

ISSUE FACT SHEET: FAMILY SUPPORT AND INFLUENCE

DID YOU KNOW?

Tens of millions of school-aged girls are out of school worldwide, and many more are fighting to continue their education. This is not only a civil rights issue, but also a practical issue: girls who go to school marry later, have healthier children, and earn more income as adults than girls who do not receive an education.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How can parents be encouraged to send their daughters to school?
2. What benefits do families gain by helping their daughters finish school?
3. How do communities benefit by educating girls?

DEFINITIONS

Support is defined as to keep from weakening or failing, to strengthen.

Influence is defined as the power to sway or affect based on prestige, wealth, position, means of argument, example, or force of personality.

OVERVIEW

Family encouragement and committed support can do amazing things! Girls growing up in supportive environments, regardless of their material possessions, have the ability to change the world. A family's long-term commitment to education makes all the difference in keeping girls in school. Parental sacrifices, guidance, and wisdom can improve their children's chances of marrying later, having healthier children of their own, earning more income as adults, and climbing out of poverty.

RELATED IMPACTS: POVERTY

Living in poverty can be extremely stressful, and a girl born today has a 1 in 4 chance of being born into extreme poverty. However, the positive impact of a supportive family is immeasurable. Families working together to ensure that every child, girl or boy, receives an education is proven to be the most effective way to end the cycle of poverty.

In the developing world, a majority of farms and small businesses are run by women. Educated girls become better business owners, leading to more income for their families. Although fewer than half of the girls in the developing world will ever reach secondary school, a girl with an extra year of education can earn 20 percent more as an adult, impacting not only her family, but her nation's economy as well. In India, for example, if the number of girls enrolled in secondary school increased by just one percent, the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would rise by US\$5.5 billion (UNGEI).

RELATED IMPACTS: EDUCATION

Keeping girls safe, in school, and focused on the future can take a tremendous commitment. In more than 50 countries around the world, school is not free. Families need to pay for uniforms, books, and sometimes even exams and report cards. However hard the struggle, family support is a key to ending the cycle of poverty.

WHAT'S WORKING

Education works! Not only is it important to educate girls, it is important to educate family members and communities on the positive benefits they will experience when girls receive an education. Providing support isn't always about providing a school; sometimes it is about helping families solve the challenges they face that cause girls to be out of school.

Here are some programs that are working:

- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are providing low-interest loans to families to cover expenses related to school, so they can afford books, uniforms, and necessary supplies.
- Organizations are helping to provide job training for parents, giving families more income and the ability to keep their daughters in school.

RESOURCES

- Room to Read at www.roomtoread.org
- Girl Up at www.girlup.org
- CARE at www.care.org
- PLAN at www.planusa.org or www.plan-international.org
- See Additional Resources Guide (found in the Resources section) for additional resources, including relevant videos.