



Chapter 6 - Conclusion

This study has shown that improving the knowledge base concerning gender and education is a necessary but not sufficient to ensure the design and implementation of well conceived policies. Improving the information base is certainly crucial. However, the fact remains that a small group of government officials will decide which policy issues will be prioritised. These male dominated groups have a disproportionately powerful role in interpreting what 'cultural realities' are and the desirability and feasibility of changing them (see Kardam, 1995). The last ten years has seen a concerted effort by a number of donor agencies in Malawi,

Tanzania and Zimbabwe to introduce a variety of measures to reduce gender disparities in education. Despite these efforts, progress has been very slow for a number of reasons including bureaucratic intransigence, lack of an effective dialogue between donors and government, and the piecemeal and uncoordinated nature of the interventions themselves.

Donor sponsored research on gender and education, although valuable, has often been oriented towards meeting donor goals rather than those of recipient governments. A way around some of the structural inequalities in the production of knowledge is to promote participatory methods and encourage local researchers as far as possible. A large proportion of the knowledge on gender inequalities in education in all three countries is in the form of consultancy reports which are often not made available locally. Donors who urge governments to adopt greater transparency should themselves be more open and share research findings with governments and others in the recipient countries. Ministries

of education would be advised (as is being done in Tanzania) to develop data banks of existing material on education in order to avoid duplication of efforts. An efficient research clearance system might help in this respect. In this way, research findings could be better utilised by policy makers and other groups such as academics and NGOs.

Proving that gender inequalities exist and pinpointing areas of concern is not enough to ensure action. Despite widespread commitments to international agreements on gender equality, the key policy makers in Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe are still predominantly male. The establishment of women's ministries in the aftermath of the Nairobi Women's Conference in 1985 should have helped to promote the cause of gender across the sectors, including education. However, in all three countries, women's ministries have been ineffective for various reasons. Nor have gender units or gender officers within ministries of education managed to promote gender in policy and practice.

The role of women's NGOs is crucial in that they help to challenge the established patriarchal norms. This has been particularly the case in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, but less so in Malawi due to the limited development of NGOs during the Banda period. The introduction of empowerment into development discourses by UNICEF and other individuals and organisations have also attempted to address the issue of women's control over their lives. However, donors often shun programmes that economically empower women (Chisvo, 1996). Apart from the odd civic education programme, there has been a general reluctance on the part of donors not to upset the status quo in recipient countries as far as gender is concerned. However, NGOs in particular recognise that because donors exercise 'real influence,' they should become more actively engaged with governments in lobbying for women's rights. Some NGOs interviewed in Zimbabwe also felt that government officials were hiding behind irrelevant and inaccurate cultural arguments in order to avoid taking gender

issues seriously. Although few NGOs have been directly involved in education in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, these organisations have played a key role in raising the general level of awareness around gender equality which has helped to provide an enabling environment for many of the most important gender interventions in education.

While in all three countries gender initiatives with respect to education have been mainly 'donor driven', unless gender advocates are active both inside and outside of government ministries, these initiatives are likely to founder. Malawi is an excellent case in point. Where gender interventions in education have come about they have been the result of advocacy on the part of individuals in government and/or donor agencies. The reliance on key individuals to promote change is hardly surprising but has created serious problems in ensuring that policy interventions become effectively institutionalised. The high turnover of personnel in many aid agencies has also caused inconsistencies and lack of

continuity. It is precisely among the agencies that have retained a core of local staff in education (such as UNICEF in Zimbabwe and Tanzania) that the most progress has been made.

Another important issue raised by the study is whether it is possible to design and implement piecemeal gender interventions in the context of highly flawed education systems, many aspects of which operate negatively against girls. The 'education for all' philosophy and the drive (as in Malawi) to get more children (especially girls) to school by any means should be considered in the light of enormous classes, very high drop outs and minimal learning. It is clear that if parental demand is to be revitalised (as in Tanzania) or sustained (as in Malawi), immediate attention needs to be given to raising the quality of education. In the case of Malawi, donors (most notably USAID and DFID) are already supporting the expansion of primary education at the same time as emphasising the importance of educating girls.

Even though there is some interest in improving the management of education through sector reform programmes (As in Tanzania), donors have tended to shy away from the question of overall education reform, not wishing to impinge on the 'ownership' of national governments. Curriculum and teacher training are two areas which need greater and more consistent attention within existing gender policies and programmes in education. In Zimbabwe, an overloaded curriculum and a norm-referenced examination system have had negative effects on all children, but particularly girls. Donors and governments should consider the limitations of incremental attempts to promote girls' access to education systems that are fundamentally gender biased. Scholarship programmes, for example, can help to provide important female role models in rural areas where there are few, but what will be their lasting impact?

Donors and government interventions to promote gender equality in education have invariably been couched in terms of

support for 'girls education'. As we have seen, although UNICEF has mainstreamed gender, the 'girl child' has been the focus of its efforts. It is essential that the analysis of girls' education is based on an understanding of gender as a dynamic relationship between the two sexes which is played out in the home, community and school. The negative response of boys' parents to the girls' secondary scholarship programme in Malawi illustrates the dangers of an exclusive focus on girls in a context of general poverty. The overall lesson is clear, namely effective interventions require a better understanding of the gender and class aspects of schooling.

The predominance of supply and demand frameworks in the analysis of gender in education has also resulted in poorly designed gender policies and programmes. The common assumption, for example, that increasing the overall supply of primary education by means of higher public expenditure will eliminate the gender gap is seriously flawed. It is certainly the case that in all three countries the expansion of primary

education in the decades after independence has succeeded in increasing the enrolment rates of girls. However, the deep rooted problems to do with the poor educational outcomes, accompanied by the low self-image of girls, seem to persist despite higher levels of participation. The main lesson learned is, therefore, that access and quality issues need to be considered in the light of the overall framework within which education operates.

Poor donor coordination in education has also encouraged a fragmented approach to gender interventions. The strength and coherence of gender interventions in education depends ultimately on the extent to which national governments are able to clearly articulate both their education and gender goals. Donors need to work more closely with government to achieve this. The policy making process itself needs to be more open and transparent with greater use of participatory methods in policy making. This is particularly relevant in Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Three main contradictions emerge from donor sponsored interventions:

(i) The need to cut social sector budgets and the numbers of civil service personnel (as part of SAPs) directly undermines the goal of reducing gender inequalities in education. Structural adjustment in Tanzania has certainly exacerbated rural poverty and reduced the demand for schooling. The overall context of resource scarcity is not likely to encourage senior officials within the education ministries to prioritise girls.

(ii) Since Jomtien, the World Bank and other donors have prioritised 'basic' education. Although the World Bank now admits that rates of return to junior secondary are as high as those at primary, donor funds are increasingly being channelled into primary sectors (World Bank, 1995). In different degrees,

the experience of all three countries has shown how poor educational outcomes and low participation rates become more pronounced at the secondary and tertiary levels. The poor qualifications of girls (particularly in maths, science and technical subjects) inhibit their access to labour markets. Unless this cycle of inequality is broken, the paucity of female role models in teaching and other professions will continue, thereby narrowing womens' access to income earning opportunities. Apart from the odd scholarship programme for secondary schoolgirls (as in Tanzania and Malawi), little attention is being paid to the poor educational outcomes of girls at post-primary levels. Access of girls to universities in Tanzania and Zimbabwe has certainly improved, although sex-stereotyped subject choices are still pronounced. With respect, however, to the area of vocational and technical

training, access still remains a major problem for girls.

Another area neglected by donors which has important gender implications is that of non-formal education and literacy. Despite particularly high female illiteracy rates in Malawi, adult literacy is a forgotten priority. Yet research done for the DFID's Community Schools programme, in Malawi shows how low levels of female literacy pose serious constraints on women's participation in the management of schools.

(iii) The current move from project to programme aid and budgetary support could also be problematic, as most gender interventions in the past have been tied to discreet projects and programmes. If donors continue to increase budgetary support to Ministries of Education, (which ultimately involves a greater

degree of recipient control over funding), there is a danger that gender could be lost. This could be avoided by a clear prioritisation of gender by both donors and governments.

In general, it is hard to assess the overall impact of donor interventions on girls' education, as most projects and programmes are relatively recent. However, interviews suggest that monitoring and evaluation of gender projects and programmes needs to be improved. A key problem is the difficulty of measuring qualitative changes. It is of utmost importance that the donors and government build sensitive but rigorous indicators linked to clear targets and objectives into the programme design. Our case studies have shown that the follow up of gender initiatives has often been unsatisfactory at both government and donor level. This raises structural problems about lines of accountability. Locally inspired interventions such as quota systems for girls to enable them to enter secondary school with lower grades

than boys have generally been found to be unsatisfactory. In Malawi, for example, they have acted as a brake on female enrolment at secondary school.

Mainstreaming of gender in donor organisations is now commonplace and most recipient governments are moving in that direction. As we have seen, gender mainstreaming has been problematic enough in the donor agencies themselves. Where there is even stronger resistance as in ministries of education, the need for strategically placed gender units is overwhelming. The institutionalisation of gender in education ministries, will be an arduous but necessary task if the process of gender reform is to be deepened and sustained.

Differences of approach between donors have also affected the outcome of programmes. UNICEF for example, generally have a more holistic view of education that encompasses formal and non-formal schooling which is particularly important in the context of the higher drop out rates of girls.

An exclusive focus on the formal schooling sector ignores realities on the ground. Donor programmes should be more flexible and distinguish clearly between long and short term goals. Creative partnerships between governments, donors and NGOs are needed in order to promote greater gender equality in education and the wider society. Despite the inevitable problems of accountability and 'scaling up' faced by many NGOs, it is important to help grassroots womens' organisations in terms of access to funding for research and other activities.

Important gains have been made over the past five years, gender issues in education have been raised and a number of interventions made to promote girls' education.

For their part, governments should firmly commit themselves to coherent gender and education policies as a framework for and commitment to change. Donors, on the other hand, should be more aware of the cultural and political pitfalls in

the way of developing coherent gender policies in education. Gender advocates in both agencies and governments have had to argue their case for gender on the grounds of the benefits to development offered by supporting the education of girls and women. However, the proposition of education as a basic human right should never be forgotten. Gender interventions in all three countries should be part of a long term, wide ranging process of social and political reform.



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List of abbreviations

ACSSE	Advanced Certificate of Secondary Education
AGEI	African Girls' Education Initiative
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BDDCA	British Development Division in Central Africa
CamFed	Cambridge Female Education Trust
CCAM	Chitukuko Cha Amayi M. Malawi
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CERT	Centre for Educational Research and Training
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Government Organisations

	in Malawi
CRSP	Civil Service Reform Programme
CSC	Christian Service Committee
CSR	Centre for Social Research
CSSE	Certificate of Secondary Education Examination
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DEC	Distance Education Centre
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	Department for International Development
DGIS	Netherlands International Development Assistance
EC	European Community
FNP	Education Development Plan

EDU	Education Development Unit
EFA	Education for All
ESARO	Eastern and Southern Region Office
ESS	Education Sector Support
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalist
FAWEMA	Forum for African Women Educationalist Malawi
FINCA	Foundation for International Community Assistance
FLP	Functional Literacy Programme
FPE	Free Primary Education
GABLE	Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education
GAC	Gender and Curriculum Unit
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GIN	Gender Initiative Network

GOM	Government of Malawi
GOZ	Government of Zimbabwe
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HIV	Human Immuno Virus
HRID	Human Resources and Institutional Development
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IDM	Institute of Development Management
IFM	Institute of Finance Management
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
JICA	Japanese International Corporation Agency
KCN	Kamuzu College of Nursing
MANER	Malawi National Examinations Board

ABBREVIATED	MALAWI NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD
MCCDWA	Ministry of Cooperative and Current Development & Womens' Affairs
MCDE	Malawi College of Distance Education
MCDWAC	Ministry of Community Development Women Affairs & Culture
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MNAECC	Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation & Cooperation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOWCACDSW	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and

	Community Development and Social Welfare
MPOWA	Malawi Professional Women's Association
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MSIS	Malawi Social Indicators Survey
MSTHE	Ministry of Science Technology & Higher Education
NABW	National Association of Business Women
NCWID	National Commission for Women in Development
NECTA	National Examinations Council
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Development
NPA	Non Programme Assistance

NSO	National Statistical Office
ODA	Overseas Development Agency
OPC	Office of the President and Cabinet
PAAD	Programme Assistance Approval Document
PCOSP	Primary Community Schools Project
PCR	Pupil: Classroom Ratio
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PIF	Policy Investment Framework
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination
PTA	Parents Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
PWA	Progressive Womens Association
REO	Regional Education Officer
SAREC	Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation

SAW	with Developing Countries Society for the Advancement of Women
SCF	Save the Children Federation
SDD	Social Development Division
SEEP	Gender Equity in Education Project
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
SMC	Social Mobilisation Campaign
SSA	Sub-Sahara Africa
SUA	Sokoine University of Agriculture
TADREG	Tanzania Development Research Group
TAMWA	Tanzania Media Women Association
TANEA	Tanzania Home Economics Association
TANGO	Tanzania Non-Governmental Organization
TAWLA	Tanzania Women Lawyers Association
TFD	Theatre for Development

TGNP	Tanzania Gender Networking Programme
TIE	Tanzania Institute of Education
TTC	Teacher Training College
TWID	Tiyende Women in Development
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam
UMATI	Ulezi na Malezi Bora (Tanzania Family Planning Association)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activity
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UIPE	Universal Primary Education

Acronym	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VETA	Vocational Education Training Authority
WAG	Womens' Action Group
WB	World Bank
WED	Womens' Education Development Group
WID	Women in Development
WILDAFF	Women in Law and Development in Africa
WLSA	Women in Law in Southern Africa
WWBM	Women's World Banking Malawi
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZWRCN	Zimbabwe Womens' Resource Centre and Network

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Acknowledgements

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