

## Gender Inequality in Education in sub-Saharan Africa



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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the issue of gender inequality in education in sub-Saharan Africa. It argues that in sub-Saharan African countries, the provision of education for boys and girls is uneven, and biased through gender, location, class and region- resulting to high illiteracy rates for girls and women. The paper concludes that political instability and violence, poverty and economical challenges, negative cultural values, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and sexual harassment are some of the leading contributors to gender inequality in education. Other factors that exacerbate gender inequality are lack of gender responsiveness among the teachers, ineffective teaching, and lack of learning materials, poor learning environment, and impact of HIV/AIDS. The paper contends that gender inequality in education holds back the growth of individuals, the development of countries and the evolution of societies to the disadvantage of both men and women if not addressed-should be at the beginning. Strategies and interventions that have the potential to eliminate gender disparities in education in developing countries are discussed in this paper.*

**KEY WORDS:** *gender inequality, education, Sahara, Africa*

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## **Introduction**

The post world war period has witnessed a significant increase in the importance accorded to education, with both “instrumental” as well as “intrinsic” arguments made for increasing financial investment and policy attention to education provision in sub-Saharan Africa. The sub-Saharan Africa region comprises the forty-two countries on the African continent south of the Sahara Africa and the six island nations close to it. The considerable importance that has been attached to education in this area is based on the assumption that education plays a crucial role in promoting social and economic development (Nwomonoh, 1998; World Bank, 95). Besides encouraging changes in behavior that lead to improvement of the human condition, education instills self-confidence and self-reliance in an individual. It also enables one to make informed decisions in such areas as health and nutrition, family planning, water and sanitation, food production and its management (Gartner, 2010; Watkins, 1999). The education of girls or women in particular has cascading benefits, including helping to decrease poverty, prevent disease, eradicate violence and deter political instability. It is also a means of securing intergenerational transfers of knowledge, and providing the substance of long-term gender equality and social change.

Sub-Saharan Africa has registered profound change in both participation and educational expansion in all levels of education since independence. The number of children enrolled in primary education grew more than six-fold jumping from 12 million to almost 61 million (excluding South Africa) between 1960 and 2000. The Net-Enrollment Ratio (NER) for primary education climbed from 56% in 1999 to 70% in 2006. In 2006, more than 23 million of the region’s children entered a classroom for the first time – an increase of some 7 million over the level in 1999 (UNESCO, 2009). The region accounted for the world’s highest increase in total primary enrollment, which rose by 42% between 1999 and 2006. This increase enabled countries such as Botswana, Cape Verde, Congo, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and, Togo, and Zimbabwe) to achieve primary gross enrollment rate of 100 percent (UNESCO, 2008). While the number of primary school aged children out-of-school has dropped by 10 million since 1999, still 35 million children of primary school age were not enrolled in 2006, about one-third of this area’s population. The region accounts for 47% of the world’s out-of-

school population, with 54 percent of being girls (UNESCO 2009; Buchmann, 1999). The average primary school completion rates for boys stand at 56 percent, but only 46 percent for girls (low in both cases). Countries such as Burkina Faso, Guinea, Madagascar, Mozambique and Niger have less than 15 percent of girls completing primary school. Girls make up more than half of the school-age population in most SSA countries and account for only 44.0 percent of primary school enrollments in 1980s. At the secondary level, enrollment increased by fifteen times between 1960s and 1990s. The number of student enrolled jumped from almost 800,000 to 12 million between 1960 and 1999. Girl's only accounts for 34.0 percent of secondary school enrollments in 2008, and few African countries will achieve gender parity target by 2015 at the secondary level if the current trends continues UNESCO, 2008). Tertiary enrollment increased by twenty times with the number of those enrolled rising from 21,000 to 600,000 between 1999 and 2006 (UNESCO, 2006; Cockerton, 2004). Female consisted 21.0 percent of university level enrollments in 1980s. They were less than two-fifths of the population, with only 38 percent enrolled in tertiary education in 2007 Furthermore, those female students enrolled in postsecondary education concentrated in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, with a weaker presence in scientific and technological subjects. For example, female students constituted a mere 40 percent of total enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa in technical and vocational education in 2005 (UNESCO, 2009).

The factors behind the gender inequity and inequality in education expounded later are driven by socioeconomic and political and factors that include political instability and violence, poverty and economical challenges, negative cultural values, attitudes and practices that foster female genital mutilation, early marriage and sexual harassment are some of the leading contributors to gender inequity and inequality in education. There is also the lack of gender responsiveness among the teachers, in the curriculum, teaching methodology, teaching and learning materials, school management systems and the overall school environment account for gender imbalance in education.

### **Political Instability and Civil Strife**

Political instability and civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa are regarded as serious malaise harmful to the development of education. Apart from the

destruction of education systems, political instability and civil wars cause gender inequality in education.

*Political instability and wars:* Political instability and strife and has become endemic to Sub-Saharan Africa. Since the early 1960s, when most of the African countries began to achieve independence, more than fifty coups have taken place in the continent. In the past ten years, the number of wars and internal conflicts have escalated, nearly a third of the forty-five countries in sub-Saharan Africa are embroiled in international or civil wars today. In the period between 1990 and 2005, 23 African nations have been scarred by violence. The list includes Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan and Uganda (Khadija, 1997; Richardson, 2000). Countries in the grip of civil strife have seen their education system suffer destruction because of the schools destroyed or damaged, while others have been used for residential purposes or barracks.

In the on going wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and areas of Sudan, children caught up in conflicts are not merely bystanders, but targets. The shocking part of war is the cynical exploitation of thousands of young people as combatants. Children do not attend schools during the war because parents may be afraid to let them, especially their daughters, out of their sight for fear that they will be abducted to become fighters or combatants' wives (Abdi, 1998; Boyden and Ryder, 1996). Some children fall victims to general onslaught against civilians; while others die as part of a calculated genocide. Still other children suffer the effects of violence or the multiple deprivations of armed conflict that expose them to hunger or disease. Conflicts also results in dramatic falls in student enrolments, displacement of teachers, looting of property and destruction of textbooks and damage of the educational curricula (Richardson, 2000). Children in conflict areas have been reported to experience trauma and suffer rampant diseases from malnutrition, sanitation problems, injuries, and lack of medical logistics that kept them from schools whenever they reopened (Richardson, 2000; Abdi, 1998). Besides the obvious blow to education of razed school buildings, a less deleterious cause may be the drawing away of funds for increased military expenditures to fight the civil war. *The Real Truth Magazine* (2007) estimates that \$18 billion is used on war per year and in the past 15 years,

almost \$300 billion has been squandered on armed conflict in Africa, capital that could have been used to lift the continent out of extreme poverty and to prevent the continuation of disease, poverty and ignorance.

*Safety and distance to school:* Insecurity and long distances to schools, and often the relationship between the two, are leading factors affecting children's attendance to school. The distribution of schools in most of sub-Saharan Africa is concentrated in urban areas, and there are large rural areas without schools. In some countries, children who want to go to school have to walk long distance through village paths to get there. In some situations, children walk many hours to and from school, this is not welcoming to those who are young, ill, physically disabled, or girls- exacerbating inequalities. There are two dimensions to this concern: one relates to the length of distance and the energy children have to expend to cover the distance, often with an empty stomach. The other relates to vulnerability while going to or coming from school each day. Parents are unwilling to send their children especially girls to distance schools where danger of being kidnapped, raped, molested and subjected to other forms of abuse looms large (Abdi, 1998; UNESCO, 2009). In rural Ethiopia, girls tend to drop out of school at a significantly higher rate when distance to walk to and from school is long. Location and distance of schools is a compelling factor for the flow of girls to schools in Eritrea. The gender difference in North Eastern Province of Kenya, among others, can be attributed to their remoteness and inaccessibility to schools (Ombati, 2003). In most of sub-Saharan Africa urban areas, girls are harassed both physically and verbally when they use public transport to and from school.

## **Economic Constraints**

Prospects for increasing educational opportunities to many children as possible in sub-Saharan African countries have been undermined by poverty, insufficient national budgetary allocations to education, debt servicing burdens and declining foreign aid to education.

*Poverty:* Poverty is the single largest factor that causes disparities in education. Poverty is pervasive across sub-Saharan African the region. Most people live on less than \$1 per day. A strong association between poverty and gender inequalities in education has been established. Inability to pay school fees, the costs of uniform, shoes, transport, stationary, added to the opportunity costs of what children might be contributing to

household labor, eat away at meager resources and push children from school. If all of their children cannot attend school, then parents will most likely give boys precedence over girls (UNICEF, 2006; King and Anne, 1997; *Ervin and Muriithi*, 2009). Studies have established that poverty weighs more heavily on girls than boys and gender differences in net attendance rates tend to be wider for poorer households in countries with relatively low school attendance (Watkins, 1999; Assie-Lumumba, 2000; King 1993). For example, the attendance disparity ratios of the richest to poorest quintile are significantly higher for girls than for boys in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali and the Niger. These ratios say something important about the unequal distribution of opportunity. For example, in Mali girls from the richest households are four times more likely to be attending primary school than the poorest girls (UNESCO, 2009). Waiving school levies and providing teaching materials can reverse this situation for both girls' and boys' enrollments. The abolition of school fees that prevents many children from going to school positively resulted in increased enrollment of 12 percent in Mozambique, 14 percent in Ghana, 18 percent in Kenya, 23 percent in Ethiopia, and 51 percent in Malawi were record in primary schools following the abolition of school fees. Similar increases in enrollment in the year with the abolition of school fee have occurred in many other countries; for example, Cameroon, 26 percent in total primary enrollment (59 percent in grade 1); Lesotho, 11 percent in total enrollment (75 percent in grade 1); Tanzania, 23 percent in total enrollment (43 percent in grade 1); and Uganda, 68 percent in total enrollment (UNESCO, 2009). This increase in enrollment demonstrates the importance of fee abolition because cost considerations determine whether parents will be able to enroll and maintain their children at school.

*Limited budget allocations:* Much as the rate of primary school enrollment in Africa jumped from 39 percent in 1960 to 85 percent in 1982 as the continent's postcolonial governments invested heavily in education, the successes were reversed during the 1980s and 1990s, due in part to structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that led to deep cuts in education spending (Manuh, 1998; World Bank, 1988). As a result, African education ministries found themselves without enough money to even maintain existing school systems, let alone expand them. This led to cost sharing policy that required parents to get involved in education of their children. The policy of cost sharing included household contributions in the form of

formal fees (school levies and examination fees), indirect charges (for uniforms and books) and informal payments (including illicit fees to teachers). It also applied to capital spending, with contributions of cash, labor and materials for school construction and maintenance. Household contributions were seen as being vital to maintenance of quality basic education in situations of extreme budgetary constraints. However, few parents were able to shoulder the increased costs of educating their children and this resulted to decline enrollment rates at all levels of education especially among the poor (UNICEF, 2006; World Bank, 1988; Manuh, 1998). The decline was evident largely in seventeen countries—Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, and Zambia—countries with more than half of Africa's school-age population. In (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, Niger, and Somalia) primary gross enrollment rate declined below 50 percent. It may be argued that the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programme in Sub-Saharan Africa do not only create, but merely exacerbate the disenfranchised position of women in education. National economic hardships typically force governments and households to allocate resources in ways that directly discriminate against women's education. When resources are scarce, parents especially in low-income household are more likely to invest on boy's education to that of girls due to cultural gendered reasons (Logan and Beoku-Betts, 1996; Tanye, 2008; World Bank, 1988). This illustrates the interaction of poverty, education deprivation and gender bias. If access to education has to depend on the ability of a family to pay, then only the better off can get quality education and boys will get preference while children from household especially girls will be left even further behind. It is on this reason that most governments, donors and development institutions are opposing the principle of user fees on education. The scrapping of the user fee and increased spending in education is bearing fruitful outcomes because children especially those excluded before are enrolling and remaining in school. It is important to note that financing education – globally and in Africa – has not been in line with the ambitious Education for All targets agreed to by donors at the landmark World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. According to the U.N. Human Development Program, the region only spends 2.4 percent of the world's public education resources despite having 15 percent of the world's school age population.

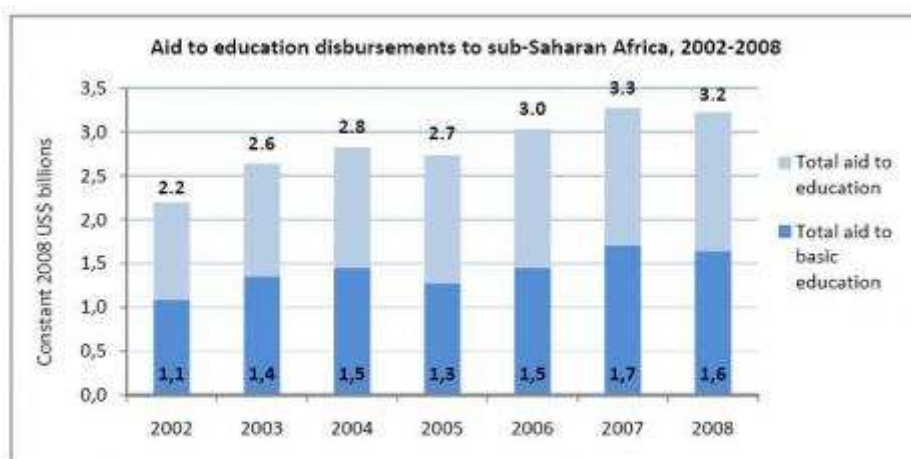
*Debt burdens:* Debt burdens remain high in many sub-Saharan African countries. Of the 32 countries classified as severely indebted low-income countries, 25 are in sub-Saharan Africa. Africa spends four times as much on debt repayment as she does on healthcare. Sub-Saharan Africa owes more than £140 billion (83 per cent of its total GNP) (Kaya, 2005). This enormous debt means that repayments to Western Creditors take priority and ordinary people suffer in poor health, restricted access to education, lack of employment and limited ability to trade and provide for themselves. The crippling foreign debt burden is one of the principal reasons education budgets in Africa has suffered (Buchmann, 1999). Debt burdens that sub-Saharan African countries owed forced schools to charge fees to make up for what they were not receiving from the government. Educations in sub-Saharan Africa become available only to the better off who managed to send their children to school. High school drop out, poor quality education and widespread gender gaps were evident in most of sub-Saharan Africa countries. The combination of low school enrollments, high drop out rates and poor quality education restricted progress towards improved literacy. This perpetuated further the economic and cultural neglect and limitation of educational opportunities for women and girls in most African societies (Bendera and Mboya, 1999; Wanjama and Kimani, 1995; King and Anne, 1993). However, donor-supported debt relief has allowed heavily indebted African countries to redirect to increase social sector spending, primarily health and education. For example, debt relief to Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia has enabled these countries to increase their expenditure in service sector like education. The School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) seeks to accelerate progress toward quality education for all children by supporting policies that remove cost barriers, preventing parents from enrolling and maintaining their children at school. As explained further in the preface to this book, SFAI was launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2006) and the World Bank in 2005 as an instrument to ensure that existing Education for All (EFA) commitments were met. Increased spending in education allows more children to attend school, in turn, narrowing the gender gap.

*Declining foreign aid:* The proportion of foreign aid allocated to education for Sub-Saharan Africa by the donors declined from 17 per cent in 1975 to 9.8 per cent in 1990, increasing slightly to 10.7 percent in 1994



(Riddell, 1999). Financing from G8 countries for primary education in Africa peaked in 2003 at \$680 million, but dropped back to \$535 million in 2004 (UNESCO, 2010). In 2007-2008, increased external support in the form of debt relief and higher inflows of financial support, favorable external environment that encouraged exports, relative economic growth and increased investor confidence like never before created enabling environment for implementation of sound economic policies that accelerated development in areas like education in many sub-Saharan African countries. However at the end of 2007, the world experienced an increase in commodity prices like fuel and food, followed by the global financial crisis. The crisis has seen commodity prices drop with negative effects on export earnings and the external current account, fiscal revenues, and household incomes. This precipitated pressure on exchange and fall in equity markets and capital flow reversals in many of the African countries. The result is that some countries are already experiencing a decline of remittances and foreign aid from the donor nations because of increasing pressure in donor nation to cut spending and balance their budgets (Ervin and Muriithi, 2009). A UNESCO All Global Monitoring Report of 2009 indicates aid disbursement to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa (shown in the adapted Graph below) reveal that aid dropped – from US\$1.72 billion in 2007 to \$1.65 billion in 2008.

*Graph 1: Aid to education disbursements to sub-Saharan Africa*



Source: OECD-DAC CRS database online and GMR calculations

This decline of donor funding is making it harder for many of the low-income countries to pay their teachers and keep the school doors open for 32 million out-of-school African children returning to school (Elliott, 2010). The crisis is making Western donors to ditch their pledges made at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 that they would provide the finance to deliver universal primary education- the donors are contributing less than one fifth of the \$11bn (£7.3bn) annual cost of meeting the pledge in the low-income countries of sub-Saharan Africa. It is feared that if this trend is not reversed, there would still be 23 million children out of school by 2015, with knock-on effects on economic growth, poverty reduction and health in sub-Saharan Africa. This could mean a drop in the gains made on girl child education, reversing the progress made towards gender equity in education, with parents choosing to invest in education of boys and removing girls from school due to high cost education.

## **Cultural Constraint**

There are myriads of social and cultural constraints that bring about the gender gap in education in sub-Saharan Africa. They include entrenched cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, the Trokosi and Voodoo practices, early marriage and child labor that affects education of girls more than boys.

*Female genital mutilation (FGM):* Female genital mutilation is a culturally-entrenched rite of passage that is often used to mark a girl's transition into adulthood. Young girls are pressurized by cultural and family to believe that FGM is part of proper upbringing; it is part of becoming a woman. It is linked to what is considered proper sexual behavior, virginity, and marital fidelity, designed to prepare them for adulthood and marriage. They are also taught to believe that FGM makes them "clean and beautiful," by ridding themselves of external vestiges of "maleness" which are considered "unclean (Kiragu, 1995). Female genital mutilation makes girls to feel grown up, and they have no qualms having sexual relations, and the community also views them as mature and ready for marriage. In countries or areas such as Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, and Sudan where female genital mutilation (FGM) is practiced, there are higher rates of teenage pregnancy and school drop outs. Girls and communities that practice female genital

mutilation should be provided with information about the practice, and why it needs to be stopped. Governments also should make and enforce laws outlawing the practice.

*Early marriage and teenage pregnancy:* In some African communities, religious and traditional norms dictate that children are married at a certain age early. Among the nomadic pastoralists of Kenya (The Samburu, Maasai, Turkana, Pokot, Somali, Rendile, Borana and Oromo), marriage is common at or shortly after puberty, especially for girls. The practice of early marriage is known to affect all children but most affected are girls. In countries like Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Niger, girls as soon as they reach maturity, they marry. Parents choose to have them marry early for a number of reasons. Poor families may regard a young girl as an economic burden and her marriage as a necessary survival strategy for her family. They may think that early marriage offers protection for their daughter from the dangers of sexual assault, or more generally, offers the care of a male guardian. Early marriage may also be seen as a strategy to avoid girls becoming pregnant outside marriage. Early marriage has been cited as "a barrier to continuing education because one is expected to quit school and engage in parental activities (UNFPA, 2004; Jensen and Thornton, 2003; Dagne, 1994). It has been established that married adolescents are particularly vulnerable population largely due to lack of educational attainment. Studies have shown that illiterate women have generally high levels of maternal mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential, and little autonomy within the household woman's lack of education also has a negative impact on hindering development and deterring progress (Ombati, 2003; Wamahiu and Wangoi, 1995). Additionally, the lack of an educated population can be an impediment to the country's socioeconomic and political development (Schultz, 1999). Enforcement of the laws against child marriage is very effective way of addressing this issue. Also through media campaigns and educational outreach programs, governments need to take responsibility for stopping this practice.

*Teenage pregnancy:* *Teen pregnancy contributes* to high-school drop out rates in sub-Saharan Africa. In most countries of the region, when a girl gets pregnant, she is less likely to drop out or complete school thereby negatively affecting her future earning potential (Wamahiu and Wangoi, 1995). In Tanzania, for instance, half of the school dropouts each year are girls of 12 to 14 years who have to leave school because of pregnancies.

Schools policies in most of sub-Saharan Africa have for a long time have and the school been advocating for expulsion of pregnant girls who are seen as a bad influence on other girls in the school. Very few schools allow pregnant girls or young mothers to complete their education. The Pregnant girls mostly get their education terminated and never allowed to continue with school because is argued that allowing these teenage mothers back to school would trigger multiplier effect among other girls (Oyaro, 2010; Wamahiu and Wangoi, 1995; Wanjama and Kimani, 1995). However, few countries like Zimbabwean and Kenya have changed their policies and now are permitting girls to go home to deliver and nurse their children and thereafter they are free return to continue their schooling without hindrance (Oyaro, 2010). This policy guideline is to ensure access to quality education of all children without any form of discrimination.

*Traditional practices:* In most of sub-Saharan Africa countries, access to education continues to be limited because of traditional practices that prevent some children from going or staying in school. For example, in Ghana, as well as in Togo, Benin, and southwestern Nigeria, the *Trokosi* and *Voodoo* practices (*Trokosi* is a Ghanaian word meaning "slaves to the Gods") have been found to keep enslaved young virgin girls from enrolling or attending school. The practice requires that young innocent virgin girls are sent into fetish shrines as reparation for misdeeds of their family members. The virgin girls spend their days collecting water, cooking, cleaning, farming, and caring for livestock. They are denied access to education, prohibited from leaving, banished from her family home, and soon to face the sexual advances of their master, the priest. Reports of school going teenage girls in parts of Ghana removed from school by their parents and given up for training as traditional priestess are common (Tanye, 2008). The imposition of strict Islamic *Purdha* (the Islamic practice of keeping girls and women in seclusion from public and outside) impedes girls or women from venturing out of the home to attend school (Papanek, 1982). In some of the region's rural communities of sub-Saharan Africa, girls' dropout rates accelerate dramatically at the onset of menstruation (Kristof, 2009). In most of these communities, menstruation itself is so taboo that girls are prohibited from cooking or even banished to private sphere during their periods. Establishing separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys is crucial part of retaining girls in particular in schools because schools that lack latrines are often seen as unsafe by both parents and children.

*Child labor:* Child labor poses a great threat to education systems, as children are forced to work rather than attend school, or have to divide their time between work and school; thus greatly affecting their ability to learn. Around the world, 246 million girls and boys are working instead of attending school and enjoying their childhood (International Labour Office, 2002). Girls, in particular, are systematically deprived of their right to education by family expectation, society's norms or the mere lack of attention given to their specified needs. The working children are the most vulnerable in society who are exploited- including girls, orphans, ethnic and minority groups and street children- all of which together make up the majority of the out-of-school population. In rural Ghana, children carry foodstuff for miles to market areas for sale in order to aid their parents and sometimes to get money for family upkeep. In Kenya, most children work on family farms picking or plucking cash crops (such as coffee, tea, pyrethrum, fruit and vegetables or working as livestock tenders, and do not attend school. Most child laborers in Nigeria work in the cocoa fields. Young Togolese from poor families go to do agricultural work in Nigeria. In Eritrea, collecting fire-wood, fetching water from a long distance and grinding mills are some of the unavoidable tasks of the girl, especially in the rural areas.

It can be argued that child labor poses a great threat to education systems, as children are forced to work rather than attend school, or have to divide their time between work and school; thus greatly affecting their performance. Compared to boys, girls bear the burden of child labor which in most cases deprives them of their right to education. Parents often reluctant to send their girls to school because the labor substitution is not equal to the service the girl child provides at home, replacing her mother, who can then go out to work. The opportunity costs are usually much higher for girls than for boys, since girls are expected to do more domestic work than boys (Bendera and Mboya 1999). In Kenya's North Eastern region, for example, enrolment of girls in schools continues to lag behind because the nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle favors only boys to be in school. Parents in this area force boys to go to school and the girls are required to stay home and look after the animals. They (parents) leave the boys under the care of relatives who ensure they go to school, while girls move around with their parents from place to place in search of pasture for their livestock (Mulama, 2010). Girls who happen to go to school are overburdened with work resulting in their poor academic performance. A

study adapted from Kane (1996), as shown in Table 1 on time girls and boys spend in studies at Nepal fits the situation for most of most sub-Saharan African children working and attending school.

*Table I. Time Girls and Boys Spend in Studies at Nepal*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Time Girls Spend in Studies</b>	<b>Time Boys Spend in Studies</b>
6 a.m.	Rises, bathes, prays	Sleeping
7 a.m.	Sweeps the compound, fetches water, washes dishes	Rises, bathes, prays, revises lessons
9 a.m.	Goes to school	Goes to school
9:30 a.m.	In school	In school
2 p.m.	School ends. Lunch in school, extra studies until 6 p.m.	Same. If studies end early, plays football
6 p.m.	Takes food to the mother in the farm	Fetches water, bathes
7 p.m.	Cooks dinner, bathes	Various (play and study)
8 p.m.	Dinner, washes dishes	Dinner
9-11 p.m.	Goes to school for extra studies	Goes to school for extra studies
12 p.m.	Goes to sleep	Goes to sleep

Source: Adapted from Kane, E. (1996) *Gender, Culture and Learning*, Washington D.C. Advancing Basic Education and Literacy 2 Project

Education is fundamental to the empowerment of girls and women. A quality education provides the tools for self-sufficiency that will enable them to escape poverty and exploitation. This is particularly prescient for the situation of girls, many of whom are driven into work that can be hazardous and abusive at a premature age, without an accessible, free, and high standard education system. Effective pressure, both internationally and nationally, for the eradication of all forms of girl child labor and for the eradication of work-based discrimination against women should be applied. This will emphasize the harmful nature of excessive or inappropriate work for children and young people and will serve to highlight that employment after schooling can be profitable for women as well as men

## **Institutional and Instructional Constraints**

There are a range of institutional and instructional factors that impede gender equality in education, from poor quality schools, sexual harassment by classmates and teachers, lack of models the gender bias in learning materials affect girls' educational attainment and performance.

*Poor quality schools:* Millions of children in sub-Saharan Africa attending to school but are not receiving quality education. The most affected are girls because there are few schools for girls than boys, particularly at post primary level in most of sub-Saharan Africa. There are more girls than boys in the poorer-quality private and community schools in sub-Saharan Africa (Hillman and Jenkner, 2004). The schools tend to have inadequate facilities, are crowded with children/students and are also staffed with overworked and often under qualified teachers. Students in these schools largely move through the strictly exam-based system, and often continue to be, ill-equipped with skills necessary for university-level education and entrance to career employment. In addition, girls than boys are less likely to enroll in, and more likely to drop out of, schools that are in poor physical condition (for example, with leaky roofs, no latrine, and no water) whose teachers are often absent, and have inadequate resources (Sharon, 2005). The environment in which girls and boys learn is as important as the fact that they are in school. Where schools do not provide a safe environment for girls, where they do not address behavior patterns that contribute to gender disparity, there is the risk that many young women will leave school early or graduate without the skills and self-esteem they need to participate as equals in the world). Girls would simply prefer to stay at home due to the lack of adequate sanitation facilities which include sufficient water, adequate toilet facilities and proper disposal facilities for sanitary wear which are necessary not only during a girl's period but at all times (Kristof, 2009). Historically, the educational planners and policy makers have not taken into serious consideration female education girls' to determine how many schools are needed. These deceptions are allowed to flourish, either due to ignorance and bad intentions or because of lack of women in decision making position has among to influence policy.

*Violence and harassment in schools:* In the 21st Century, children especially girls still encounters violence and harassment in the place they should be the safest- at school. On a daily basis in schools across the sub-

Saharan Africa, pernicious forms of gendered violence, whilst not easily quantifiable, including physical, verbal and sexual assault and harassment happens to girls making it impossible for them to realize their right to education (Ofeibea 2003; Haffejee, 2006). For example, in South African schools, rape, assault, and sexual harassment of girls are widespread. Girls are frequently fondled, raped in school toilets in empty classrooms and hallways, subjected to aggressive sexual advances verbally degraded and these are committed by both teachers and male students (Prinsloo, 2006). A study in Guinea indicates that boys are very aggressive towards girls and that they use physical force threats and tease girls to silence them in class. Teachers also prey on girls, threatening to fail them, or publicly humiliate them, to prod them into sexual liaisons. Those girls who given in to teacher demands are often rewarded with grades high marks and other goodies. In Zimbabwean, Malawi, Rwanda and Angola, Nigeria, Tanzanian, Uganda and Ethiopia violence against children in schools is a widespread problem and often leads to emotional and behavioral problems that physically abused children experience, such as depression, aggression, disobedience, nightmares, physical health complaints and poor academic performance (Delano, 1998). Sexual violence and harassment in schools erect a discriminatory barriers for children especially girls seeking education. Violence is a key challenge to girls' school attendance and achievement, undermining their social and economic advancement. Violence against women and girls also compromises efforts to combat HIV/AIDS by undermining their ability to protect themselves in intimate relationships.

The disturbing reality of violence against girls is it is rarely treated with the abhorrence that it deserves. Even in countries where there are comprehensive legal frameworks to address such issues, the reality on the ground is very different.

*Lack of role models:* Absence of role model is a problem that the girl child in sub-Saharan Africa faces both at home and at school. Women role models are in short supply in sub-Saharan Africa as few women are in formal economy, leadership positions and in the field of science and technology (Duncan, 1989). For example, throughout their lives, girls are taught mainly by male teachers, especially the sciences and mathematics which they come to perceived as male subjects. Therefore girls seem to have no role models to look up to, no one to identify with and no one to serve as a mentor. If there were to be more women leaders who could act as a role model to girls, there would possibly be an increase in the number



of girls aspiring for higher positions in the society. Ombati (2003) suggests that the promotion of female teachers to position of responsibility as a strategy to encourage girls' education and provide them with role models. Apart from providing positive role models to young girls, particularly in rural areas, parents are put at ease about their daughter's safety by the presence of female teachers.

*Gender biased curriculum:* In sub-Saharan Africa as elsewhere in most of the world, the school curriculum continues to be gender-differentiated and, when offered a choice, girls and boys choose subjects that fall within the traditional male/female split, which is promoted by teachers, parents, and peers (Gordon, 1998). Research has established that the curricula and teaching materials used in schools across sub-Saharan Africa remain gender-biased to a large degree, and are rarely sensitive to the specific needs of girls and women (Bailey, 1992; Clark and Elaine, 1998). Close scrutiny on the curriculum and educational material at schools reveal that girls and minorities, among other things, are asked to relate to curriculum and material that are not produced in their perspective, not presented from their perspective, and tends to ignore their existence (Obura, 1992). Gender bias in curricula varies from country to country within the region, but instructional programs and texts generally reinforce subordinate or domestic roles for women. Discriminations based on gender stereotype surface in many ways in the school context. It may occur, for example, through teachers' samples of group placements and activity assignments, the content of compliments and criticism. Examples range from the treatment of females in textbooks and curriculum materials to differential treatment of males and females in the classroom, to mistaken beliefs about attitudes and cognitive abilities (Marshall and Reihartz, 1999). Perhaps curriculum modifications among other changes addressing sex stereotyping might ensure fuller participation and performance of girls in science and technological subjects.

*Biased instruction:* In teaching, research has established that in most schools, female students can become nearly invisible, as teachers interact more frequently with boys, asking them better questions and providing more precise and helpful feedback. Studies show that teachers tend to answer boys more often than girls in math and science classes and pay more attention to girls in 'softer' classes, thereby sending messages about gender capacities. Teaching materials, textbooks and lectures tend to depict science and technology as a male domain, depriving girls of role models

(Sadker and Sadker, 1994). The immediate outcomes of these practices are channeling of girls and boys to what are seen as gender appropriate subjects and careers. In Botswana, for instance, boys are channeled into the so-called masculine areas such as mathematics, science and technology, while girls opt into stereotypical "feminine" jobs in teaching, nursing and clerical work. Few women are found in scientific or technical education where they could develop better skills to secure better paying jobs (Duncan, 1989). Generally, the participation in science and mathematics education at primary level in sub-Saharan African countries is compulsory for all children. However, the participation rates drop significantly from primary to secondary school, especially for girls. At the tertiary education reveal, average science education participation was 5.1 % for male and 2.8% for females in 2001. The way out is to have gender-equitable materials to enable students have a more gender-balanced knowledge, to develop more flexible attitudes towards gender roles, and to imitate role behaviors contained in the materials. There is also need to create a female friendly environment in schools and communities. Teachers, parents and the community should encourage girls to select scientific and technological subjects by cultivating self-confidence and assertiveness in girls (Orenstein, 1994). Girls should be encouraged to venture into male dominated subjects to acquire skills needed for senior decision-making positions in both public and private sectors. Developing instructional and learning methodology that are child-friendly and gender sensitive is an important element of gender and child-friendly schools.

## **HIV/AIDS and Education**

There exists a strong relationship between gender and HIV/AIDS, with gender inequalities contributing to HIV, and HIV/AIDS in turn worsening gender inequality in education. One way of addressing the challenge is to extend quality skills-based HIV/AIDS education to both boys and girls.

*Challenges of HIV/AIDS:* HIV/AIDS pandemic is presenting enormous challenges to sub-Saharan African countries, and girls' are disproportionately affected whether they are infected or not. It has been established that HIV/AIDS is exacerbating the gender-based disparities that already exist in the education sector, which disadvantage girls in their access to quality education and disadvantage women in career employment

(Whiteside, 2002; Bennel, 2005). Girls than boys are at greater risk of contracting the disease, bear a disproportionate share of its burden and comprise the majority of new infections globally. In sub-Saharan Africa, women constitute 60% of people living with HIV/AIDS, and female aged between 15-24 years old constitute more than two out of three newly-infected with the virus (UNAIDS, 2009). In high prevalence countries of eastern and southern Africa, girls' enrolment in school decreased in the last decade because they are the first to be pulled out of school or not to enroll to care for sick relatives or to look after younger siblings (Bennel, 2005). Girls and young women know little about sex and sexuality because they are often denied an education to protect them against infection. Research has established that fewer girls than boys aged 15-19 have basic knowledge about how to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and many misconceptions exist and remain uncorrected in communities with limited access to accurate information. Often, these myths can be damaging to girls and women, for example, "having sex with a virgin can cure HIV" (Suzanne, 2002; Meel, 2003). Education is one of the key defenses against the spread of HIV/AIDS. Studies show that educated women are more likely to know how to prevent HIV infection, to delay sexual activity and to take measures to protect themselves. Education also accelerates behavior change among young men, making them more receptive to prevention messages. Children who stay longer in school and receive education on life skills and sexuality benefit from delayed sexual debut, increased HIV prevention knowledge and condom use rates among those already sexually active, and improved understanding of HIV testing (Bennel, 2005). It can be argued that universal primary education is not a substitute for expanded HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, but it is a necessary component that complements these efforts.

## **Conclusion**

Education is a fundamental human right to every child. It is universally acknowledged to benefit individuals and promote national development. Education expands the opportunities and life choices for both boys and girls. When all children have access to a rights-based, quality education that is rooted in gender equality, a ripple effect of opportunity that impacts generations to come is created. Despite efforts to expand educational opportunities to all children, barriers to educational access,

participation and achievement persist and gender inequity continues to flourish to the detriment of girls in sub-Saharan Africa. Gender equity and equality in education is but a pipe dream if barriers that keep girls from enrollment and having quality education are not addressed.

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## **Rodna nejednakost u obrazovanju u subsaharskoj Africi**

### **APSTRAKT**

*Ovaj rad se bavi pitanjem rodne nejednakosti u obrazovanju u sub-saharskoj Africi. U radu se naglašava da u sub-saharskim afričkim zemljama obezbeđivanje obrazovanja za dečake i devojčice nije jednako i određuje se polom, lokacijom, klasom i regionom, što ima za posledicu visoku stopu nepismenosti devojaka i žena. U radu je zaključeno da su politička nestabilnost i nasilje, siromaštvo i ekonomski izazovi, negativne kulturne vrednosti, žensko genitalno sakaćenje, rano stupanje u brak, kao i seksualno uznemiravanje su neki od vodećih faktora (participanata) u rodnoj nejednakosti u obrazovanju. Drugi faktori koji pogoršavaju (negativno utiču) na nejednakost polova su nedostatak rodne odgovornosti od strane nastavnika, neefikasna nastava, kao i nedostatak nastavnih materijala, loše okruženje za učenje, kao i uticaj HIV-a i side. U radu se tvrdi da je rodna nejednakost u obrazovanju sprečava razvoj pojedinaca, razvoj zemalja i evoluciju društva na štetu kako muškaraca, tako i žena. U radu se između ostalog raspravlja o strategijama i intervencijama koji imaju potencijal da eliminišu nejednakost polova u obrazovanju u zemljama u razvoju.*

**KLJUČNE REČI:** *rodna nejednakost, obrazovanje, subsaharska Afrika*

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