



ISSUE BRIEF

FROM AID TO IMPACT

Empowering Girls Through Education

The developing world's future will largely be shaped by today's girls and tomorrow's women. A growing body of evidence indicates that a girl's well-being is critical to progress on a range of developmental outcomes. An educated girl is more likely to delay marriage and childbirth, enjoy greater income and productivity, and raise fewer, healthier and better-educated children. Indeed, investments in girls' education have proven to go further than any other spending in global development.

Yet millions of girls in the developing world face systemic disadvantages across a range of areas, including education, health and the burden of household tasks. In many contexts, girls have little space to safely make the transition between childhood and adulthood because they face multiple constraints and risks during adolescence.

CARE recognizes that girls need more than quality education to help them contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty. Girls need a foundation of knowledge, skills and experiences that will prepare them to take control of their lives. Combining education and leadership development can help girls better articulate their needs, identify and address problems, make decisions and overall, shape their futures.

Issue in Focus

Education is at the heart of social and economic development. It has the power to stimulate economic growth, reduce poverty and inequality, and promote social cohesion and good governance. Educated mothers are more likely to have healthier children and higher incomes, and studies show that education contributes to the prevention of HIV.

Currently, an estimated 71 million children around the world are out of school. Of these, nearly three in five are girls. CARE has identified a number of issues that must be comprehensively addressed to secure girls' rights, including the right to an education. These include:

- **Quality Education:** Ensuring girls' access to equitable education requires relevant curricula, competent teachers, and a protective learning environment. Targeted efforts are also needed to support school continuation for girls who did not enroll in school, started late or dropped out.
- **Gender Inequity:** During adolescence, girls' gender and age make them particularly vulnerable to various forms of violence and discrimination including sexual coercion, exposure to HIV/AIDS and forced early marriage.

“Every girl can become a force for change. To unlock her potential, she must have the opportunity to go to school and build the skills and confidence needed to meet life's challenges head on.”

— Dr. Helene D. Gayle, president and CEO of CARE



- **Poverty:** Girls are exposed to various risks and vulnerabilities that stifle their ability to achieve their full potential. Such risks are often directly related to issues of poverty and marginalization, a lack of economic opportunities, heavy labor demands in the household, poor access to healthcare and other public services, and exposure to violence, conflict and natural disasters.
- **Social Support:** Girls' ability to develop self-esteem and leadership skills for transformative change is largely dependent on acceptance and support from family, community and peers.

Policy Recommendations:

The U.S. can play a leadership role in securing girls' access to education by:

- Elevating International basic education as a development priority.
- Addressing gender inequity in education and targeting marginalized populations.
- Passing the Education for All Act, which will support a successful international effort to ensure that girls and other marginalized children in the world's poorest countries achieve a quality education.

Advancing Community-Based Education in Afghanistan

CARE committed to supporting education in Afghanistan, a country fighting to reverse the effects of decades of conflict. The Partnership Advancing Community-Based Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) reaches over 90,000 Afghan women and girls in approximately 1,000 remote communities.



This program, funded in partnership with the U.S. government, primarily supports communities that lack access to formal schools by providing primary education to Afghan children, 60 percent of whom are girls. PACE-A also offers accelerated learning, literacy and early childhood development activities in communities that identify these needs.

Innovative Approaches to Promoting Girls' Leadership

CARE's Power to Lead Alliance is a three-year public-private partnership between CARE, the U.S. government and the private sector to promote girls leadership and education in vulnerable communities in Egypt, Tanzania, Honduras, India, Yemen and Malawi.

In Tanzania, this innovative initiative supports the development of leadership skills in girls in vulnerable communities. Girls learn about civics and are exposed to positive role models, including female legislators and university students. These activities reinforce the value of education, and inspire girls to reach their full potential and play a greater role in their communities.

For example, in collaboration with the Kahama District Council, 60 girls from 17 schools attended a Tanzania National Parliament Assembly session where they observed parliament proceedings and met with female Members of Parliament.

A woman's earnings will be 10-20% higher for every year of school completed.

A child born to a literate mother is 50% more likely to survive past the age of 5 years.

Children with educated mothers are twice as likely to go to school and are less malnourished.



CARE USA Headquarters
151 Ellis Street, Atlanta, GA 30303
404-681-2552 | www.care.org

Washington, D.C. Office
1825 I Street, NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC, 20006
202-595-2800 | can.care.org

Copyright ©2011 by Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc. (CARE). All rights reserved.
Cover photos from top to bottom: Brendan Bannon/CARE, David Rochkind/CARE. Back side photos from top to bottom: Shaw McCutchen/CARE, Kate Holt/CARE.