

GIRLS EDUCATION IN GHANA

Amongst many others, these are some of the key challenges for girls' education:

Poverty

Opportunity cost of sending children to school. Children are expected to contribute to herding, farming and other income-generating activities in such places as streets and markets.

Inability of parents/guardians to bear various education related cost such as uniforms, stationery and transportation.

Distance / Lack of Schools

Inadequate provision of school facilities and basic infrastructure (long distance between school and home, lack of classrooms, desk and chairs).

Severe lack or nonexistence of qualified female teachers in schools especially in the deprived rural areas to serve as role models for girl pupils.

Sociocultural Practices

Prevailing cultural/traditional beliefs, practices and perceptions towards the role of girls in communities and families, including the opportunity cost of sending girls to school.

Mismatch between school calendar/timetable and household duties such as fetching water, cooking, collecting firewood and caring for young siblings.

Gender based discrimination and violence against children both in and out of school, which cause low self-esteem of girls partly resulting from teasing and sexual harassment by male pupils and teachers.

The accelerated promotion of girls' education requires strengthened partnership and resource mobilisation to invest in approaches that have been proven to be cost effective in reaching the maximum number of children.

It is therefore essential to create a safe and appealing school environment to attract, accommodate and retain the increasing number of children through:

Quality of kindergarten education and training of kindergarten teachers.

Teacher training, including child-centred teaching methods.

School health, water, hygiene

and sanitation including construction of separate toilet for girls.

Provision of teaching and learning materials.

Community mobilization and sensitization on girls education.

The whole process of improved planning and management, combined with the creation of a child- and teacher- friendly environment is expected to translate the goals and objectives of the national ESP into local actions at school and community-level, leading to promotion of quality basic education for both boys and girls in Ghana.

Ghana is committed to attaining the millennium development goal of education. As a result, like other countries, it makes considerable investment in education. Education features prominently in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) document. Indeed it gulps substantive part of budgetary allocation therein.

According to the GPRS document, its main policy objectives of education is to:

- Enhance access to basic education, with special emphasis on gender and geographical equity and
- To improve the quality of basic education in terms of human, material and financial resources.

The document goes on to say, "The beneficial impact of expanding can be achieved only if education is of good quality and parents and guardians perceive good returns to investment in children's education. If parents believe that their children are not receiving quality education they will not send their children to school.

Ghana's ultimate goal for education is to provide free and compulsory universal basic education for all children, to achieve Education For All (EFA).

Gender equity and equality has been regarded as key priorities for achieving EFA and poverty reduction in Ghana. The government has identified various activities to help achieve these goals.

With the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2006-2009 (GPRS II) and Education Strategic Plan 2003-2015 (ESP), Ghana has committed itself to achieve the two education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

Gender Parity in primary and secondary education by end of 2015

Universal Primary Completion by 2015

The importance of achieving gender parity in education although wasn't achieved by the MDG target year of 2005, is well appreciated by government since this first MDG will have a major impact on the achievement of other MDGs and thus the overall national development of Ghana.

