



IFUW

The Multi-faceted Right to Education: **A Guide to Implementation & Monitoring**

Final Draft



The Multi-faceted Right to Education

A Guide to Implementation and Monitoring

Prepared by the
International Federation of University Women



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women / Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child / Committee on the Rights of the Child
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
GPI	Gender parity index
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IFUW	International Federation of University Women
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDG2	Millennium Development Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
MDG3	Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
NFA	National federation and association
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

Introduction

About the *Handbook*

The Multi-faceted Right to Education is a Handbook that calls for a unified strategy spanning all elements of the education sector. It has been written to highlight the importance of the right to education and give practical advice in the day-to-day work of education management professionals, interested members of the public, and the various public organizations. It gives concrete examples based on current views and practices on rights-based approaches in the education of girl children. It presents key issues and challenges in establishing rights-based education and provides a framework for policy and programme development, based on 'best practice' in various regions and countries. It also encourages government and civil society to intensify their support for girls' education and to promote education for girls.

Contents of the *Handbook*

In the Introduction the contents of the *Handbook* are explained, its objectives are outlined and the audience for whom it has been prepared is identified.

In Part I the right to education is explained and how the various international conventions highlight the importance of education. Statements that identify the critical importance of education for girls follow, together with descriptions of the impact that a lack of girls' education has on some of society's deeply rooted inequalities and the missed opportunities for half the population. The right to education is examined together with the obligations and responsibilities of government, education professionals, the public and civil society in facilitating, providing and promoting education for girls.

Part II examines obstacles to the implementation of the right to education for girls in particular and suggests tools for action in overcoming the barriers some of which are illustrated with case studies.

Part III addresses monitoring the right to education, especially for girls, as an on-going activity responsive to changing needs.

Objectives of the *Handbook*

The *Handbook* is designed to explain why it is important to focus on the education of girls, and the benefits to society of ensuring that girls receive a quality education. It is hoped that national federations and associations (NFAs) will find the guidelines helpful in working in their communities with education professionals, parents and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve the retention and achievement of girls in school, to value the wider impact that this will have on the empowerment of women and their ultimate involvement in decision-making locally and nationally, and to provide on-going monitoring to ensure that decisions are not disregarded.

Target audience

This *Handbook* is a reference manual for members of the International IFUW at all levels - international, national and NGOs; community groups that are negotiating with governments at state and/or national level; and individuals involved in educational assessment as well as various educational programmes under sanctions. The material can be used for raising awareness of the right to education and also for national level mobilization that will include linking to education groups and other community groups, as well as the media.

PART I: Why the right to education is important – especially for girls

*If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade plant trees;
if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.*

- Chinese proverb

1.1 Legal framework for the right to education

The right to education is universal and inalienable and enshrined in international law through several conventions. Not only do all people have the right to receive quality education but they also have the right to the knowledge and skills that will enable them to contribute economically and socially and that will enable them, if required, to lift themselves out of poverty and gain the means to contribute to and participate in their communities. The fact that these rights are not recognized for many girls is the rationale for this *Handbook*.

The international community has stated the critical importance of girls' education at various times:

- The right to education is enshrined in Article 26 of the ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights*** and reaffirmed in the 1960 ***UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women***.^[1] Human rights, as guaranteed by the international law and agreements, are rights that every human being possesses, irrespective of race, religious or political beliefs, legal status, economic status, language, color, national origin, gender, ethnicity.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights ***Article 26***

"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

- The ***International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*** (ICESCR) devotes Articles 13 and 14 to the right to education. Article 13, the longest provision in the Covenant, is the most wide-ranging and comprehensive article on the right to education in international human rights law. Education is seen both as a human right in itself and as "an indispensable means of realizing other human rights."^[2]

- In promoting and protecting the right to education, Articles 28 to 32 of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC), affirm all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.^[3]

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 28

1. *States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:*
 - a. *Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*
 - b. *Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;*
 - c. *Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;*
 - d. *Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;*
 - e. *Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.*
2. *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention*
3. *States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.*

Failure to support these rights still denies millions around the world not only the opportunity and ability to acquire knowledge and skills but also to create the opportunity and ability of people to claim and protect their rights.

Access to education for girls is also affirmed in the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs), agreed in 2000 following the Millennium Summit and to be achieved by 2015. MDG2 is to 'Achieve universal primary education' and MDG3 is to 'Promote gender equality and empower women'.^[4]

Millennium Development Goals

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Target 2A: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

Indicators:

- 2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education
- 2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary
- 2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

Indicators:

- 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

As well as providing targets for development, the Millennium Development Goals provide a means of comparing and commenting on the situation in different countries.

1.2 Criteria for the right to education

In the *State of the World's Children*, the outcome document from the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002, governments agreed to work for access to free, quality and compulsory primary education and a range of strategies and actions to achieve them.

There was a call for leadership from all continents and all sectors of society. The emphasis was to be on the need to give every child the best possible start in life, to ensure that every child completes a basic education and to involve children, adolescents in particular, in the decisions that affect their lives.^[5]

The provision of the right to education therefore calls for a unified strategy that spans all elements of the education sector. As a first step Governments must ensure that basic education is **available, accessible, acceptable** and **adaptable** for all — the '**4 A Scheme**'.^[6] On the Right-to-Education website it is presented diagrammatically with the child in the centre, surrounded by 4 circles representing education that is:

- **Acceptable** — which means being relevant, and pluralistic; and providing quality education and quality teaching.
- **Available** — which includes safe buildings; school in the village; sufficient numbers of teachers; free textbooks and uniforms; sanitation facilities; and appropriate transport.
- **Accessible** — which means no child labour; no gender discrimination; no disability discrimination; affirmative action to include the most marginalized in school; and schools within reachable distance.
- **Adaptable** — which includes meeting the specific needs of the children; in the local context, and meeting the changing needs of society, and contributing to gender equality.

While this gives the ideal context in which the right to education should be available it can be a model on which a strategy for action can be based and which will lead to all children being able to attain an education.

For girls it will lead directly to:

- Better reproductive health;
- Improved family health;
- Economic growth for the family and for society; and
- Lower rates of child mortality and malnutrition.

A girl who has an education is more likely to:

- Contribute fully to political, social and economic life;
- Grow up to be a mother whose own children are more likely to survive;
- Be better nourished;
- Go to school herself;
- Be more productive at home and better paid in the workplace;
- Be better able to protect herself and her children; and
- Be better equipped to claim her rights, be empowered to make her own choices and secure a life of dignity.^[7]

1.3 United Nations Girls' Educational Initiative

An important United Nations partnership and movement for girls' education is the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), which was launched in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar. Its goal is to narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education and to ensure that by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with equal access for boys and girls at all levels of education. It is a partnership that embraces the United Nations system, governments, donor countries, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, and communities and families. UNGEI provides stakeholders with a platform for action and galvanizes their efforts to get girls into school.^[8]

The E4 – Engendering Empowerment, Education and Equality Conference organized by UNGEI and the Beyond Access team at the Institute of Education, University of London in May 2010 had as its goal to strengthen and expand partnerships for girls' education around the most pressing obstacles faced by girls in pursuit of education — violence, poverty and the quality of education and their intersections with participation, climate change and health.^[9]

If girls do not receive education, inequalities in society are inevitable. As long as girls are left behind, the goals of educating all children and ensuring real human development can never be achieved. A girl who is denied an education is more vulnerable to poverty, hunger, violence, abuse and exploitation, trafficking, HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality – a legacy that may well be passed on to her own children.^[10]

1.4 International differences

“Education is about more than just learning. It saves lives...”

- Carol Bellamy (Former Executive Director, UNICEF)

Although countries are located in different geographical areas and have diverse cultural backgrounds, they may experience similar problems in terms of providing for the education of all students: ensuring that government funding is distributed impartially and that high quality education is available to all children. These are major problems for countries, even for those that are more developed and better resourced. Primary public education may be underfunded, particularly in developing countries and class size is often larger than is desirable, leading to a high student-teacher ratio. This indicates a need for more resources for education and/ or for the need for legislative change.

A comprehensive network and data source is needed for monitoring country practices and tracking basic statistics. Achieving universal access will not be easy to realize this objective worldwide but it is not impossible. It will require government commitment together with that of NGOs.

A success story, which illustrates many of the principles identified above, comes from Turkey.



“C’mom girls, let’s go to school!”

In Turkey, primary education up to grade 8 is compulsory for all children regardless of their gender. Moreover, education in public schools is free of charge. Under the law, the government has to take all necessary measures in order to provide scholarships, credit or boarding for all children in need. However, in practice the enforcement of this law is very complex issue.

Because of the extreme conservatism of families and poverty, children’s enrollment in certain regions of the country is very low. The enrollment is even lower for girl children. A public campaign initiated by one of the leading media companies in Turkey, together with the Ministry of Education and several NGOs has contributed greatly to the profile of the education of girls in the country. With the contribution of several public institutions, NGOs and local administrations, the campaign aims at providing gender equality, and 100 percent school enrollment of girl children aged between 6 – 14 years old.

The Campaign was launched by the Government of the Turkish Republic and UNICEF on 17 June 2003 in the province of Van, initially in 10 cities, where there is the lowest schooling ratio among girl children. In 2004, the first year of the campaign, thanks to its popularity and media support, the number of cities involved was increased by 23. They are mainly in the east and south east of the country. In 2006 it was expanded to cover the whole country.

Although the campaign has been focusing on girl-children, boys have also been included in it activities.

From 2003 to 2006, during the campaign the number of girl-children, who enrolled in school was as follows:

2003	2004	2005	2006	Grand Total	Children couldn’t enroll
40,000	73,200	62,251	47,349	222,800	50,647

By 2006 it was found out that 50,647 girls (19% of the total number that was set in the beginning of the campaign) were still not enrolled to school. The campaign will be continued until no more girls are left behind.

The West African Republic of Sierra Leone is a post-conflict country

The civil war, which killed about 120,000 people, ended in 2002, but challenges in education remain. A priority was the reintegration of child soldiers, of whom just over 400 were girls. USAID was instrumental in getting this work done.

An estimated 69% of primary aged children attend school. Rates for both sexes are equal at this stage. It is at secondary school level there is a high drop out rate for girls who constitute a net attendance of 19%. Barriers include early pregnancies, child marriage, poverty and sexual abuse. Despite Government's free tuition policy, it is the cost of books and school materials that compel some girls to seek additional income. Child labour, such as petty trading is still common. Many young female pupils are victims of societal and cultural prejudice, which along with traditional customs keep them at home.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, not only sponsored the 20th-26th, October, 2009 'Act now to keep girls in School' week, but continues to work with development partners to provide quality primary education with the building of classrooms, provision of water and sanitation facilities, teacher training and learning materials. During this week, girls that excelled such as 10-year-old Hawa in Kono in Eastern Sierra Leone, were recognised and rewarded with school materials and prizes, as were others in all the country's provinces. UNICEF is helping to develop policies to ensure girls' retention in school and foster completion of their studies. This includes providing child friendly learning environments that are rights-based, gender sensitive and safe for the girl child to be nurtured in.

- Patrice Wellesley

1.5 Special education and education of other minorities

Many countries have ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities within their populations. The Roma in Europe, the Khoi and San in southern Africa, Indigenous Australians, Native Americans, the Harijan in India and Mandaeans in the Middle East are all examples of such groups. Children belonging to these groups often find access to school difficult. Lack of familiarity with the language of instruction, where it is not the child's first language, is also an impediment to education. Where schools are available, the education they offer may not be seen as relevant; segregation and discrimination may also deter children who might wish to attend.^[11] Children with disabilities, including physical, intellectual and learning disabilities, also face difficulty in obtaining access to education in many parts of the world.

Members of minority groups have a right to education that is enshrined in the ***United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities***.^[12] Governments have an obligation to protect the rights of people belonging to minority groups and to provide appropriate education. The right to education for children with disabilities is listed in Article 23.3 of the CRC.

1.6 Applying the components of education

1.6.1 Obligations and responsibilities for the provision of education within a country

Defending the right to education is an endeavour that has been exercised in the world for many decades. Today, although we are in a stronger position than we were 50 years ago, it is a fact that girls' participation in education lags far behind boys' participation rates in many regions in the world. The gender parity index (GPI) developed by UNICEF indicates that the struggle to increase girls' attendance at school and completion rates is far from over. In order to realize these objectives, the responsibilities need to be clearly defined and understood by all partners in

the education system — Government, parents, teachers, pupils, school administrators and those NGOs whose core business is education.

The right to education requires in the first instance that the State adopts appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary, judicial and promotional measures to facilitate the full realization of the right to education for all people including girls.

1.6.2 Obligations and responsibilities of Governments and local authorities

Governments need to create a supportive economic and political environment by:

- Developing a government-led education strategy, based on Articles 28 and 29 of CRC;
- Providing resources for the implementation of education rights agreed to in the CRC (Article 4) and the ICESCR, Articles 2 and 13;
- Establishing processes for participation across government departments and in the society at large, which protect the rights of children to access compulsory primary education and extends that right to secondary education; and
- Empowering local communities, using local expertise and knowledge, to implement and manage the delivery of education.

Implicit within the government-led strategy should be

- Provision of appropriate levels of education from pre-school to secondary school for ALL children, including those with special needs;
- Provision of school buildings and grounds that make up a physical learning environment that is safe, clean, hygienic and includes facilities for both girls and boys;
- Assurance that the school is located in an area that is easily accessed by young children;
- Training of teachers in the delivery of quality education across all levels of schooling both urban and rural areas, including teaching children with special needs;
- Development of a broad and relevant curriculum that provides the learning experiences that will enable both girls and boys to reach their potential and become citizens who can contribute to the economic development of their community/country;
- Development of policies and implementation strategies on the education of girls and the education of girls with disabilities;
- Development of assessment and reporting processes that are implemented and understood by parents and students;
- Provision of adequate and affordable educational equipment and materials for children including those with special needs; and
- An economic environment in which parents are earning a living wage, with adequate housing, an effective health system and a recognition of the value of education to themselves and to their children.

1.6.3 Obligations and responsibilities of the public

1.6.3.1 Teachers need to:

- Set the tone for what happens in the classroom, which should be one that is tolerant, inclusive, respectful and flexible and encourages participation by all students;

- Promote a classroom environment that encourages children to be actively involved in learning and in understanding how to behave and that helps them to learn how to resolve conflict;
- Provide feedback to children and parents on progress of the children's learning;
- Help children to understand their rights and responsibilities to the school and to one another;
- Encourage engagement with the local community and be responsive to the local community.
- Be experts in their subject material and keep abreast of new developments of discoveries in their field;
- Be proficient in the professional skills necessary for teaching effectively, e.g. lesson design, teaching strategies, classroom management strategies and assessment procedures; and
- Abide by their code of professional conduct.

1.6.3.2 Students need:

- Schools that are accessible for all children regardless of age, gender, disability, caste and ethnicity.
- To be included in consultations about such matters as setting up a school council, deciding on school policies and developing and maintaining a sustainable school environment;
- A physical environment and learning materials/equipment appropriate to their physical and mental needs, especially if they have any special learning needs;
- Removal or decrease of economic barriers to education, such as school fees, uniforms, costs for transportation and equipment (paper, pencils, books and sports equipment);
- Removal of barriers faced by girls in exercising their right to education, e.g. through the provision of hygiene and sanitation facilities; provision of female teachers; training of teachers in gender equality.

1.6.3.3 Parents should:

- Recognize, support and monitor the right to and value of education for ALL children – girls as well as boys, able and disabled;
- Provide an environment in the pre-school years that ensures a child's preparedness for school;
- Ensure that children are not burdened with domestic responsibilities so that they cannot benefit from school attendance;
- Be involved in school activities and supporting parent-teacher activities;
- Encourage children with their schoolwork and homework;
- Make sure as far as possible that children are healthy and well nourished;
- Encourage and provide for children to complete their schooling by ensuring that traditional practices, such as early marriage, do not interfere with completion of schooling;

- Take advantage of parenting education programmes that will assist them in meeting the needs of their children as they pass through the different stages of education.

1.6.4 The role of civil society/NGOs

National or local civil society organizations and/or NGOs can play an important role in the provision of education in their own countries, or local communities. They can both provide services or be advocates for the provision of education by:

- Lobbying the government if it has not introduced an education strategy;
- Holding their government accountable for commitments made in ratifying international treaties. (CRC, Article 4 and the ICESCR, Articles 2 and 13);
- Monitoring government policies and/or programmes to see that they are being implemented and monitored and, if not lobby for change, and /or resist change when a successful programme is being threatened;
- Setting up pilot projects which explore different opportunities in the provision of education and which reflect the reality of children's lives in their community;
- Building strategic partnerships with other NGOs to strengthen their effectiveness in the provision of education and the programmes provided;
- Encouraging collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data that can be used to support or facilitate change; and
- Mobilizing the community to ensure that the rights of children are being met through the education that is being provided, e.g. forming a parent-teacher association.

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PART II. Overcoming obstacles to the implementation of the right to education for girls

“Nothing really is as important in the world as getting children to school, especially female children.”

- Amartya Sen in an interview with Mishal Husain of WIDE ANGLE

2.1 Constraining factors in girls' education can include:

- Gender discrimination and cultural values including child marriage and teen pregnancy;
- Funding;
- Quality of education;
- Poverty and family circumstances; and
- Displacement/Violence.

2.1.1 Discrimination and cultural values

Deep-seated attitudes and stereotypes regarding girls and women and education persist in many societies, and as a result, varying levels of discrimination against girls and women remain an obstacle to accessing education.

A group of UN independent experts, addressing the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, in May 2010, said “Cultural diversity can only thrive in an environment that safeguards fundamental freedoms and human rights.” They stressed that defending diversity goes hand-in-hand with respect for the dignity of the individual.

2.1.2 School funding

In accordance with their obligations to provide appropriate and accessible education for all children, including those with special needs, governments need to ensure that sufficient funding is earmarked for this purpose.

2.1.3 Quality of teachers

Evidence from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicates that effective education depends on the quality of the teachers. Good quality teaching can overcome significant levels of disadvantage in the lives of the students while poor quality teachers add to the barriers many children face and can deter them from attending school. ^[1]

2.1.4 Poverty and family circumstances

In all countries, there are families who will find it difficult to pay for their children's education. Evidence from the *UNICEF Report to the Millennium Summit* in March 2010 indicates that although there has been some narrowing of the gender gap in primary schools it has slowed in secondary schools. ^[2]

2.1.5 Displacement through war, violence or trafficking/ refugees

- Many thousands of women and girls suffer the trauma of war; they are usually innocent civilians caught up in the conflict. As displaced people they must cope with the loss of homes and belongings; in many cases they are also separated from their families.
- In these circumstances, girls are particularly vulnerable to violence and intimidation. Violence against girls in schools is not only a direct infringement of human rights as elucidated in CEDAW ^[3] but it also plays a role in denying girls the right to access to education by being a cause of dropout among girls. Violence includes rape, sexual harassment, physical and psychological intimidation, teasing and threats. It may occur on the way to school or in the school itself, and can be perpetuated by teachers, parents, persons of perceived authority and fellow students.
- International law provides that host states must grant refugees the same treatment as their own citizens with regard to the provision of primary education.

2.2 Taking action to overcome obstacles

Education needs to be given priority status when governments engage in planning for economic and community development; it should be the driving force behind all other aspects of social and economic development and sustainability. It is imperative that countries work to elevate the overall standard of education within the community. Countries need to adopt a multi-faceted approach to improving education standards that address issues on several levels particularly those that ensure equal rights for girls in education. ^[4]

Effective community action needs to involve the collaboration of individuals and families. Working together with the community and the government they can build the capacity to address the gaps that may exist.

2.3 Basic tool for action

To support the education of girls:

- Community needs to be informed about the benefits of educating girls;
- Families need to know what programmes and resources are available to help them educate their daughters; and
- Governments need to know what educational programmes are needed in specific contexts and what programmes or approaches are effective.

2.3.1 Disaggregated data collection

In order to plan wisely and affectively, governments must collect data on education and expenditure. Data should include rates of:

- School attendance;
- Achievement;
- Transition rates;
- Completion;
- Literacy and numeracy;

- Scholarship offers;
- Distribution of teachers; and
- Teacher salaries

Data should be collected in a sex-disaggregated format to indicate the participation and performance of girls. This will alert governments to any shortcomings affecting girls and allow them, and also communities to focus on issues of particular relevance to girls as opposed to boys, acknowledge their different roles in society and take remedial action to meet the needs of particular groups.

Relating this data to the relevant international bodies including UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) will allow countries to monitor their own progress and to facilitate regional planning.

2.3.2 Taking action ...

While governments set the scene for education, action needs to involve individuals and communities especially in relation to girl's education.

2.3.2.1 At the individual level:

- Women must evaluate their own thoughts and beliefs, and make adjustments where they believe it is necessary;
- They must **encourage other girls and women** to do the same, and encourage other girls and women to pursue their education; and
- Women must **be willing to take action** to advocate on behalf of themselves and the women and girls around them, and take courageous and creative steps to find solutions for remaining obstacles such as having to care for siblings at home.

A Literacy Centre in the outlying areas of Kabul, Afghanistan

In 'Stones into Schools' by Greg Mortenson, Viking Penguin 2009 (P 325 - 326) there is a graphic description of literacy centre which consisted of a tiny eight-by-twelve-foot adobe storage room with a dirt floor and one large window. There were 40 women inside packed tightly into rows of five or six, sitting cross-legged on the floor and facing a whiteboard. Most were in their 30's or 40's and many had young children. They were permitted by their husbands to attend the class in the hope that learning to read and write would enable them to earn additional income. There was evidence of the women's determination to learn more than vocabulary and grammar for there were nutrition charts and hygiene information on the walls. What the students wanted most of all were cell phones – so that they could talk to one another and exchange information. At the time of the visit the chief subject of interest was an up-coming election. This is described as 'a quiet, hidden revolution of female learning and liberation.'

2.3.2.2 Community level

At the community level, education should be seen as a valuable process for all children regardless of sex, ethnicity, tribal affiliation or religion. Long-held beliefs about education need to be put aside and parents encouraged to send their children to school.

- **Women can organize themselves** to discuss the issues that prevent girls in their community from attending school, and they can develop strategies for solutions. When change can take place on a grassroots level, it is likely to be sensitive and relevant to the culture, and in return, the community may be more willing to embrace the change.

How to End Child Marriage

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) provides action strategies for the prevention and protection of girls in child marriage and calls for support and scale up of community programmes.

A programme conducted by ICRW found community-based interventions are working to reduce early marriage with multi-faceted programmes that educate families and community members and provide girls with education and life skills. Child marriage, for example, is deeply embedded in cultural traditions, which may be difficult to change. However, as the campaign against female genital mutilation/cutting demonstrates, community mobilization can be effective in initiating behavior change and discouraging harmful practices. [5]

- **Communities** should be encouraged to be involved with schools. This helps to build a sense of collaboration and cooperation that will strengthen the overall support for girls' education within the community therefore encouraging attendance.

Afghanistan

Though the Taliban do not officially govern Afghanistan, much of the country is still under their control, which means that many thousands of girls in provinces outside of the major cities are still not allowed to attend school. One young woman has made strides with the local authorities and Taliban of one province, and as a result, over 2,000 girls have been allowed to go to school.

In the Afghan culture, it is not appropriate for women to speak directly to non-family member men, so a woman must speak to other men through male family members. This young woman gained her father's support for starting schools for girls in the province where they lived, and he went door-to-door and talked to the fathers of local girls about the value and importance of their daughters attending school.

In 2002, he was able to earn the respect of enough fathers so that his own daughter could start the first girls' school in the province since the fall of the Taliban. As of March 2009, there were approximately 2,000 girls attending schools in this particular province. This growth necessitated the need for the education and training of female teachers, so the young woman also took responsibility to develop training programmes for female teachers (S. Saleem, personal communication, March, 2009).

- Parents and families should have high *expectations* of their children's schools and should be able to hold schools accountable when those expectations are not met. At the same time, parents need to be made aware of their own responsibilities in relation to their children's educational success. (See 1.6.6.3)

2.3.3 Government action on schools and school infrastructure

In accordance with their obligations to provide appropriate and accessible education for all children, including those with special needs, governments should ensure:

- There are sufficient schools to meet the needs of the population and that they are located in appropriate areas. Ideally each village and town should have at least one primary school. Secondary schools should be established in regional centres to allow young people to continue their education without having to attend boarding school.
- School buildings are accessible, built in close proximity to girls' homes so that girls are safe during their travels to and from school.
- School buildings are suitable for the purpose for which they are intended – weather-proofed with adequate natural lighting. Schools, (and clinics or hospitals) should be among the first to be provided with running water and electricity.

- School must be affordable so that any girl can attend as there can be direct and indirect costs for their families.

San Pedro, Lake Atitlan, Guatemala

In this highlands town of Guatemala, many families do not have the funds to pay for the books and uniforms for their children to attend school. As a result, many children do not go to school. A group of mothers who could not afford to send their children to school got together, and they decided that they would bring the unschooled children in their neighbourhood together and teach them themselves.

Visitors learned about this group of teaching mothers, and through generous gifts from donors, the mothers were able to obtain a building, furnish it, and provide learning materials. To keep the costs low, the mothers continued to volunteer their time to teach, and children were not required to wear uniforms, pay for books, or pay fees. They continued to rely on donors to support the school. As of June 2004, there were approximately 100 children attending this school (Vilma, personal communication, June 2004).

Communities and governments working together can:

- Decrease and/or **eliminate costs**, not only the direct costs of books and uniforms but also the indirect costs such as domestic support and childcare;
- **Provide scholarships** for girls to attend school that will also cover the indirect costs to families; and
- Provide funding for health care in schools as well as **nutritional programmes** to ensure that students are receiving adequate food intake.

Belize

The Anglican Diocese of Belize operates schools in Belize with many of the schools located in poor and remote areas of the country. The Diocese makes earnest attempts to make school accessible to all children, and while uniforms and books are an expense that is normally paid by the family, the Diocese is able to obtain funding to provide family assistance to cover these expenses for those who cannot afford it. This is not the only obstacle that the families face in Belize.

For example, it was noted that many children were not performing adequately, and the Diocese discovered that one of the contributing factors of underperformance was malnutrition. The children did not have adequate food at home, and they were coming to school hungry and consequently were unable to concentrate. The Diocese began raising funds to start feeding programmes at the schools, and so far feeding programmes are in operation in 18 out of 22 schools. (C. Babb, personal communication, March 2004; Anglican Diocese of Belize, 2007).^[6]

- Schools need to be **girl-friendly** which means that they have facilities for girls that provide privacy and safety and that respect the values of the culture by:
- Providing girls' classrooms or schools, **girls' bathrooms** and female teachers;
- Providing gender-sensitive **curriculums**;
- Encouraging girls to achieve and **participate**; and
- Discouraging gender stereotyping.

2.3.5 Teachers (See 1.6.2.1)

Teachers should:

- Comply with **professional standards** at all times;

- **Be accountable** for their actions towards the children in their care; and
- Be treated with the **respect** to which their knowledge and skills entitle them.

Governments can demonstrate this respect by ensuring that:

- Teachers' **salaries** are sufficiently generous to attract highly able applicants and ensure that they remain in the profession;
- **Working conditions** are sufficiently attractive so that graduates choose to stay in the profession, do not leave to work in other professions, nor look for employment in other countries;
- Teachers are confident that they will not be used as **scapegoats** for failures in the education system, which are caused by circumstances outside their control such as inadequate funding for basic supplies, poverty of students, families and communities;
- There are sufficient numbers of **teachers and classrooms** are not overcrowded; and
- Teachers are provided with **continuous training**.

2.3.6 Quality of education and curriculum

Education must be of high quality by ensuring that:

- The curriculum is **up-to-date**, and includes competencies that are relevant to the culture, with books and supplies provided for every student;
- Education equips children and young people with the **skills and knowledge** necessary to meet the challenges of the new century with emphasis on literacy, numeracy, creativity and problem solving;
- Schools teach social skills including the ability **to work collaboratively**. The school environment and the curriculum should emphasize co-operation and tolerance of difference and discourage all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination; and
- The curriculum acknowledges the growing impact of **globalization**. While it is important for all people to know about and appreciate their own culture, young people need to be aware of the existence of other people and values.

Improving Quality in Schools in Developing Countries^[7, 8]

While many developing countries are closing in on the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education for All, it is clear from recent international surveys that the quality of literacy teaching has been undermined by the resulting huge increases in class size. The supply of classrooms, furniture, trained teachers and textbooks has often not kept pace with the increasing numbers of children arriving at the classroom door. Many teachers are faced with classes of 80 children and more, insufficient seating, and no suitable textbooks. Not surprisingly, such children are still unable to read after three years at school.

Another general barrier to quality teaching is the fact that many children in the Third World are expected to learn to read in a second or third language. When children have already mastered one language to express their needs, their incentive to learn another is often quite fragile. If they do not see or hear that language used frequently outside school, and they have no reading materials in the target language it is not surprising that progress is slow.

One formula for coping with these twin problems - the lack of incentive, and the lack of exposure - is the "Book Flood" approach. Most children enjoy a good story. In this strategy, primary school classrooms are flooded with an abundant supply of suitable, high-interest, illustrated children's books, and their teachers are trained in short workshops to make constructive use of the books every day, using the Shared Reading method. In practice, this means that the teacher reads the story through to the class, stopping to explain and discuss as she goes. The story will be shared in this way several times, over successive days, and children will be given interesting activities to maintain interest. They will talk about the story, act it out, draw and display their favourite parts, make a Big Book, rewrite the story with a different ending, or different characters, and so on. The teacher will also use the story as a basis for teaching letters and sounds, vocabulary, and grammar. Children get plenty of exposure to the target language, under meaningful and motivating conditions, and most soon learn the language of the books they interact with.

Book Floods have been conducted in a number of developing countries where children are learning in a second language, and consistent gains have been found in reading, writing and listening skills. The Book Flood approach was pioneered in small rural schools in Fiji in the 1980s, and found to work very well. After one year, children improved their English skills at twice the normal rate, and the gains increased in the second year. Teachers and children enjoyed the experience, and examination results were much improved all round, as better English meant better learning in all subjects. The method has now been used successfully in Niue, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and several other countries. Evaluations have been consistently positive, and some Education Ministries have extended the approach to all their schools.

2.4 Conclusion

Although it is generally expected that governments will establish programmes and policies that will remove obstacles, individuals, families, and communities can also take action to remove them as has been described above. There will, however, always be gaps, but when communities are able to collaborate, they build capacity. Within this capacity, solutions can be found to fill the identified gaps.

2.4.1 Obligations

In accordance with their *obligations* to provide appropriate and accessible education for all children, including those with special needs, governments need to ensure that adequate funding is set aside for this purpose.

The following concerns should be taken into account:

- While each country must determine its own financial capacity, an examination of countries regarded as having highly successful education systems suggests a figure of 5 percent of GDP as a minimum budget target;
- Within the total amount allocated, special provision must be made for children with special needs, including girls, children who are isolated, children with disabilities and children from severely impoverished backgrounds who would not be able to attend school without additional support;
- Education funding must be distributed fairly and according to the needs of the school and its pupils regardless of their sex, ethnicity or religious affiliation;
- Schools should be funded from consolidated revenue and government schools should not charge tuition fees;
- As a general principle, funding for core educational programmes should take precedence over programmes that benefit elite groups;
- Education is an investment in the future of the community, therefore governments should resist pressure to reduce education funding in difficult economic circumstances. It should be one of the last areas to be subjected to austerity measures and if reductions must be made, they should be undertaken in a manner that is equitable and does not prejudice any particular group; and
- The provision of education funding must be transparent. As governments use public money to fund education programmes they must be accountable for the ways in which that money is used.

2.4.2 Governments

Governments can fulfil their legal and humanitarian obligations towards refugees by:^[9]

- Ensuring that refugee children have access to local schools or that schools are provided in all settlements for displaced people or refugees;
- Monitoring schools to ensure that the education provided is of high quality and that resources are made available to girls as well as boys;
- Making provision for the inclusion of older girls and women whose education has been disrupted over an extended period;

In summary, at the nation/state level, governments can search for ways to:

Education a Fundamental Right in India

*In India, on 4 August 2009, the Lok Sabha passed 'historic' legislation. The **Right to Education Bill**, makes education a fundamental right of every child between 6 and 14 years of age. The Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal is reported as saying "This is the first time an effort has been made to universalise education in the country," and added: "We have been talking about it for the last 16 years."*

- Provide funding that would alleviate the costs to families so that girls can attend school;
- Provide daycare for siblings or children;
- Provide food rations for families;
- Make school accessible to married and pregnant girls by allowing them to attend school; and^[10]

- Providing clean and safe toilets for girls with connection to water.

In western Tanzania, school enrolment has gone up by 100 percent now that the girls have their own toilets. They are free to use them without fear of being victimized by boys.

- Arrange for classes to be held at times that would allow girls with home responsibilities to attend school; ^[11]
- Promote gender equality in the schools by developing school curriculum that avoids gender stereotyping
- Provide gender sensitivity training for teachers so that teachers can facilitate equal gender participation and have equal gender expectations in the classroom; ^[12]
- Provide scholarships for girls who need to attend boarding school due to isolation or difficult family circumstances;
- Provide pathways back into education for girls who have been forced to leave school because of family circumstances or pregnancy; and
- Being vigilant to ensure that child traffickers or other malicious interests do not exploit girls attending schools.

'If you really want to change a culture, to empower women, improve basic hygiene and healthcare, and fight high rates of infant mortality, the answer is to educate girls.' ^[13]

The fulfillment of the right to education is an ongoing process that requires governments, communities and individuals to work together and to recognize and overcome obstacles. Important strands running through all endeavours are human rights as defined in a variety of conventions, treaties and covenants. The first two parts of this manual have identified the principal documents that need to be referred to; noted the common obstacles; and suggested actions to overcome them. It is only through education that a legacy of peace and MDG2 and MDG3 can be achieved.

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PART III Monitoring the right to education

Monitoring compliance of human rights instruments

Because of their knowledge of what happens in schools in their communities NFAs can contribute to UN procedures for monitoring the right to education

- *They can work as partners with government by participating in the preparation of education-related sections of country reports to treaty monitoring bodies;*
- *They can also act as government watchdogs by providing reliable independent information in parallel/shadow reports to treaty monitoring bodies; and*
- *They can disseminate information about their country's report and the relevant committee's concluding observations to the public, to other NGOs and to opinion leaders;*
- *They can monitor compliance with the committee's recommendations.*

3.1 Reporting process

Once a Government has ratified, as opposed to signing, a human rights instrument / treaty, it has a legal obligation to implement the treaty. This is different from the outcomes of world conferences, the recommendations and commitments of which are not binding. The Government is committed to work towards the progressive realization of the treaty and is obliged to submit country reports to the relevant treaty-monitoring committee at regular intervals on the progress it has made towards implementing the rights contained in the treaty. When the report is reviewed by the committee, the Government must send representatives to discuss the report with its members; provide responses to questions raised by the committee; and subsequently act on the committee's concluding observations and final recommendations once the review has been completed. In the main the committees see the national reports as a 'rolling reporting system' and expect each report to build on the previous one.

NGOs, including IFUW and its national federations and associations can be involved in the reporting process in a variety of ways.

3.2 Treaty monitoring committees

There are three treaty monitoring bodies particularly concerned with the right to education, namely: the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). All three encourage NGOs to participate in the reporting process and provide opportunities for them to do so.

Independent experts from different regions of the world comprise the treaty monitoring committees. Although the committee members are elected by States parties, they serve as individuals in their own right and not as representatives of their governments. Meetings of the committees are held two or three times a year and each committee is serviced by a permanent secretariat within the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva (OHCHR). Although there are similarities in the way the committees function, there are also distinct differences, of which NFAs should be aware, if they wish to contribute to the reporting process.

3.3 Country reports

3.3.1 Initial report

The first country report is normally due two years after ratification (except in the case of CEDAW which is at the end of the first year). The report should provide an overview of the country's situation including measures that have been taken to ensure that people can enjoy the rights as conferred by the treaty. The aim of this initial report is to provide a 'baseline' against which progress in implementation can be measured in the future.

3.3.2 Periodic country reports

Governments are then required to report at regular intervals, usually every five years except in the case of CEDAW, which is every four years. The reports are aimed to show 'progressive realization' towards the implementation of the various articles and should include legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures taken. In their reports governments are asked to identify key trends; to explain any factors and obstacles that are preventing them from fully complying with their obligations; and to demonstrate how they have followed up the recommendations made by the committee at the previous review. Additional information may also be requested by the monitoring committees between reviews.

Organizations such as NFAs can be involved in the preparation of the country reports, which is encouraged by the monitoring committees. As a starting point the NFA should refer to the guidelines issued by the appropriate monitoring committee. In addition it can prepare its own 'shadow reports'. The most helpful NFA involvement, however, is to work with the Government on the preparation of the report, providing expertise and relevant information, particularly of what has been achieved in the reporting period. While some Governments do not react negatively to 'naming and shaming' many do and it can be counter-productive. Copies of past reports are available on the website of OHCHR.

3.4 The review

3.4.1 Pre-sessional working groups

All three of the relevant committees hold pre-sessional working group meetings before the scheduled review of a country report, although procedures differ among committees. During these meetings, a preliminary review of the report is carried out by some members of the committee, who also use supplementary information including inputs from NGOs. A list of issues and questions is then compiled and sent to the government of the country concerned in advance of the session. This list forms the basis for the discussion of country report at the formal review. A rapporteur is appointed by the committee for each country report and is responsible for drafting the list of issues and questions, and, after the report has been examined, for writing the committee's concluding observations or comments.

3.4.2 Formal review session

During the formal review, the committee examines the report in the presence of the government representative/s and observers. The government representative usually starts by making a statement to update the written report. Questions are then posed by the members of the committee that are frequently based on issues identified during the pre-sessional meeting and the list of issues and questions. One or two days time is allowed for the government representative to refer back to her/his capital for further clarification, following which s/he will usually reply question by question. The aim is to ensure that the review in the form of a

'constructive dialogue' with the government representatives, rather than an adversarial exchange.

NFAs from countries being examined may participate in a special session for NGOs during the sessions of CEDAW and CESC. They may attend as observers and may meet informally with committee members between sessions. In addition they may send relevant information in writing to members of the committees.

3.4.3 Concluding observations or comments

Once the formal review has taken place, the committee prepares its concluding observations (in the case of the CESC and CRC) or comments (in the case of CEDAW) on the progress that has been made by the government in implementing its treaty obligations made by the government. In addition to including the main discussion points, they will highlight major problem areas and make recommendations for further and improved implementation. Concluding observations and comments are available on the website of OHCHR.

3.5 National level follow-up

Once the concluding observations or comments have been published NFAs can work with other NGOs in their respective countries to draw attention to those areas that have been highlighted during the review for further attention. They can also inform the media and can work with the appropriate government department towards implementation. The committee is, as already stated, concerned with 'progressive realization' in the implementation of the treaty, rather than 'instant answers'.

3.6 Human Rights Council

In March 2006 the UN General Assembly created the *Human Rights Council* (HRC) to replace the *Commission on Human Rights*. It is an inter-governmental body within the UN system made up of 47 States responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. Its main purpose is to address situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.

On 18 June 2007, the Council adopted its Institution building package, providing elements to guide it in its future work. Among the elements is the *Universal Periodic Review* mechanism, which will assess the human rights situations in all 192 UN Member States. It is a State-driven process by which a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States is undertaken once every four years. It provides an opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations. As one of the main features of the Council, the UPR is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed.

Other features include an *Advisory Committee*, which serves as the Council's 'think tank' providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues and a revised *Complaints Procedure* that allows individuals and organizations to bring complaints about human rights violations to the attention of the Council. In addition the HRC also works closely with the *UN Special Procedures* established by the *Commission on Human Rights*, such as the appointment of *Special Rapporteurs*, including the *Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education*.

The work of the HRC does not only focus on gross violations of civil and political rights but also includes aspects of economic, social and cultural rights, eg in 2009 it adopted a ***Resolution on Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights***. It can therefore be a mechanism that can be used to promote universal access to primary education.

Further information on the HRC can be found on the website of the OHCHR.^[1]

3.7 Developing Rights-Based Education Policies

While education can be monitored against the CESC, CEDAW and CRC Articles on education it is useful for NFAs to be aware of the policies promoted by the agencies of UNESCO, UNICEF and UNGEI. (See 1.2, 1.3) These UN entities provide useful and detailed yardsticks against which to measure government actions, particularly for marginalized groups of children and for specific topics in education.

Many of these measures are based in the 'Education for All' (EFA) movement, a global commitment to provide quality, basic education for all children, youth and adults, launched at the *World Conference on Education* in 1990. Participants endorsed an 'expanded vision of learning' and pledged to achieve universal primary education and reduce illiteracy by 2000. At a further meeting in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 the international community affirmed their commitment to achieve EFA by 2015.

Six key education goals were identified. ^[2]

Goal 1 Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Goal 2 Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Goal 3 Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes

Goal 4 Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Goal 5 Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Goal 6 Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

These are rights to education but also rights within education, which include human rights education itself. This means that rights to and within education need to be seen within the context of the **World Programme for Human Rights Education** adopted through a UN General Assembly Resolution in 2004. The **Plan for Action** for this resolution, started by UNICEF was evolved jointly by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO.^[3] The implementation of this programme at a national level is an important aspect in monitoring the right to education for girls.

A joint UNESCO-UNICEF event, held during the July 2010 high level segment of the *Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC), highlighted the importance of expanding women's and girls' education as a means to progress all the development goals especially that of gender equality.^[4]

In all monitoring at a local and national level it is important for NFAs to be aware of actions and statements made by these entities. Support for and promotion of such actions and statements, especially in the context of evaluating a country's progress towards achieving universal, rights-based education for girls, adds validity to the monitoring process.

3.8 Brief Guidelines for Monitoring Progress in Literacy Outcomes in Developing Countries ^[5, 6]

These guidelines are suggestive only. Accurate evaluations are best undertaken by teams of trained and experienced researchers, with the aid of detailed manuals. There are many technical traps for the unwary – in the selection of samples, the development of tests and the interpretation of results.

3.8.1 Small-Scale Studies

To evaluate the impact of a literacy project in a small number of schools:

1. Design a study in which the intervention is conducted for one school year in several schools (say 4-10) at an age where the students are beginning to acquire the target language. It is better to start with two adjacent grade levels – (eg Years 3 and 4).
2. Select another sample of schools from similar circumstances to serve as control groups. Normally they would carry on with their usual program. Or they may be introduced to an alternative literacy program. Allocations of time devoted to the literacy programs should be similar across groups.
3. Invite all the schools to participate in the project. Spell out what will be required of them.
4. Select (or develop) a set of suitable literacy tests (eg. reading, listening or writing skills) for the target grades, and administer them, as pre-tests, to all the students in the intervention groups and the control groups. Check to see that the two samples of schools are similar in literacy levels at the outset. If not, some attempt should be made to equate them by dropping or adding more schools.
5. Arrange for all participating teachers to receive training in the principles and procedures of the planned intervention(s).
6. Visit the intervention schools from time to time to ensure that the program is implemented appropriately. Assist teachers where necessary and collect evidence of any irregularities – lack of resources, teacher absences, non-cooperation, etc. Visit control schools for similar reasons.
7. Towards the end of the year, administer the same (or parallel) tests to the same students, as post-tests, and compare the progress made by the intervention students and the control groups. Compare the mean scores on each test and make statistical tests as appropriate.
8. An alternative design is to use the adjacent classes in the same schools as control groups. For instance, if the intervention is to take place in Years 3 and 4, the students who are one grade ahead (in Years 4 and 5) are pre-tested at the beginning of the school year. Their test scores are compared with those of the intervention groups, one year later, when they reach the same stage in their schooling, after having been taught the new literacy program.
9. A useful addition to the testing of the students is to administer attitude scales, before and after the program, to the students, to detect any changes in attitudes to reading and books. Teachers could also be asked for their opinions.

3.8.2 Large-Scale Surveys

To evaluate progress in literacy across a whole education system.

Literacy levels in many education systems are monitored from time to time by testing the literacy skills of a large cross-section of students, and comparing the results with those of the same age/grade in other years.

1. Decide on the grade levels and literacy skills to be monitored. For instance, an assessment could be made of the reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge of Grade 4 and 6 students in the whole nation. This might be repeated in the same grades every five years.
2. Select a large representative sample of schools which contain the selected grades. Advice from statisticians is recommended at this stage. Ensure that all important sub-groups are properly represented. (eg genders, ethnic groups, home language groups, regions, school types)
3. Select or develop a set of tests of reading comprehension and vocabulary appropriate for the chosen grades. Questionnaires for teachers and students should also be designed to allow for the analysis of results by sub-groups. Attitude scales might also be prepared.
4. Train a team of assessors to administer the tests and questionnaires to the selected students in the sample of schools.
5. Mark the tests and calculate means and standard deviations for the whole sample and for selected sub-groups.
6. Interpret and report the results, and distribute to the Ministry, to schools and other interested parties.
7. Store the reports for later use, in order to make comparisons with the results of future surveys of the same grade groups, at the same time of the year, and with the same tests.

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