

GIRLS' EDUCATION: RURAL INITIATIVES THAT WORK

"NEW HORIZONS" SUPPORT FEMALE STUDENTS IN PERU

In the 1995 World Bank Data report on Peru, the available figures indicated that boys and girls have near equal enrollment rates in primary schools. However, in 1998, when Ana Maria Robles, Country Director of the Girls' and Women's Education (GWE) Project in Peru, and her team from CARE/Peru began a diagnostic of girls' education in the entire country, they found a different story. They discovered that of the 1,800,000 girls of school age who could attend primary school, and who had proper records, more than 200,000 were not enrolled. Of the girls in the rural areas who had enrolled, most did not remain in school beyond third grade. Attendance was sporadic, particularly during the June through September harvest season. The home environment was not conducive to studying because of the lack of water, space, and electricity. There was little parental support or encouragement for girls to leave their domestic duties of taking care of siblings and animals.

Because many indigenous people did not officially register their children's births, documentation did not exist for fulfilling part of the necessary administrative paper work for enrolling a child in schools. The distance between the provincial capitals and many of

MOROCCAN GIRLS BENEFIT FROM COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

When development initiatives that contribute to the economic and social progress of a nation are conceptualized and implemented, ownership and commitment at all levels are important to their success. In the case of Morocco, education is a top priority, second only to territorial and national integrity. The Kingdom of Morocco, with an eye on achieving education for all by 2015, adopted a new national charter on education in order to make systemic reform. According to Abdelaziz Meziane Belfkih, Chairman of the Special Commission for Education and Training, the National Charter "provides elements of a new social and cultural contract between the nation and its schooling system..." which, in addition to decentralizing education, improving its quality, and adapting education to local/regional environments, seeks to target underserved/underprivileged populations such as rural girls.

In line with the political will and spirit that prompted the education reform, the Girls' Education Activity (GEA), funded by USAID's Office of Women in Development (G/WID), managed by American Institutes for Research (AIR), and



The girls of the Foyer d'Etudiantes in Ait Iktel (Morocco), in a festive mood after the successful completion of their school year

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the outlying areas is large and the trek was difficult. Roads did not exist. Schools were located far from village settlements and parents were not as willing to allow their daughters, as they did their sons, to walk the distance to school.

Based on this new information, the *Nuevos Horizontes* (New Horizons) project began in April 1998. Funded by USAID's Global Bureau's Women in Development's (G/WID) GWE activity and coordinated by CARE/Peru, the specific overall objective of the three-year project is to increase successful and timely primary school attendance and completion by girls in rural areas. Social mobilization of both the private and public sectors in support of girls' education contributes to the holistic

approach in garnering support for this ambitious goal. It also supports G/WID's Strategic Objective No. 2: Mobilizing resources of local constituencies in support of girls' education. Because the activity is scheduled to end in September 2001, I decided to visit the Peru GWE project in my role as director of the USAID/G/WID/GWE support project implemented by DevTech Systems to learn more about what kinds of actions had been created in the Andean rural areas to reach the goal of increasing the number of girls staying in school.

Peru is divided into 24 departments, one of which is Ayacucho, in the central Andes highlands, where *Nuevos Horizontes* has chosen to implement its

pilot project. I was only permitted to journey to the north of Ayacucho, to a city called Huamanga, because of travel restrictions to the communities in which the interventions have been introduced.

In Ayacucho, 50 percent of women between 15 and 50 are illiterate (compared to 18 percent nationally). In Huanta, where some of the 20 pilot schools are located, 86 percent of the population of 63,547 lives in extreme poverty. Chronic malnutrition is a serious problem for chil-



Members of the CALEN (Peru)

dren under 5 at more than double the national average of 13 percent. For more than 10 years, the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) was systematically destroying the lives and homes of people. While the environment has been relatively stable for the past eight years, the indigenous population has been left with emotional and physical scars.

"After the capture of Guzman [leader of the Shining Path], a new sense of citizenship appeared. During the [time of the] Shining Path, there was a fear to participate in civil society," said the director of the local network called FLORECER or REDS. The Shining Path, an opposition group, began in 1980 in Huamanga, the capital of North Ayacucho. Because the target group for *Nuevos Horizontes* is the indigenous

population, it was difficult for CARE/Peru to gain the trust of the communities, particularly the parents of girls. Moreover, teachers who were sent to the areas were Spanish speakers and used Spanish as the required language of instruction to the Quechuan students. Because parents, especially mothers, did not speak Spanish, there was little support for girls to attend school and to learn a language that was not used in daily living in the village. The teachers had not been given adequate training to deal with life in the mountains, multigrade classes, and introducing Spanish as a second language. Most of the teachers had little interest in remaining in the communities and would sometimes show up for work on Tuesday and leave on Thursday. Often, teachers would not show up at all, but they would continue to collect their pay.

The Regional Director of the Ministry of Education (MOE) told me that because of the distance to rural schools, the MOE couldn't supervise how teachers performed, let alone address pedagogical issues. As a result, the Committee for Advancement of Rural Education for Girls or CALEN was formed. This group of concerned citizens, formed in the post-Shining Path era, functions in the communities where the 20 pilot schools exist.

Señor Gilberto, president of the parent's association and a member of CALEN, said, "I meet with the director of the school and the teachers. We enroll our children in the schools and we know our rights. We respect the teachers. Once the community got angry because one child received a bad mark. We cannot abuse the teachers' authority. But sometimes a teacher is contracted but doesn't show

up.” Gilberto continued by saying that there is a system that is now in place for communication to take place. This is an important first step in strengthening the communities at both the local and provincial levels.

At the national level, CARE/Peru works with the REDS, the network that was formed solely for the purpose of gaining support for rural girls’ education. In a meeting with Deborah Urquieta, Assistant to the First Lady in the transitional government and a member of the REDS, I was told that there is an interest within the country for rural education. Ms. Urquieta also mentioned that the present First Lady Elaine Karp, wife of President Toledo, shares this interest. After former President Fujimori resigned in November, a transitional government was in place until July 1, 2001. I had met with Ms. Urquieta during her last week in her capacity as Assistant. She told me that it was through the first conference that Nuevos Horizontes and the network sponsored in 1999 that she heard rural girls speak for themselves. She feels that the network will remain long after the USAID-funded GWE activity ends be-

cause it reaches out to a broader group.

I also met with Ms. Rosario Valdeavellano, also part of the transitional team who will leave her duties on July 28, 2001, and return to teacher training in Cusco, the ancient capital of the Inca Empire. She echoed Ms. Urquieta when she stated how struck she was with rural girls, speaking in their own languages, addressing a large delegation on how important education

**OF THE GIRLS IN THE RURAL AREAS
WHO HAD ENROLLED, MOST DID
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THIRD GRADE.**

was for them as well as for the country. “I was impressed when girls complained about teachers who came late; teachers who came drunk; teachers who beat them, sexually harass them. These girls were very brave to do that.” Ms. Valdeavellano told me that we have to listen to these girls and continue programs on sexual harassment that have only begun. She also stated that more bilingual programs have to be established. When she began at the teacher training college in Cusco 20 years ago,

there was no bilingual program in an all-Quechuan area. Now there are five bilingual centers, but that is not enough. Ms. Valdeavellano showed me materials in both Aymaru and Quechua, the main indigenous languages of Peru.

CARE/Peru, through the lobbying of the REDS, is presently trying to pass a law within the Peruvian legislature to ensure that rural girls receive the education that they have a right to receive under the Declaration of Children’s Rights. Because of the political crisis since the 1980s brought on by the Shining Path and the recent corruption of the Fujimori regime in the 1990s, the educational system of Peru has had major setbacks. There seemed to be a feeling of cautious optimism in the week I was there before the Toledo government took over on July 1, 2001. I left Peru feeling that indeed the country has survived so much that one can only hope that they succeed in strengthening education for all Peruvian children, particularly for girls from the Andes.

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In collaboration with USAID’s Office of Women in Development and DevTech Systems, Inc., the American Institutes for Research is holding a conference titled “Reflections on Girls’ Education: Lessons Learned” in Washington, D.C., August 27–29, 2001. This conference marks the culmination of the USAID-sponsored Girls’ and Women’s Education (GWE) Initiative in three emphasis countries (Morocco, Peru, and Guatemala). The conference will:

- 1) Bring together key individuals, stakeholders, and staff who participated in and coordinated GWE activities in Morocco, Peru, and Guatemala in order to share the successes and challenges of the past five years.
- 2) Provide a forum for participants to reflect upon respective experiences and to, then, generate a list of lessons that were learned.

- 3) Encourage participants to explore the GWE model and its underlying assumptions and then to propose possible next steps for girls’ education in Morocco, Peru, and Guatemala.

To generate lessons learned, participants will address the following issues:

- Conferences and Networks
- Social Communication Materials and Media Events
- Scholarship Programs
- Community Partnerships
- Classroom Participation

The proceedings of the conference will be published by December 2001. For further information on obtaining the proceedings, please contact Meghan Donahue at mdonahue@devtechsys.com or Muzit Mesfun at mmesfun@devtechsys.com.

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implemented by Management Systems International (MSI), began in 1997. Its main purpose is to help host-country governments and private sector/non-governmental entities formulate, institutionalize, and implement country initiatives in support of girls' education. One such entity is the Committee for Rural Girls' Education (Comité de Soutien à la Scolarisation des Filles – CSSF), whose membership is composed of professionals from the private sector, the public sector, higher education, and the banking industry. It is the only NGO in Morocco whose main objective is to ensure that girls' education maintains its priority status within the national spotlight. Mrs. Yamina Lamrini, a prominent member of the CSSF who is also one of only two women members of the Special

THE ISSUE NOW IS WHETHER THE GIRLS' HOME CAN ACCOMMODATE THE GROWING NUMBERS OF REQUESTS BY PARENTS TO SECURE A PLACE FOR THEIR DAUGHTERS IN THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

Commission for Education and Training, said, "I have worked with different NGOs in the last 20 years; however, this project is different and exciting. Although historically, we [Moroccans] do not have experience in working together at many levels (national, local, school, household) and with many partners (public, private, individual), this project demonstrates that even without prior historical experience, we can work together to come up with solutions that are successful and sustainable."

One of the ways in which the CSSF supports girls' education is through mobilizing funds for a rural girls' scholarship program from sources such as individuals, banks, autonomous public enterprises, private businesses, international agencies, etc. In collaboration with the USAID/Morocco Mission, the GEA, led by Country Director Najat Yamouri, works hand-in-hand with the CSSF through sup-

ship funds, the directors of local NGOs, and members of the CSSF and the Special Commission for Education and Training, the project achievements came to life. Mr. Mohammed Aandam, director of one of the local associations (Tichka) in the province of Ouarzazate, said, "We are able to successfully reach the girls and their parents because this is our community.



Loubna's family in the village of Barrage My Youssef. The older sister, who wasn't able to continue on to middle school, is on the far right. Loubna's younger sister, whom her parents hope will follow in Loubna's footsteps, is on the far left.

porting, coordinating, and following up on activities. However, the ultimate goal is for the CSSF, along with the network of community-level NGOs (associations), to continue to provide rural girls with opportunities to obtain scholarship funds once the GEA project closes later this year. This would allow for the sustainability of such an important initiative.

On behalf of USAID/G/WID and DevTech Systems and as continuing technical support to the girls' education program, I embarked on a field visit to Morocco in June of this year. This visit allowed me to meet and speak with various stakeholders of the girls' education initiative in Morocco. Through the testimony of the girls who receive scholar-

There is a trust there that normally would not exist if the association members were outsiders. Since we know the problems of the community, we try to work together to come up with relevant solutions to these problems so that, in turn, the community is comfortable when discussing issues such as sending their girls to school."

The rural girls' scholarship program gives girls the opportunity to remain in school through the middle school years (grades 7, 8, and 9). The scholarship funds enable rural girls, who otherwise would not have been able to continue beyond sixth grade, to live in a girls' home and attend a school nearby. The idea of a girls' home came about as a

result of many discussions with the community to find a culturally relevant solution to the high dropout rate among girls. When I visited the Timeline Home for Girls, which is managed by the Tichka Association, many of the mothers were there to celebrate their daughters' completion of the school year. Two mothers said to me that they have no worries concerning their girls because the home is safe and their daughters can concentrate on their studies away from the inescapable chores that they would have had to perform at their own homes. The parents' peace of mind is reflected in the fact that before the Timeline Home for Girls was established, only five girls were in the local middle school, but now, there are 43. Mr. Aandam stated that the issue now is whether the home can accommodate the growing numbers of requests by parents to secure a place for their daughters in the scholarship program.

Before going to visit a newly established girls' home in Ait Iktel called Foyer d'Etudiantes, I talked to two sets of parents in the village of Barrage My Youssef whose daughters (Latifa and Loubna) are participants in the scholarship program. As we sat in their homes, Latifa's mother said, "I want Latifa to have a better life than I did. She likes school and by going to the girls' home, she can concentrate on her books. She's a character, my daughter. She asserts that she wants to be a journalist, just like her namesake Latifa, the famous Moroccan reporter." Latifa's father, in turn, said, "I am happy that my daughter is continuing school. She will not be like us. For us it is too late, but Latifa, she will have a better life."

Loubna's parents also expressed great joy in their daughter's participation in the scholarship program. They told us

that they wished their older daughter had had the opportunity to attend middle school as well; there was no girls' home available when their older daughter completed sixth grade, and she was not able to continue her education. With sadness in their voices, they said that although it's too late for their older daughter, Loubna and, later on, her younger sisters will have better opportunities due to continuing their education.

**THE CLOSE COLLABORATION
BETWEEN ALL OF THE STAKEHOLDERS
AT ALL LEVELS RESULTED IN THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE COMMON
GOAL.**

On our way to the Foyer d'Etudiantes at Ait Iktel, Mr. Ali Amahane, director of the local NGO that manages the girls' home, related the difficulties they encountered when establishing the much-needed home for the 21 girls who now reside there and how they overcame them. He said that the partnership with the CSSF is not limited to scholarship fund disbursement and that it includes the concomitant benefits of a truly collaborative, working relationship. For example, when the local Ministry of National Education (MoNE) was reluctant to enroll the girls in the middle school because they had come too late in the year, in addition to already being behind in their studies due to being out of school for three years, the association collaborated with the CSSF to help facilitate a solution. In this case, that meant that the CSSF contacted the MoNE in Rabat, which, in turn, contacted the local MoNE and urged it to work with the association in ensuring the enrollment of the 21 girls. Eventually, not only were the girls enrolled but the concerns of the local MoNE officials were addressed through giving the girls extra catch-up classes. When Mr. Amahane told me that Loubna and

Latifa, along with their 19 housemates, had successfully passed their exams, I concluded that the close collaboration between all of the stakeholders at all levels resulted in the achievement of the common goal. By valuing and addressing the contextual realities of the communities, parents, and girls and by the linking of committed groups, locally and nationally, the common goal of educating girls in Morocco is being accomplished.

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**ARNOLD HARBERGER
ADDRESSES ASCE MEETING**

The Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE) — a forum for academics, economists, and other intellectuals from the United States and other countries to discuss economic conditions in Cuba — held its 11th annual meeting at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables, Florida. Dr. Arnold C. Harberger, the world-known economist and a professor at UCLA, was sponsored by DevTech Systems as the luncheon speaker on Exchange Rate Policies and the Transition—Latin America and Russia.

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WE INVITE OUR READERS TO SEND THEIR LETTERS AND COMMENTS ON THE MATERIAL IN THIS ISSUE OF THE SPHERE TO DEVTECH SYSTEMS' ARLINGTON OFFICE.

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