

XI. FINAL COMMENTS

As with many complex issues, this report likely raises many questions. Should this be the case, it has succeeded in its goal: to stir conversation, research, and action to address the factors which hinder children's, and more specifically girls', enrollment and success in secondary school throughout the developing world. The purpose of this paper is to illuminate — through research, true stories, and analysis of the benefits of improved girls' secondary education — the need for greater investment in girls' secondary education and more strategic action to make it happen.

Among the many questions raised is that of who is responsible. Whose issue is this? Is this the responsibility of national governments and their local communities and schools? Is it the responsibility of individual donors or the entire international aid system? Will tackling this problem reduce assistance for other concerns, such as primary education, HIV/AIDS, and micro-finance programs? Will this investment pay off? And if so, to what degree? And for whom? How can we be sure that all the elements are in place for success?

These questions cannot be answered in the space here, but they do need to be answered. Further research and analysis must address the question of financing secondary education. This paper sets the stage for that discussion.

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May A. Rihani is a Senior Vice President of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and Director of the AED Global Learning Group. She is responsible for educational reform programs in several African and Middle East countries, and focuses on ensuring gender equity in AED's educational projects and social development programs. She has designed, planned, and managed cross-cutting gender programs and girls' education projects in Afghanistan, Benin, Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Jordan, Mali, Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Qatar, and Yemen. These projects have been funded by USAID, the World Bank, the Netherlands AID, the Mosaic Foundation, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the Supreme Educational Council in Qatar.

Ms. Rihani's extensive work in girls' education and gender equity includes research work, policy assessments, innovative designs, systems analysis, and management of country programs. She is considered a leading voice on the relationship between girls' education and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

May Rihani is frequently invited to speak on gender issues. Her publications include: *Learning for the 21st Century: Strategies for Girls' Education in the Middle East and North Africa*. (UNICEF MENA Regional Office, 1993).

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