

## SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

One in five children around the world—120 to 125 million children worldwide—are not enrolled in primary school. Education is a child’s right, enshrined in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. More pragmatically, although economists do not agree on the exact role that education plays in spurring economic growth, the relationship between the two is strong.<sup>1</sup>

What can drive a child away from school? Many things play a role. Even where schools exist, too often teachers fail to show up for class; books and learning materials are scarce; classes are crowded; schools are unsafe; and communities have little say in what schools teach.<sup>2</sup> In addition, in many countries where schools are nominally free, “user fees” and other costs, such as those for books and uniforms, are higher than families can afford. For millions of children, the choice appears to be: Work and eat, or study and starve. Violence is a common problem. Human Rights Watch has found that Kenyan teachers routinely cane, slap, and hit students, that South African teachers have asked students for sexual favors in exchange for good grades, and that girl students in some schools in South Africa and Turkey were forced to undergo virginity tests.<sup>3</sup>

Increasingly, educators, NGOs, and other civil-society groups are demanding not just more education, but better education. Many groups have joined the Global Campaign for Education, a growing international network that calls for more and better education; the elimination of obstacles such as school fees; more training for teachers; and more money to pay for these and many other improvements in the quantity and quality of schooling available in developing nations.<sup>4</sup> The most desperate need is in Africa, where only one out of every two children is enrolled in primary school. Every other child gets no schooling at all.<sup>5</sup>

Success is not likely soon without effort from all levels of society. Even in countries that have adopted compulsory primary school laws or Education for All campaigns, such as Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, millions of children need greater access to quality schooling. International funding falls well short of the need. Only 1.5 percent of development aid from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries goes to basic education, which is only one-tenth of the amount needed if every child is to be enrolled in school.<sup>6</sup>

### **An Overview of the Problem: All Children—Girls and Boys—Need Schooling**

Although progress has been made in the last few decades toward bringing all girls into school, girls still attend school less commonly than boys. Fewer girls enroll compared to boys around the

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Dept. Of Labor, *By the Sweat and Toil of Children, Vol. VI: An Economic Consideration of Child Labor*, 2000, <<http://www.dol.gov/ILAB?reports/iclp/sweat6/overview.htm>> (June 21, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Global Campaign for Education, “A Quality Education for All: Priority Actions for Governments, Donors, and Civil Society,” briefing paper, May 2002, <[http://www.campaignforeducation.org/\\_html/2002-docs/05-quality\\_en/frameset.shtml](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/_html/2002-docs/05-quality_en/frameset.shtml)> (June 21, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Jo Becker, “Easy Targets: Violence Against Children Worldwide,” *Human Rights Watch*, September 2001, <<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/children>> (June 21, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Global Campaign for Education, “A Quality Education for All.”

<sup>5</sup> Global Campaign for Education, “The Global Education Crisis,” 1999–2000 <[http://www.campaignforeducation.org/\\_html/2002-docs/05-ssoc-lobby-full/frameset.shtml](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/_html/2002-docs/05-ssoc-lobby-full/frameset.shtml)> (June 21, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Global Campaign for Education, “2002: Historic Year for the World’s Children?” May 2002, p. 5.

world, and fewer succeed in completing their schooling.<sup>7</sup> In Africa, twenty-four million girls do not attend primary school, and boys outnumber girls in school attendance by at least 5 percent in twenty-two African countries. And yet, more educated girls are more likely to raise healthier families and to be healthier themselves, to mention only two benefits of education. UNICEF calls the lack of education “life-threatening” for girls in countries in the throes of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Among uneducated women in Africa, 40 percent know nothing about AIDS, but that figure dwindles to 8 percent among women who have completed postprimary schooling.<sup>8</sup>

That is not to say the education of boys is unimportant. All children—boys and girls—deserve quality education. As the Information Age advances, illiterate and uneducated children, and the adults they will become, are more likely to fall behind.

Improving education—starting simply by providing a teacher and a place to study or a piece of chalk and a board on which to write—is widely considered one of the most effective ways of helping child laborers.<sup>9</sup> The International Labor Organization estimates 246 million children between the ages of five and seventeen work in jobs that the organization considers dangerous or harmful to their well-being and welfare.<sup>10</sup> Some researchers believe poor schooling can itself lead children to abandon school for work. Although education is not a panacea, when children are in school, they are generally not performing harmful or potentially harmful work. They also learn key skills, from “the three Rs” to how to stay healthy in a world full of disease.

### **The Global Fund for Children’s Response to the Problem: Funding Effective Grassroots Organizations**

The Global Fund for Children (GFC) seeks out educators who are helping children learn despite all obstacles—and who are achieving results. Since 1994, the Global Fund for Children has been searching for the most creative and successful efforts to help children around the world. Some of the most innovative community-based schools are in marginal locations and operate on a small scale, existing solely due to the vision and resourcefulness of one teacher or a small group of educators. Few have good contacts in philanthropic organizations. The Global Fund for Children invests in their success and growth and, when they are successful, introduces them to other funders who can help as well.

Through our intermediary grant-making program, GFC supports nonformal educational programs that integrate basic education with awareness building and training in reproductive health, hygiene, vocational skills, environmental issues, microenterprise development, human rights issues, conflict resolution, computer skills, and artistic expression. GFC is particularly

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<sup>7</sup> UNICEF, “Educating Girls: Transforming the Future,” March 2000, excerpted on [http://www.unicefusa.org/girls\\_ed/girls\\_ed.html](http://www.unicefusa.org/girls_ed/girls_ed.html) (June 21, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Carol Bellamy, “Statement on the launch of the Girls Education Movement,” Uganda, August 15, 2001, <http://www.unicef.org/exspeeches/01esp31.htm> (June 21, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Among the many possible sources for the statement, see Fariz Siddiqui and Harry Anthony Patrinos, “Child Labor: Issues, Causes and Interventions,” *World Bank*, no date listed, [http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/hnp/hddflash/workp/wp\\_00056.html](http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/hnp/hddflash/workp/wp_00056.html) (June 21, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> International Labour Office. 2002. *A Future Without Child Labour, Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, International Labour Conference, 90<sup>th</sup> Session, 2002, Report I (B)*. (Geneva: ILO, 2002), p. 18.

sensitive to the distinct needs of boys and girls, AIDS orphans, street children, child laborers, and other vulnerable groups of children and youth.

*Campaign for Female Education  
Savelugu Nanton District, Ghana*

In Ghana, where government budget cutbacks have slashed education funding, GFC supports the Campaign for Female Education (CamFed). Ghana's government cut funding for schools as part of a structural adjustment program that sought to balance the national budget. The cuts forced families to spend more money to send their children to school, and many—especially girls—face a stark choice between going school and dropping out to work or stay home. GFC support is helping sixty girls between the ages of eleven and thirteen complete their primary education in Savelugu Nanton District, where CamFed works.

CamFed helps girl students in their final two years of primary education, as research has shown that those are the years when girl students are most likely to drop out of school. Girls in the area who are not part of CamFed commonly drop out of school after class three, and many go on to arduous work, early pregnancy, and marriage. CamFed students receive two school uniforms and a pair of shoes, as well as books and stationery. CamFed, drawing on research showing that social support plays a role in keeping girls in school, makes a point of visiting the girls on regular field visits and encouraging them to stay in school.

*Kitemu Integrated School  
Kampala District, Uganda*

Uganda's Universal Primary Education program has put an emphasis on educating children with special needs, but results have been disappointing. Schools for special-needs children are few and far between.<sup>11</sup> Kitemu Integrated School in Kampala District, sixteen miles from Uganda's capital city of the same name, is trying to change that. The school offers education to a student body that includes students excluded from many schools, such as the deaf, the mentally challenged, and the physically handicapped.

Founded in 1995 by a young teacher named Sserwanga M. Stephen, the school now offers education and vocational training. It also offers basic medical care and food, enabling students to learn without having to worry about when they will next eat. Schooling for students with physical or mental handicaps is rare in Uganda, and these children often fall behind in their studies and some may be treated badly by their families as a result. Kitemu is trying to change attitudes toward special-needs children.

Deaf children were among the school's first students, and one of the school's first teachers, Maria Fanta, was herself both deaf and skilled in sign language. Word of the school's success has spread, and now deaf children have been referred to the school from other cities, such as Entebbe. Stephen has worked with skeptical parents to convince them that deaf and handicapped children can achieve more than traditionally believed. Kitemu, which offers education from nursery to third grade of primary school, also educates orphans and poor children who otherwise could not afford to attend school. Finding the money to support the school has been a challenge ever since the school's inception, when students had only papyrus paper on which to write. The

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<sup>11</sup> Steve Harknett, "Kitemu boosts school for disabled," *New Vision*, November 8, 1999.s

school has only a small plot of land where it can grow its own food, and even the modest crops the school has managed to plant have suffered due to the region's persistent drought. Government promises of support have not always materialized. In one instance, the government helped build classrooms, but did not pay for roofs. GFC has provided for salaries for teachers, nutritional supplements, medical care, and textbooks for students at the school.

### *Children's Town*

#### *Malambanyama Village, Zambia*

Where the AIDS epidemic has robbed children of their parents, many orphaned children face a stark choice of whether to attend school or work to survive. Children's Town, located in Malambanyama Village in rural Chibombo District, Zambia, is striving to make the decision to attend school easier for these children. Children's Town, located about one hundred kilometers from Lusaka, Zambia's capital city, was founded in 1990 as a skills-training center and school for over two hundred street children and AIDS orphans aged nine to twenty-one. Today, day students account for 154 children studying at the school, and 105 students board in the "town." The boarders are organized into family groups, in many ways replacing the families they have lost. As in families, all children have their own special responsibilities. They participate in running Children's Town by producing food, raising animals, maintaining the buildings and surrounding areas, and running a store. Maize that the students grow feeds the town, and what they sell covers part of the organization's budget. A 1999 GFC grant was used to build a health clinic, purchase goats for the animal husbandry program, and buy mattresses for the boarders. The town's health clinic also serves the greater community: Children's Town children who have been educated about HIV/AIDS serve as community health educators in nearby villages.

In 2001, a GFC grant was used to pay high-school fees for some of the students, construct a house for teachers, and purchase textbooks, blankets, and more mattresses. A flood in March 2001 caused extensive damage to the school's buildings, but the school continued to hold classes.

### *Christ School*

#### *Bundibugyo, Uganda*

In the process of recovering from decades of civil unrest and conflict, Uganda has adopted a Universal Primary Education program, which makes attendance at primary schools free and officially bars discrimination against girls or because of a child's cultural or religious background.<sup>12</sup> And yet the big picture sometimes leaves out details that loom large for each child: Where can I obtain a textbook? How can I pay for it? The lack of educational resources is only one reason why only 12 percent of Uganda's secondary school-age population actually attends school.<sup>13</sup> In 1999, GFC provided a grant to pay for education materials at the Christ School in Bundibugyo, Uganda, which welcomes secondary students regardless of class, religion, or gender.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Ssonko, "Education for All in Uganda—Part II," *ELIMU: Campaign for the Right to Education*, December 2001, <[http://www.elimu.org/\\_docs/2001/12/011-uganda-part2.shtml](http://www.elimu.org/_docs/2001/12/011-uganda-part2.shtml)> (June 21, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Unesco World Education Report, 2000, cited in Uganda Country Profile—Statistics, January 2001. *ELIMU: Campaign for the Right to Education*, <<http://www.elimu.org/countries/africa/uganda/statistics.shtml#primary>> (June 21, 2002).

*Ruchika Social Service Organisation  
Bhubaneswar, India*

Since 1998, GFC has supported Ruchika Social Service Organisation in the northeastern Indian state of Orissa, which operates nonformal primary schools for street children that can help them reenter regular public schools. Ruchika first reaches street children by bringing education to where many live and work: the railway stations, where children sell bottles of water, shine shoes, and carry luggage, and then curl up to sleep on any flat surface they can find. Ruchika founder Inderjit Khurana believes that if children have run away from regular public school, school should find the children and adapt to them.

Ruchika operates more than a dozen railway-platform schools at railway stations throughout Orissa, and its success has inspired other educators to start schools at railway stations in other parts of India. Children learn not only how to read and write, using textbooks Ruchika produced, but they also learn a range of other skills from basic hygiene to singing. Keeping street children in school is a challenge: Some climb on the trains to sweep the floor around customers' feet for money, to sell bottles of fresh water, or simply to travel, and never return. Playing, working, and living around such large, fast-moving machinery is dangerous and often results in broken bones or worse. Ruchika, like many small nonprofit schools, struggles to stay afloat with help from donors that include students in the United States, young people in India, and GFC.

**Conclusion**

Quality education should not be a privilege reserved only for children living in developed countries. Not only is education every child's right, it is also one of the keys to creating a healthier, more caring, and more productive global society. While the task of providing schooling to each child may seem daunting, there are a number of small, indigenous organizations that have found creative and successful ways of bringing education to their communities. Unfortunately, these groups are often underfunded, underappreciated, and unnoticed by the larger international funders. In order to ensure that we are helping to create more educated and aware future generations, these organizations must receive the support necessary to give each and every child the opportunity to learn.