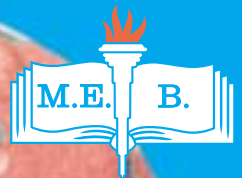# Improving Educational Opportunities for Girls

## *Lessons from the Past Decade*

**Institute for International Research Consortium
Girls' Education Activity**

M.E. B.

**Ministry of
National Education**

**For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY**

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# Contents and Credits

# Getting Girls into School and Keeping Them There

Many factors shape the environment in which girls receive a basic education — government policy and practice, the school system, community practices, religious beliefs, and cultural attitudes and behaviours. Key actors who influence the kind of education (or lack of it) that girls receive include national politicians, community leaders, religious leaders, the business community, the media, teachers, parents and even the girls themselves. To enroll girls in school and keep them there, these key actors in society need to actively identify ways to contribute time and resources to promote girls' education. They must work to transform factors that inhibit girls' school participation and strengthen those that support their successful completion of school.

## Getting girls into school requires that

- national policies favour girls' attendance;

- school facilities are safe;

- schooling is affordable.

## Keeping girls in school requires that

- they live in a society where they are encouraged to participate and do their best;

- schooling is relevant to their lives;

- they participate fully in learning.

There are many ways in which the public and private sectors have been successful at getting girls into school and keeping them there. This booklet shares some lessons learned and strategies that have been used in the past decade by various constituencies.

These strategies come from both domestic and international experiences. No single approach will resolve the constraints on girls' education. There must be a package of interventions working simultaneously. Individual countries can draw from these experiences and apply them to their cultural context.

# Government Ministries and Political Leaders can …

- reduce the direct and indirect costs of schooling;

- develop policies that benefit girls; eliminate punitive pregnancy policies; teach children in the lower grades in home languages that they can under–stand without out–of–school study time; develop policies to protect girls' security; establish age of entry policies to enroll girls in school and complete the primary cycle before puberty; establish textbook policies that provide books to girls and let them take them home to study;

- place a priority on supporting basic education and increase funding for primary education;

- create more school places — use school mapping to target under–served locations;

- introduce the use of double–shifts and multi–grades;

- establish repetition policies and automatic promotion policies;

- develop policies and introduce incentives to attract and support female teachers in rural schools;

- introduce flexible scheduling of the school calendar;

- provide tax benefits to parents for sending their daughters or wards to school;

- conduct social marketing campaigns to inform the community about the benefits of educating girls and to learn more about why not all girls attend school;

- revise the curriculum to make it more relevant to the education of girls;

- place a priority on developing science, math and technology programmes that get girls intimately involved in learning

- revise textbooks — replace negative images or stereotypes about girls and women; incorporate activities that specifically involve girls and introduce positive stories about women and girls and their contributions to society;

- increase spending on learning materials;

- introduce gender sensitisation program–mes for ministry and school personnel;

- provide role models and mentoring programmes;

- explore cross–ministry and sector efforts to improve the health of school children and girls in particular;

- introduce alternative learning program–mes such as community schools, schools –of–second–chance, evening classes and other programmes that are respon–sive to the learning needs of many girls;

- conduct on–going school–level research in order to learn more about the classroom experiences of girls.

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# The Religious Community can …

- specify and publicise how religious teachings support girls' education;

- conduct community–based dialogues and form planning committees to discuss ways to sponsor girls' education in their area;

- sponsor or take part in a symposium that brings different religious leaders and groups together to discuss girls' education and the role and actions that religion plays in encouraging or discouraging girls' schooling;

- develop community–based child care programmes to free girls from childcare responsibilities;

- sponsor parenting programmes that promote encouragement of girl children;

- develop community–based maintenance programmes to improve routes that girls use to walk to school;

- collaborate with communities to build latrines and promote girls' safety;

- write a series of editorials about girls' education;

- speak publically in support of girls' education at conferences, religious seminars and meetings and in community forums;

- promote girls' education on radio and television.

# The Business Community can …

- sponsor school–level competitions that encourage improved access, participation and persistence for girls;

- develop community–based child care programmes;

- support community–based maintenance programmes to improve routes that girls use to walk to school;

- build latrines and other infrastructural improvements at schools;

- sponsor community–based programmes on how parents can support their daughters' education;

- develop programmes to provide library books, sports equipment, exercise books, pencils and other supplies to schools;

- sponsor scholarship programmes for girls;

- pay for advertising (e.g., billboards, newspaper advertisements) with a slogan that represents the goal and vision of girls' education (e.g. *little by little we will go far*).

- encourage and sponsor employees and staff to become involved in efforts to promote girls' education;

- provide experts to work with the ministry and schools to improve the curriculum, instruction and training;

- place the slogan on their company vehicles (*… supports girls' education*);

- sponsor coupon books that can be sold to raise funds for girls' education — (e.g. companies/businesses offer coupons for services at a reduced rate for the people who purchase the coupon books);

- assist in the development of labour–saving technologies at the community level.

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# Communities can …

- establish community–based child care programmes to free girls from the responsibility of caring for younger siblings;

- ensure that routes children use to walk to school are safe and well–maintained;

- assign chaperones to accompany girls to school;

- use participatory exercises to determine why school–age children, particularly girls, are not in school and propose actions to overcome constraints;

- introduce labour–saving technologies to free up girls' time

- ensure that the school is secure for girls;

- provide adequate and sanitary latrines;

- install a birth registration programme to keep track of school–age girls.

# Non–governmental Organisations can …

- conduct social marketing campaigns to inform the community about the benefits of educating girls and to learn more about why not all girls go to school;

- provide role models and mentoring programmes;

- introduce alternative learning programmes such as community schools, schools–of–second chance, evening classes, and other programmes that are responsive to the learning needs of many girls;

- use participatory exercises to determine why school–age children, particularly girls, are not in school and propose actions to overcome the constraints;

- introduce labour–saving technologies to free up girls' time;

- pay for advertising (e.g., billboards, newspaper advertisements) with a slogan that represents the goal and vision of girls' education (e.g. *little by little we will go far*).

# The Media can …

- provide radio and television spots that heighten awareness about the needs for girls' education and repeat the slogan, goal and vision statement periodically throughout the day;

- produce a documentary about the factors that influence a girl's education and identify ways that different groups (parents, business people, politicians) can provide support;

- write a series of editorials about girls' education;

- produce a television series or soap opera that focuses on girls' education in rural and urban areas and discusses different issues each week that girls face (extra work, harassment, discrimination, expectations);

- sponsor fundraising campaigns in which donors are identified and the common goal is highlighted each day/week

- produce a weekly radio programme that highlights what different schools are doing to promote girls' education and acts as a catalyst to advance school–level initiatives.

# Well–known Personalities can …

- give musical performances to raise resources for girls' education;

- become spokespersons to different groups (e.g., unions, civic clubs) and in the media to advocate for girls' education;

- donate art for public fundraising auctions

- perform promotional spots to promote girls' education;

- conduct school visits and serve as role models.

# Schools can …

- strengthen school–community links by supporting parenting programmes and encouraging the formation of school boards and parent associations;

- develop regulations dealing with inappropriate behaviour towards girls;

- ensure that the school is safe for girls;

- provide an adequate number of sanitary latrines;

- ensure that girls have the same opportunity as boys to receive textbooks and other instructional materials;

- ensure that school chores are equitably assigned to both boys and girls.

# Teachers can …

- encourage girls to become more actively engaged in classroom learning activities;

- provide positive reinforcement to girls when they give correct answers;

- develop classroom rules that promote respect for both boys and girls;

- ensure that boys and girls have an equitable assignment of chores in the classroom;

- provide textbooks and other instructional materials to girls;

- create study and discussion groups for girls to help them with homework and daily issues;

- assign leadership roles to girls as well as boys;

- refrain from using personal rebukes when correcting or punishing students.

# Parents can …

- provide time for girls to do homework and study at home, and check their work when possible;

- distribute home chores equitably between sons and daughters;

- encourage daughters and sons to get enough sleep;

- show daily interest in their daughter's school work;

- provide them with learning materials and uniforms;

- ensure that they eat a good breakfast and lunch.

# Girls can …

- ask teachers for help when they don't understand or don't know an answer

- recognise that not all subjects are easy and that they should try as hard as boys to master them;

- walk to school together with other pupils;

- take their textbooks home and make time to study and do homework;

- form study groups with others.

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*Haydi Kızlar Okula!* The Ministry of National Education and UNICEF, together with various organisations, agencies and individuals concerned with quality basic education, are aiming to increase enrolment rates for girls and achieve gender parity in primary education attendance in fifty provinces with the lowest rates by 2005.

Visit the UNICEF Turkey website to find out more about the *Haydi Kızlar Okula!* Campaign for Girls' Education.