

## Girls' Education Key to Global Wealth, Health, New Council Report Finds

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**April 20, 2004** – Investing in girls' education globally delivers huge returns for economic growth, political participation, women's health, smaller and more sustainable families, and disease prevention, concludes a new report from the Council's Center for Universal Education.

The report, "What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World," was directed by Senior Fellow Gene Sperling, former National Economic Adviser in the Clinton Administration, and Barbara Herz, who brings more than 20 years of expertise at the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Treasury and the World Bank. The report was released at the Council with Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, a long-time advocate for expanding girls' access to education. "The United States needs to take the lead on a true global initiative for education that makes special efforts to ensure girls are educated," Senator Clinton said. "Because in today's world, we are all more secure when children and adults around the world are taught math and science -- instead of hate."

The report is designed as a user-friendly guide for policymakers to access the extensive and overwhelming evidence on the impact of educating girls in developing countries. The report catalogs hundreds of rigorous studies on the tangible economic, social, and political gains that come from giving girls the opportunity to learn, and makes policy recommendations to increase access to and quality of girls' education, and bolster donor support for education.

The imperative to educate girls in the developing world is great:

- 104 million children ages 6-11 are out of school, and 60 million of them are girls;
- Nearly 76 countries are off-track to reach the UN Millennium Development Goal of gender parity by 2005;
- Another 86 countries are off-track to achieve universal primary education by 2015.

The crisis is particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, where the majority of out-of-school children are concentrated, and girls' achievement and completion of even a basic education lags far behind that of boys'.

While the report emphasizes that reaching girls must be part of an overall effort to ensure that all children, boys and girls, are in school, it details the special benefits from educating girls. Some of the report's major findings include:

- A single year of primary education correlates with a 10-20% increase in women's wages later in life. Academic studies find the return to a year of secondary education is even higher – in the 15-25% range;
- An extra year of a woman's education has been shown to reduce the risk that her children will die in infancy by 5–10 percent;
- Education offers what the World Bank has referred to as a "window of hope" in helping prevent the spread of AIDS among today's children. A recent study of a school-based AIDS education program in Uganda found a 75 percent reduction in the likelihood that children would be sexually active in their last year of primary school;

- Girls' education is the best single policy for reducing fertility and therefore achieving smaller and more sustainable families, according to a recent survey of the academic literature. In Brazil, for example, illiterate mothers have an average of six children while literate mothers choose to have less than three children, and are better able to care for and invest in their children's well-being;
- A study of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa found that from 1960 to 1992, more equal education between men and women could have led to nearly 1 percent higher annual per capita GDP growth.

These findings are culled from some of the most significant studies and research available on the topic. Based on this overwhelming evidence, the report highlights proven strategies and programs for success to increase girls' educational opportunities. Major recommendations include:

- Reducing school fees;
- Covering indirect costs of schooling through scholarships, stipends and school health and nutrition programs;
- Building schools close to girls' homes;
- Making schools more girl-friendly with private latrines and ensuring girls' safety at school;
- Providing more female teachers for girls;
- Improving the quality of education by ensuring basic teacher training.

To effectively support and expand these programs, countries need to develop comprehensive national education strategies and ensure that heads of state and ministers prioritize education, which in turn can mobilize sufficient resources to get the job done. With these critical components and a concerted, coordinated effort by donors to work together to support countries that make progress, the report concludes that universal education is an attainable goal.

For more information on the report, contact the Center for Universal Education at 202-518-3401.

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