practices in resource allocation.
4. Gender blind policies in the selection and posting of teachers.
5. Inadequate policies for monitoring gender equity in education.

At the tertiary level, female students face similar constraints in addition to inadequate access due to poor performance at lower levels of education, with particular reference to science, mathematics and technical subjects. There is also lack of guidance in the choice of subject combinations, peer pressure that discourages women students from enrolling in male dominated fields, and lack of support mechanisms in a male dominated environment. The challenge is to refine available knowledge in order to localize it. This would facilitate more focused interventions.

3 PROMISING INTERVENTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

3.1 PROMISING INTERVENTIONS

1. Political Will & Commitments to EFA Translated Into:

- Clearly articulated education policies that are gender responsive and deliberately promote gender equity.
- Social policies and legislation supportive to the status and roles of women.
- Structural support e.g. establishment of a Gender Unit within the Ministry of Education and that of a National Task Force on Gender and Education for advising on and monitoring girls' participation (Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia).
- Declaration of Compulsory Education (even mere statement of intent is important)
- Policy on re-entry for drop-outs (e.g. pregnancy).
- Legislation and policies aimed at curbing sexual harassment.
- Entry age policies that are gender responsive.
- Legislation against child labour. Several countries have now outlawed child labour or are in the process of doing so using the children's convention to strengthen their hand.
- Gender responsive admission policies – (Affirmative Action, quota system, relaxed criteria) for academic and training programmes.
- Positive policies towards NGO and Community partnerships.
- Institutionalization of data collection desegregated by gender and their use in policy making and planning. Ownership and pride in knowledge, however depressing: Partnership with and support to research institutions.
- Adoption and operationalization of decentralisation as a deliberate strategy for tapping all available resources, enhancing partnerships and empowering local authorities and communities to intervene at the grassroots level, e.g., to curb early marriage and discourage harmful initiation rites. It is now common practice to hear of chiefs stopping premature withdrawal of girls from school in Kenya.

2. Cost Related Interventions:

- Lowering and/or eliminating direct costs, e.g., free primary education in Malawi which increased enrolment by 67 percent. Other examples are Ghana and Zimbabwe. Kenya's declaration of free and universal primary education 1974 - 1979 increased girls' enrolment in primary schools by over 40 percent.

- Bursaries/scholarships targeting the poor, e.g., Kenya where both government and NGOs provide bursaries and other subsidies and incentives – uniforms, lunches.
- Monitoring the impact of cost-sharing measures on girls' education.
- Determining what costs are essential and what trimmings can be eliminated, especially the school uniform which is more expensive for girls than for boys.
- Decentralization of educational administration and management and community involvement.

3. School Related Factors:

- Creation of a school environment and institutional culture that are support to and empowering for girls and in which parents have confidence; design of an EFFECTIVE SCHOOL for encouraging enrolment, reducing repetition and drop-out, and enhancing achievement.
- Gender sensitization of all teachers and other educational personnel.
- Review of curriculum, examinations and other educational materials for gender responsiveness and provision of support materials for teaching and learning: (RE: FAWE's ABC of Gender) Analysis in the education sector.
- Facilitation of re-entry of drop-outs to increase completion.
- Remedial and counselling programmes targeting girls.
- Presence and visibility of female teachers in all geographical regions especially arid and semi-arid areas and in non-traditional female subject areas, e.g., science and technology.
- Gender sensitive provision and allocation of school resources – physical facilities and equipment.
- Streaming by gender and where possible single sex schools especially at the secondary school level. Provision of boarding facilities especially for nomadic communities to increase retention completion, improve performance, and enhance security.
- Flexibility in scheduling school sessions to accommodate socio-economic responsibilities of children in family and community. Such flexibility is currently visible only in non-formal education.
- Integration of Family Life Education (FLE) as an essential component of curriculum at all levels of education and designed to empower girls and boys for healthy interaction with the opposite sex. FLE should inculcate self-confidence in girls' ability to manage their sexuality.
- Deliberate strengthening of girls' participation in maths, science and technical subjects.

3.2 LESSONS LEARNT

The problems hindering girls' participation in education are inter-related and hence demand a multi-faceted strategy and comprehensive approach, in order to ensure that they are holistic and simultaneous. Each set of constraints needs to be matched with corresponding interventions. The enactment of gender responsive education policies needs to be accompanied by gender sensitive planners and practitioners, and the development of gender responsive indicators for monitoring successful implementation. The provision of bursaries and other subsidies needs to be complemented by supportive parents and conducive environments, both at home and at school. This calls for successful advocacy programmes, gender sensitization of teachers and curriculum developers, legislation to curb early marriage, and flexible school calendars that take into account the competing priorities on girls' time. All these activities need to be undertaken at the same time because they are complementary. This approach is labeled "the package approach".

No one agency has adequate capacity for addressing all these constraints especially when using the package approach. In Sub-Saharan Africa the government alone cannot provide all the support needed to facilitate the achievement of EFA or the achievement of gender equity at all levels of the education system. The task at hand demands a combination of partnerships – governments, NGOs, religious organizations, researchers, the media, community leaders, women's organizations, teachers' organizations, donor partners and individuals – to ensure that all the country specific constraints are addressed adequately. Different actors contribute according to their area of strength, experience or expertise. The media is particularly suited for advocacy outreach, while community and religious leaders are credible door-to-door campaigners. The latter are also well placed for identifying the real poor in the case of bursary awards. Women's organizations undertake advocacy and monitoring roles, while teachers' organizations facilitate gender sensitization, and the creation of a girl-friendly school environment. We are engaged with a "HARAMBEE EFFORT" – voluntary, cooperative effort in mutual support.

The provision of additional resources alone is not adequate. It has to be accompanied by sustained political will, commitment to the achievement of gender equity, supportive policies and other mechanisms for ensuring implementation of gender responsive policies. Lack of resources is no longer an excuse for doing nothing. It is more important to ensure gender mainstreaming within on-going policies and programmes.

While general improvements aimed at the education system may not benefit girls, improvements that target girls also benefit boys. Peer support is an important strategy for improving girls' participation. The

creation of girls' clubs provides for platforms to share experiences and engage in self-confidence instilling activities. It is important that boys too are sensitized on the importance of girls' education and the fact that they too stand to benefit from it.

4 THE FAWE STRATEGY

4.1 FAWE

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) works to ensure that programmes targeting girls' education are well focused and carefully designed for greatest impact. FAWE is working with other partners to ensure implementation of a wide range of support that responds in a comprehensive approach to the multiple problems facing girls' education within a specific country environment. The popularization of "the package approach" is among FAWE priorities, to ensure that measures aimed at increasing access are accompanied by quality and relevance targeted interventions, which are also important for ensuring persistence and achievement.

Among the strengths of FAWE, as an indigenous network of African women senior policy makers in education are:

1. its dual status as a non-government organization whose core membership consists of government ministers and government-appointed vice-chancellors. This status enables members to work with the independence of an NGO, while at the same time having access to, and influence over, mainstream education and government policies;
2. its broad network of National Chapters in 31 member-countries whose membership brings together various specialized skills and expertise, with grassroots outreach;
3. its credibility with governments, other NGOs and funding agencies, built over the last six years as the leading authority on female education in Africa; and
4. its focused attention on influencing education policies, which makes its members have a comparative advantage, since they themselves are policy makers.

4.2 THE MISSION

In recognition of the crucial role that women play in development, FAWE identified its overall mission as helping ensure that women and girls are an integral part of the intellectual and technical resource base needed for the survival and prosperity of Africa. As a mechanism to promote the education

of girls and women throughout the continent, FAWE nurtures collaboration in developing national capabilities to accelerate the participation of girls and women in education at all levels, in line with the goals of Education For All. FAWE works with ministries of education and creates inter-sectoral partnerships to ensure that:

1. gender equity is in-built in all educational policies in particular, and in all programmes of national development generally, and that where gender imbalances in education persist, positive and specific short term affirmative action is taken to redress them; and
2. there is continuous and rigorous debate on, and review of, all social policies that impinge on how education policy is developed and implemented.

4.3 THE GOALS

Although the goals of EFA are clear globally, implementation strategies have to be devised at the national level, taking into account demographic conditions, resource constraints, and the implications of the expansion and development of education delivery systems. FAWE's over-arching goal is to use its forum as an intellectual resource to assist members in the development of national capabilities to evolve, try out and improve strategies that have the potential to accelerate female participation in education, and move toward achievement of EFA. FAWE contributes to sound human resource development policies by providing and widely disseminating examples of good practice in strategic resource planning, development and deployment.

4.4 THE OBJECTIVES

FAWE has had the following specific objectives:

1. to influence educational policies relevant to education so as to increase access and retention and improve performance of girls and women in education;
2. to build public awareness and consensus on the social and economic advantages of female education through advocacy;
3. to gather and analyze existing data to facilitate the design of interventions in favour of girls' education and monitor progress;
4. to support, document and disseminate information on innovative strategies aimed at improving and accelerating female participation in education;

5. to create and sustain partnerships with governments, donors and NGOs to increase their investment in girls' education; and
6. to assist in the development of capacity to accelerate and monitor female participation in education both at the regional and national levels.

4.5 PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

The six objectives translate into programme activities as follows:

Objective 1

To influence educational policies relevant to female education so as to increase access and retention, and improve performance of girls and women in education.

FAWE continues to expand and strengthen its core membership, at both regional and national levels, of people who can influence education policies with focus on:

- 1) Full members
- 2) Associate members
- 3) National Chapters (NCs)

Particular emphasis is laid on facilitating the establishment of fully functional National Chapters that are nerve centres for girls' education in their countries, are able to carry out advocacy activities, initiate review and debate of policies, collect and analyze data on girls' education, and undertake experimentation and demonstration interventions.

Through the Strategic Resource Planning project, FAWE encourages the identification of the most promising policy choices in achieving Education For All in general, and girls' education in particular, and assists governments in identifying strategies to reduce wastage in education systems focusing on girls.

Objective 2

To build public awareness and consensus on the social and economic advantages of female education through advocacy.

While maintaining a focus on high level policy makers, FAWE widens the focus of its advocacy to middle level policy makers and grassroots opinion leaders through the implementation of a multimedia advocacy approach. Production of targeted advocacy materials maintains this focus to create gender

awareness among education policy makers and other target groups. National Chapter members are provided with opportunities to acquire skills in effective advocacy and in the creation and sustaining of partnerships with the media to promote girls' education.

Objective 3

To gather and analyze existing data to facilitate the design of interventions in favour of girls' education, and to monitor progress.

FAWE endeavors to play the role of "custodian and analyser of continent wide data on the status of girls' education in Africa." This is achieved by encouraging National Chapters to collect data and fill in the FAWE National Score Card, and to analyze and synthesize the data. Studies are commissioned on important issues in girls' education where data are lacking.

FAWE has developed a Resource Centre at the Secretariat as a depository for information and data on girls' education, and has encouraged the development of resource and documentation centres at the national level.

Objective 4

To support, document and disseminate information on innovative strategies for improving and accelerating female participation in education.

FAWE believes that it is important to demonstrate what works under what circumstances, supports innovative ideas and projects that show potential for improving and promoting girls' access to education and their performance, and reducing gender imbalances in education. This is achieved through the experimentation and demonstration grants programme and the administration of the Agathe Uwilingiyimana Award by FAWE National Chapters. FAWE reviews innovative ideas, evaluates them and develops methodology for their replication.

Objective 5

To create and sustain partnerships with governments, donors, NGOs and other stakeholders in education to increase their investment in girls' education.

FAWE has established its presence at the international, continental and national levels. Specific emphasis is laid on identifying and defining the nature and purpose of partnerships and networks that are most beneficial for the achievement of FAWE goals.

FAWE supports and facilitates National Chapters in their efforts to build and strengthen linkages with other organizations and individuals involved in education.

Objective 6

To assist in the development of capacity to accelerate and monitor female participation in education both at the regional and at the national level.

FAWE seeks to support the creation of national level networks that can act as nerve centres for girls' education. In particular, FAWE tries to build the capacity of National Chapters in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

4.6 ROLE OF NATIONAL CHAPTERS

It is the broader membership of the FAWE National Chapters that establishes essential linkages with grassroots institutions, communities and parents. Effective advocacy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education policies, reforms and programmes demand action at the most local level.

FAWE National Chapters are expected to:

1. persuade governments to implement strategic resource planning and target advocacy for policy development in education using relevant and practical tools;
2. try out, identify and document innovative strategies in formal education that complement national EFA strategies, especially as they relate to female participation;
3. assume responsibility for ensuring gender equity in all national development policies;
4. generate and/or use national statistics and up-to-date gender differentiated national data to advocate for gender equity;
5. establish and maintain resource centres with literature and reliable research data on girls' education; and
6. establish upstream channels with the ministries of education and other key actors in education, as well as downstream linkages with community groups, parents, teachers and youth associations through which to implement sensitization, dissemination and advocacy efforts.

4.7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE PLANNING (SRP)

Through this programme, FAWE has examined the causes of low enrolment of girls and has identified possible strategies and policy options available to governments to redress gender imbalances for the achievement of EFA through resource allocation, cost-shifting and cost-sharing. Nine countries are involved in this process so far, a process that also brings together all partners in education at the national level jointly to assess the proposed policy options, the resources available and to pool such resources for increased outreach and improved quality in education.

4.8 FAWE ACTIVITIES AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL

FAWE's involvement at the tertiary level is aimed at creating an enabling environment for the female community – students, managers, lecturers and researchers. Specifically, FAWE has developed a programme of activities aimed at strengthening female leadership at the tertiary level. These activities fall under three broad areas: 1) Policy and Research, 2) Capacity Building, and 3) Supporting Networking.

1. Policy and Research

The main objective is to collect data on issues such as access, persistence and performance, of female students, academic and management staff, and take stock of university expenditures in nine universities in the region. It will provide a valid comparative data-base and also a credible basis for raising issues on female participation at that level. In partnership with the Association of African Universities (AAU), a survey of current gender programmes in African universities is also underway. It aims at taking stock of measures already being implemented to redress gender imbalances, and at assessing the impact of such measures. There is also a collaborative effort with the AAU to create a data base of female experts in SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA aimed at raising the visibility of women professionals for equitable inclusion in decision making and development research.

2. Capacity Building

FAWE supported the creation of the Africa Gender Institute (AGI) at the University of Cape Town and is involved in building the research capacity of female researchers and assisting them to get published. Spearheaded by FAWE Core member and Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Dr. Mamphela Ramphela, the Institute nurtures young women academics and researchers, providing them with an enabling environment to improve their skills and knowledge.

3. Supporting Networking

FAWE ensures women's representation and effective participation in crucial regional and international higher education fora. Another major priority for FAWE is ensuring that educational and gender research undertaken by universities in Africa finds its way into government ministries and is used to inform policy. Through the Associations of University Women and Young Career Women at the national level, FAWE also encourages counseling and networking with girls at primary and secondary levels. The use of role models inspires girls towards educational achievement. It may, in the longer term, help to increase the number of female students in universities. The TUSEME Festival at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, spearheaded by the current Executive Director of FAWE, Professor Penina Mlamba, brings together school girls and academicians for enriching interaction, and provides girls with a creative opportunity to articulate the problems they face in education.

4.9 FAWE PARTNERSHIPS

As indicated earlier, the problems facing girls in education cannot be holistically addressed successfully by one agency. FAWE has cultivated a mutually supportive partnership with several agencies and organizations at national, regional and international levels. In summary, FAWE works in partnership with these and other groups in the following areas:

1. Creating demand for policy research on factors that constrain and those that encourage girls' effective participation in education and advocating for gender responsive education policies.
2. Disseminating closely targeted information on girls' education through a variety of media including print, electronic, and folk media, and presentations at various strategic fora.
3. Improving the quality of education with particular reference to gender sensitization of education managers, curriculum development personnel and textbook writers and publishers, and the provision of relevant and adequate learning materials and facilities.
4. Improving the school environment to meet the specific needs of girls, including water and sanitary facilities, and paying particular attention to the security and safety of girls in and out of school.
5. Reducing the direct costs and opportunity cost of schooling for girls.
6. Encouraging networking and sharing on issues affecting girls' education to facilitate identification, adoption and replication of successful strategies.
7. Mobilizing additional resources for education generally and specifically for girls' education, e.g., for improving girls' schools and providing for sponsorship through bursary scholarships.

5 TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Africa is making gradual progress towards the achievement of basic education for all and gender equity. Other levels of education are also developing although at a slower rate. The following are among the challenges facing the region as we approach the 21st Century:

1. The sustainability and acceleration of on-going efforts demand that Africa takes full advantage of the dynamics of grassroots communities which provide for social cohesion, mutual aid and solidarity which, if well harnessed provides an unprecedented opportunity for the development of education.
2. Ensuring that quantitative growth in education at all levels is accompanied by improvements in quality. This calls for significant improvement in teacher training programmes and in the overall status and welfare of teachers. It also calls for innovative and collaborative efforts in the production of textbooks and other learning materials aimed at improving quality and reducing cost.
3. African education systems need to aim at stimulating the achievement of applicable knowledge that can be utilized to alleviate and eliminate problems that continue to haunt the region – ignorance, poverty, hunger and disease. The issues of quality, relevance and effectiveness of education need greater attention, i.e., greater focus on the processes and outcomes of learning.
4. While measures aimed at increasing the resource base must continue to be enhanced. African countries should endeavor to maximize the utilization of existing resources through rationalized allocation and more efficient management, in order to curb wastage.
5. The potential of expanding the role of the information technology in education is still largely untapped. Efforts directed at the use of Information Technology (IT) need to address identified problems in African education, i.e., access, retention/persistence, quality and achievement. At the tertiary level, the challenge for Africa is to use the technological innovations for efficient, more cost-effective ways of producing, managing, disseminating and accessing knowledge.
6. The financial constraints facing governments demand the liberalization of education in a supportive environment, to facilitate the effective participation of all existing and potential partners – NGOs, civil society, the private sector and communities. There is need to increase the role of communities and parents as part of the education strategy. Coordination of all their efforts remains a government responsibility, added to that of ensuring the inclusion of all disadvantaged groups.
7. Current projections indicate that African countries need to achieve a minimum of 7 percent growth rate in order to reduce poverty by half in 15 years, according to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). This calls for innovative strategies at the national level, collaborative efforts at regional and international levels, and increased support from the international community.

8. With specific reference to girls' education, African countries need to sustain the political will for the elimination of gender disparities in education at all levels, and to strengthen the mechanisms in place for monitoring the implementation of gender equity policies and programmes. In addition, they need to challenge and seriously address aspects of culture, attitudes and practices that continue to hinder the advancement of women.

At the International Level

1. More forces are needed to support the appeal by UNICEF, UNESCO and OXFAM for waiving the debts owed to developed countries by poor countries in order to boost education and other social services.
2. The Jubilee 2000 is another international movement that puts pressure on governments in the North to cancel debt in an attempt to provide poor countries with a fresh start, to facilitate poverty reduction.
3. Support from international funding agencies is crucial for the development of education in most Sub-Saharan Africa countries. However, as Ingemar Gustafson of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) so appropriately stated: *“Education is the responsibility of the countries themselves. It is they who must take the leadership role in policy making, implementation, and in coordinating the assistance of funding agencies. However, funding agencies have knowledge and experience that can be shared in a spirit of partnership and collegiality among governments and donor partners.”* (Sawyerr: ADEA, 1997).
4. Collaborative efforts between institutions of learning, especially in the field of research are also important for providing mutual support in the development of knowledge and refining of strategies.

FAWE looks forward to cooperation and collaboration with the James S. Coleman Centre for African studies and others interested in the education of girls and women specifically, and education in Sub-Saharan Africa generally. The process of globalization demands that we all work together for the welfare of us all.

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