

## Education and the rights of girls

6.1 Submissions to the inquiry highlighted the key role of education in empowering women and girls and helping them to realise their human rights. Witnesses proposed that access to education facilitates the full participation of women and girls in their communities and societies. Caritas Australia stated:

The realisation of human rights requires that women and girls be able to access education. There is strong evidence that women who are literate and educated are more able to contribute to society, to advance economic development, and to access their other human rights.<sup>1</sup>

6.2 The Committee heard evidence from a number of witnesses concerned with the issue of girls' education in the Indo-Pacific region. This chapter examines:

- the right of girls to an education;
- the value of education to individual girls and their societies;
- progress towards gender parity in primary and secondary education;
- progress in the Indo-Pacific region;
- obstacles and barriers impacting girls' access to education;
- current work to promote girls' education; and
- recommendations from witnesses for Australia's role in the region.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Caritas Australia, *Submission 42*, p. 3.

2 Data and figures reported in the chapter are generally quoted from submissions to the inquiry, most of which were received in 2014. Thus some figures may have since been superseded.

## Education as a right

- 6.3 The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) referred to the powerful contribution of education to poverty reduction and empowerment. ACFID wrote:

Education is a crucial way of tackling poverty, and enabling broader access to employment options for women, as educated women are more likely to find decent work than those with low/basic education levels ... Ensuring that all girls, including those with a disability and those from ethnic and indigenous communities, are able to access a quality education is crucial to ensuring the basic human right to education for all.<sup>3</sup>

- 6.4 ACFID also explained that educating women and girls provides strong economic benefits and boosts development: 'If all students in low income countries left school with basic reading skills, estimates indicate that 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty'.<sup>4</sup>

- 6.5 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) emphasised that there is significant variation across the Indo-Pacific in relation to many aspects of life, including women and girls education:

They come from some of the wealthiest countries in the world such as Japan and New Zealand as well as some of the poorest such as Cambodia and Bangladesh. Some can access the highest standards of education globally and others miss out on the most basic schooling, some are encouraged to independently plan and save for their retirements, while others are not permitted to open a bank account.<sup>5</sup>

- 6.6 Plan International (Plan) submitted that education is a human right, enshrined in Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 28 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and Article 13 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.<sup>6</sup>

- 6.7 Article 10 of the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) further articulates the core requirements to ensure women and girls enjoy equal opportunity to receive and benefit from educational and training services. Article 10 calls on member states to provide:

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3 Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), *Submission 25*, p. 10.

4 ACFID, *Submission 25*, p. 10.

5 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Submission 27*, p. 9.

6 Plan International Australia (Plan), *Submission 46*, p. 4, and footnote 2.

- The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training.
- Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of same quality.
- The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging co-education and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods.
- The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants.
- The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women.
- The reduction of female student drop out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely.
- The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education.
- Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.<sup>7</sup>

6.8 The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action elaborated on these requirements in a section dedicated to the rights of the girl child,<sup>8</sup> as part of its broader agenda 'to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle'.<sup>9</sup>

6.9 'The Girl Child: Strategic Objective L.4' calls on governments and international and non-government organisations to:

7 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 'Part III, Article 10', <[www.hrcr.org/docs/CEDAW/cedaw5.html](http://www.hrcr.org/docs/CEDAW/cedaw5.html)> viewed 15 October 2015.

8 United Nations (UN), Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995, 'The Girl Child: Strategic Objective L.4' <[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm#diagnosis](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm#diagnosis)> viewed 22 September 2015.

9 UN, Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995, 'Mission Statement 2' <[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement)> viewed 23 September 2015.

- provide education and skills training to increase girls' opportunities for employment and access to decision-making processes;
- provide education to increase girls' knowledge and skills related to the functioning of economic, financial and political systems;
- ensure access to appropriate education and skills-training for girl children with disabilities for their full participation in life; and
- promote the full and equal participation of girls in extracurricular activities, such as sports, drama and cultural activities.<sup>10</sup>

6.10 RESULTS International Australia Inc (RESULTS Australia) submitted that the right to education 'is inextricably linked to other fundamental human rights', such as:

- The human right to equality between men and women and to equal partnership in the family and society.
- The human right to work and receive wages that contribute to an adequate standard of living.
- The human right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.
- The human right to an adequate standard of living.
- The human right to participate in shaping decisions and policies affecting one's community, at the local, national and international levels.<sup>11</sup>

6.11 Some witnesses argued that adopting a child-focused approach in the Indo-Pacific region 'makes sense', because developing nations in the region are experiencing a 'youth bulge'.<sup>12</sup> UNICEF explained that children between the age of five and 14 make up about 20 per cent of the global population,<sup>13</sup> while Plan submitted that, in Indo-Pacific countries such as Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji and Samoa, almost half the population is aged under 18.<sup>14</sup>

6.12 DFAT's Principal Gender Specialist, Ms Sally Moyle, advised the Committee that Australia's aid program 'focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls' but does not 'necessarily have a specific focus on the girl child'. However, Ms Moyle also explained that

10 UN, Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995, 'The Girl Child: Strategic Objective L.4', Article 280, viewed 22 September 2015.

11 RESULTS International Australia (RESULTS Australia), *Submission 72*, p. 7.

12 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 14.

13 UNICEF, *State of the World's Children in Numbers: Every Child Counts*, 2014, Cited in Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 14.

14 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 14.

much of DFAT's programming, 'particularly in health and education, really focuses on girls' empowerment'.<sup>15</sup>

6.13 Research by UNESCO drew the connection between literacy and education of women and the empowerment of women. UNESCO stated that:

- Today, nearly 17 [per cent] of the world's adult population is still not literate; two thirds of them women, making gender equality even harder to achieve.
- The scale of illiteracy among youth also represents an enormous challenge; an estimated 122 million youth globally are illiterate, of which young women represent 60.7 [per cent].
- With some 775 million adults lacking minimum literacy skills, literacy for all thus remains elusive.<sup>16</sup>

## The value of education

6.14 RESULTS Australia maintained that the education of girls can bring about 'unprecedented social and economic changes' that are beneficial to families and communities, in that:

- Educating girls and women reduces the incidence of specific diseases, maternal and child mortality – with a child born to an educated mother being more than twice as likely to survive to the age of five.
- It lowers fertility rates through channels such as preventing early childbirth, improving birth spacing, improving women's access to the workforce and giving women more power over the number of children they have.
- Female education will also benefit nutrition through for instance ensuring appropriate intra-household allocation of resources.
- Women's education plays a central role in boosting earnings, with each additional year of education beyond third grade will increase her income by 10 [per cent]- 20 [per cent], and increasing both family and national income.
- Reducing political extremism and violence against women.
- Educating girls accelerates overall literacy: mothers with a primary school education are five times more likely to send their children to school.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Ms Sally Moyle, Acting Assistant Secretary and Principal Gender Specialist, Human Rights and Gender Equality Branch, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 9.

16 UNESCO, *Education, Statistics on Literacy*, UNESCO Institute of Statistics, <[www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/resources/statistics/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/resources/statistics/)> viewed 14 July 2015.

- 6.15 The Australian National University (ANU) Gender Institute pointed out that the UN Secretary-General has estimated that ‘investment in girls’ education translates into an average GDP growth of 0.3 percentage points for each per cent increase’.<sup>18</sup>
- 6.16 ChildFund Australia argued that investment in girls’ education has:  
... proven to increase the number of female wage earners in society, increase productivity for employers, and reduce the incidence of child marriage and HIV rates ... The impact of this has been shown to be intergenerational, with educated women more likely to send their children to school, and for longer periods of time with each successive generation.<sup>19</sup>
- 6.17 ChildFund reported that in Sri Lanka, and many other countries in the region, well educated women have more opportunities to participate in the economy through business than women with low levels of education.<sup>20</sup> Further, ChildFund referred to UN Foundation research that indicated that ‘women and girls who earn an income reinvest 90 per cent of it into their families’.<sup>21</sup>
- 6.18 Plan argued that education also contributes to ‘empowering girls and women to make free choices and decisions about marriage’, saying that education enables girls to:  
... acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to protect their sexual and reproductive health and rights, to protect themselves against unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), to delay childbearing and to decide on whether, when and how many children they have.<sup>22</sup>
- 6.19 Based on work in Cambodia, PNG and Timor-Leste, Oaktree identified a correlation between human rights violations confronting women and girls and the need for access to education. The submission states:  
Education can help girls combat family and sexual violence and improve their economic and leadership opportunities. At the same time family and sexual violence and the perceived lack of economic and leadership opportunities for women can impact on the rights of a woman or girl to receive an education. Therefore,

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17 RESULTS Australia, *Submission 72*, pp. 7–8.

18 Australian National University (ANU) Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 7.

19 ChildFund Australia (ChildFund), *Submission 2*, p. 6.

20 ChildFund, *Submission 2*, p. 4.

21 ChildFund, *Submission 2*, p. 6.

22 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 12.

education exists as both an opportunity to combat human rights violation and a right within itself.<sup>23</sup>

- 6.20 The Australian Bahá'í Community described women as 'the first educators of the next generation', stating:

... their education has a tremendous impact on the family's physical, social and economic well-being; their economic participation increases productivity and drives economic progress; their presence in public life has been associated with better governance and lower levels of corruption.<sup>24</sup>

## Global progress

- 6.21 In 2015, the UN reported that: 'About two thirds of countries in the developing regions have achieved gender parity in primary education'.<sup>25</sup>

- 6.22 The 2015 UNESCO *Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report* recorded significant progress on education, with the number of children and adolescents that do not attend school globally having almost halved since 2000. However, the report also noted that:

... in low and middle income countries in 2015, one in six children will not have completed primary school. In addition, one in three adolescents will not have completed lower secondary school.<sup>26</sup>

- 6.23 UNESCO looked at the issue of gender parity in primary and secondary education and reported:

Although it [was] projected that by 2015 gender parity will be achieved, on average at the global level, in primary and secondary education, 3 in 10 countries at the primary level and 5 in 10 at the secondary level are projected not to achieve this target.<sup>27</sup>

- 6.24 Further, amongst the children who are out of school around the world, 'girls are more likely than boys never to enrol in school' – 48 per cent

23 Oaktree, *Submission 11*, p. 2.

24 Australian Bahá'í Community, *Submission 61*, p. 1.

25 UN, *2015 Millennium Development Goals Progress Report*, 2015, p. 28, < [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015\\_MDG\\_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)> viewed 23 September 2015.

26 The report provides the result of annual evaluations conducted against six goals set out in the *Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All* agreement, signed in 2000 by 164 nations, including many in the Indian Ocean and Asian region. See UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges*, pp. 2–5, < [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf)> viewed 23 September 2015.

27 UNESCO, *EFA Monitoring Report 2015*, p. 3, viewed 23 September 2015.

compared to 37 per cent. However, in some countries, once they are enrolled, 'girls are more likely to reach the upper grades'.<sup>28</sup>

- 6.25 The report stated that the goal of universal enrolment in and completion of primary education – which was considered the 'most important EFA indicator'<sup>29</sup> – remained unmet:

Despite an increase in the global primary adjusted net enrolment ratio from 84 [per cent] in 1999 to 91 [per cent] in 2007, the indicator has since stagnated. At best, if earlier rates of progress resume, it will reach 93 [per cent] by 2015.<sup>30</sup>

- 6.26 The study revealed that, in 2012, 121 million children and adolescents remained out of school, with poorer children less likely to attend than children from wealthier families. In Niger and Guinea, for example, over 70 per cent of the poorest girls had never attended primary school.<sup>31</sup>

- 6.27 Finally, the report also argued that countries are not prioritising education spending, saying:

As a share of government spending, expenditure on education has changed little since 1999 and at 13.7 [per cent] in 2012, falls short of the recommended 15 [per cent] to 20 [per cent] target.<sup>32</sup>

## The Indo–Pacific region

- 6.28 Commenting to the Committee on progress in levels of education for girls in the region, DFAT reported that it was 'looking pretty good, at least in primary school'.<sup>33</sup>

- 6.29 Plan recognised that 'significant advances have been made towards gender parity in primary education enrolment and participation rates in the Indo–Pacific'. However, Plan also expressed concern that progress was slower for adolescent girls, saying:

... the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remain silent on the specific educational needs of adolescent girls, as does current Australian development policy.<sup>34</sup>

28 UNESCO, *EFA Monitoring Report 2015*, p. xiv, viewed September 2015.

29 EFA Goal 2 – Universal Primary Education, in UNESCO, *EFA Monitoring Report 2015*, viewed 23 September 2015.

30 UNESCO, *EFA Monitoring Report 2015*, p. 3, viewed September 2015.

31 EFA Goal 5 – Gender Equality, in UNESCO, *EFA Monitoring Report 2015*, p. xiv, viewed 23 September 2015.

32 EFA Goal 6 – Quality of Education, in UNESCO, *EFA Monitoring Report 2015*, p. xiv, viewed 23 September 2015.

33 Ms Moyle, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 9.

- 6.30 DFAT agreed that low rates of secondary school enrolment and retention for girls, and low literacy rates for women, in countries in the Indo-Pacific region are an ongoing concern, stating: 'This presents a significant barrier to women's opportunity to take-up leadership positions'.<sup>35</sup>
- 6.31 Australian Volunteers International (AVI) quoted Australian government estimates on the economic cost of poor education for women across the Asia-Pacific region, which put this cost at US \$30 billion annually, and US \$50 billion annually when factoring in the costs of women's low levels of participation in the work force.<sup>36</sup>
- 6.32 The table below provides an estimate of the economic cost of the disparity between male and female enrolments in upper secondary education:

Table 6.1 Cost of disparity between girls and boys education in the Indo-Pacific

Country	% Girls enrolled in upper secondary education	Education gender gap (percentage points)	Total Gross National Income (\$million)	Estimated lost growth (\$million)
Cambodia	20	11	6906	227
Indonesia	48	3	315 759	2841
Laos	31	12	2879	103
Papua New Guinea	5	2	4637	27
Solomon Islands	13	5	331	4
Timor-Leste	33	1	865	2
Vanuatu	24	17	369	18
Nepal	22	4	8051	96
Pakistan	12	10	122 295	3668
Sri Lanka	69	3	25 731	231
Afghanistan	4	11	8092	267
Bangladesh	32	3	69 921	629
India	40	12	906 537	32 635

Source Plan International, Submission 46, p. 20.<sup>37</sup>

34 Plan, Submission 46, p. 10.

35 DFAT, Submission 27, p. 15.

36 Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, *A New Paradigm in Development Assistance – Harnessing the Private Sector*, Speech, Queen's Hall, Parliament of Victoria, 29 April 2014, p. 4, cited in Australian Volunteers International (AVI), Submission 43, p. 1.

37 Footnote 102 states that the calculations were based on the latest UNESCO comparisons showing the gap between boys' and girls' secondary schooling in the region, in UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, 2008.

## The Pacific region

- 6.33 Dr Priya Chattier, ANU Pacific Research Fellow at the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) program, submitted that progress is 'slow and uneven' in the Pacific, with some countries doing well and others stagnating. For instance, Polynesia is 'on track' to achieve universal primary education, reduce child mortality, and improve maternal health. However, '[t]he Pacific's overall MDG rating is said to be negatively affected by Papua New Guinea's 'off-track' performance on all goals'.<sup>38</sup>
- 6.34 Dr Chattier provided a breakdown of the status of access to education across the Pacific, submitting that:
- Gender equality in access to education has been achieved or is close to being achieved in primary and secondary schooling in most Polynesian and Micronesian countries of the Pacific;
  - ... some disparities still exist in the Melanesian sub-region as well as in Cook Islands (primary), Niue (secondary) and Tuvalu (primary);
  - More girls than boys are in secondary schooling in the Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Tokelau and Tuvalu.<sup>39</sup>
- 6.35 Dr Chattier added that:
- Tertiary enrolment varies by country and territory: in some cases women are under-represented; among the notable exceptions are [the University of the South Pacific] USP, where recent statistics show female students are enrolling in equal if not higher numbers than males and particularly in study by extension mode, and the University of Guam which has 60 [per cent] female enrolment.<sup>40</sup>
- 6.36 Witnesses submitted that women and girls in the Pacific face challenges in completing their education due to lack of infrastructure and resources. The YWCA reported:
- Many young people across the Pacific do not enjoy universal access to formal education. In most parts of the region, a booming population of young people combined with a lack of infrastructure, resources and qualified teachers have resulted in limited school places. Consequently, young people in the Pacific

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38 Dr Priya Chattier, Pacific Research Fellow, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia (SSGM) program, ANU, *Submission 55*, p. 1.

39 Dr Chattier, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

40 Dr Chattier, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

are gradually 'pushed out' of school with only a minority completing their secondary schooling.<sup>41</sup>

- 6.37 Plan cited research in PNG that found 'while a relatively even number of boys and girls commence secondary school, significantly less girls than boys complete secondary education'.<sup>42</sup>
- 6.38 Dr Chattier asserted that girls in the Pacific region 'are still disproportionately losing out on positive advances in universal primary education and completion of secondary school'.<sup>43</sup>
- 6.39 UN Development Programme (UNDP) data indicates that in PNG only 6.8 per cent of adult women in 2013 had reached at least a secondary level of education, where 14.1 per cent of men achieved this level.<sup>44</sup>
- 6.40 Dr Chattier explained that in Vanuatu 'the gender parity index at primary school is almost equal but at post-secondary level, young women have far less access to educational opportunities'.<sup>45</sup> She also noted that, even where gender parity is close to being achieved in primary and secondary education in the Pacific, it 'does not translate into women's participation in paid employment', adding:

To achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, education and training need to be better tailored towards Pacific realities.<sup>46</sup>

- 6.41 Father Jan Czuba, Vice Chancellor and President of the Divine Word University, presented evidence to the Committee about the University's work in PNG to open up study and employment for women:

When I established Divine Word University, and I am currently working on establishing another university, my main focus was to educate women, especially women from remote areas. We have 54 per cent of female students and 68 per cent of females in administration. This was done on merit, but honest merit: in PNG culture, quite often when a man and a woman with equal

41 Cited in YWCA, *Safe. Respected. Included. Connected. Skilled. A Pacific Young Women's Leadership Strategy*, p. 20, <[www.unicef.org/pacificislands/YWCA\\_PYWLS\\_-\\_final\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/YWCA_PYWLS_-_final(1).pdf)> viewed 14 July 2015, referenced YWCA, *Submission 65*, p.8.

42 Plan, *Submission 46*, pp. 9–10.

43 Dr Chattier, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

44 Data cited by Committee Chair, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 7, and sourced from Explanatory Note, UN Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2014-Papua New Guinea*, p. 4, <[hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/PNG.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/PNG.pdf)> viewed 24 September 2015.

45 Dr Chattier, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

46 Dr Chattier, *Submission 55*, p. 5.

experience are applying for jobs the man gets the job because he is a man.<sup>47</sup>

## East Asia

6.42 Witnesses submitted that progress has been made towards gender parity in education in most areas of East Asia, with some countries even exceeding gender parity.<sup>48</sup> For instance, DFAT explained that in Burma and the Philippines, girls are 'doing better' in secondary education than boys. However, improvements in education enrolment are not consistent across the region and have not generally translated into equality in employment or empowerment for women. DFAT's response has been to shift focus in program delivery from primary school enrolment to looking beyond enrolment to retention, completion and 'quality' of education.<sup>49</sup>

6.43 Witnesses pointed out that not all countries in the region have reached parity. Referring to outcomes in Laos, Save the Children reported that:

There has been great progress in primary school enrolment over the past five years with national figures showing an increase from 91.6 [per cent] in 2009 to 97 [per cent] in 2011. However, drop-out rates at primary level remains high, particularly in more remote and rural areas. The number of children completing grade 5 is significantly off track to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 2, likely to only achieve 75 [per cent] against a target of 95 [per cent] by 2015.<sup>50</sup>

6.44 The Director of Alola Foundation, Ms Nicole Bluett-Boyd, pointed out that in Timor-Leste:

Gender gaps are evident in secondary education, and more so in higher education, with only four per cent of Timorese women having completed some level of tertiary studies.

Ms Bluett-Boyd added that the 'importance of investment in programs that increase and assist in the maintenance of enrolments is paramount'.<sup>51</sup>

47 Father Jan Czuba, Vice Chancellor and President, Divine Word University PNG, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 7.

48 The UN reported in 2015 that gender parity in both primary and secondary education had been achieved in the Eastern Asia region, but not all countries have reached parity. UN, *2015 Millennium Development Goals Progress Report*, p. 29, viewed 23 September 2015.

49 Ms Moyle, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 9.

50 Save the Children, 'Laos: Education', < [laos.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/education](http://laos.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/education) > viewed 24 September 2015.

51 Ms Nicole Bluett-Boyd, Director, Alola Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 43.

- 6.45 The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste's Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, submitted that Timor-Leste's levels of enrolment in secondary education are generally 'very low'. Further gaps are emerging between men and women in secondary education and are becoming particularly evident at the tertiary level, where around eight per cent of men and around four per cent of women have a tertiary qualification.<sup>52</sup>
- 6.46 Plan reported on Cambodian government research showing that, in Cambodia around 18.8 per cent of young rural women have never attended school, compared with 13.8 per cent of men, and only 17.7 per cent of such women ever complete lower secondary education, compared with 23.5 per cent of men.<sup>53</sup>

## South and West Asia

- 6.47 Progress towards the aims of increased primary and secondary school enrolments in South and West Asia has also been mixed. DFAT acknowledged that Sri Lanka and India had made 'considerable progress in secondary school enrolments', but submitted that in Pakistan 'only 18 per cent of women have undertaken a secondary school education compared to 43 per cent of men', and 'the literacy rate for women is 47 per cent compared to 70 per cent for men'.<sup>54</sup>
- 6.48 The ANU Gender Institute reported that in South Asia: 'the gap between female-male enrolments grows sharply as girls and boys move upward through the education system'.<sup>55</sup>
- 6.49 Plan submitted that their research in Pakistan demonstrates that:
- overall completion rates at primary level are 61 per cent;
  - completion rates for boys are 71 per cent;
  - completion rates for girls are 51 per cent;
  - only 41 per cent of girls enrol in secondary schools, compared to 58 per cent of boys; and
  - the 'situation is worse in rural areas'.<sup>56</sup>
- 6.50 Reporting on positive outcomes in Sri Lanka, his Excellency Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, advised that Sri Lanka provides free education to both boys and girls from primary to

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52 Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, *Submission 45*, p. 2.

53 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 10.

54 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 15.

55 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 3.

56 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 9.

university levels, complemented by private educational institutions. He noted that a highlight of Sri Lanka's performance in the Gender Gap Index of 2014 was the nation's achievement in ranking 59<sup>th</sup> among 142 countries for closing the gender gap in enrolment in primary to tertiary education.<sup>57</sup>

- 6.51 The Sri Lankan High Commissioner also advised of the provision of vocational training facilities, and accelerated learning programs, for women who were affected by the war.<sup>58</sup>
- 6.52 Ms Rebecca Lim, Ms Felicity Mashuro and Ms Louise Woodley submitted that UNICEF statistics reveal primary school attendance for girls in India is 'fairly high' at 81.4 per cent (2008–2012). However, this drops significantly to 48.7 per cent for senior school attendance for girls.<sup>59</sup> Amnesty International Group, University of Western Australia (UWA) Group further reported:
- India has had difficulty achieving educational outcomes for much of its population, with many not completing an adequate education. This problem is significantly more pronounced in females than males. For example, the effective literacy rate for males above age 7 was found to be 82.14 [per cent], while for females it was only 65.46 [per cent]. The school dropout rate for adolescent females may be as high as 64 [per cent], with girls from ethnic minorities being particularly disadvantaged.<sup>60</sup>
- 6.53 The UN reported that in many countries, including India, disability remains a barrier to education, saying:
- Disability is another major impediment to accessing education. In India, for instance, more than one third of children and adolescents aged 6 to 13 who live with disabilities are out of school.<sup>61</sup>
- 6.54 Mr Stephen Roscoe Howell, Founding Director of Slavery Links Australia, emphasised the importance of governments and agencies making a long term commitment to empower socially and economically marginalised sectors of the community, including girls, to enable them to achieve tertiary level education. He referred to successful Australia projects in

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57 High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, *Submission 79.1*, pp. 1–2.

58 High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, *Submission 79.1*, p. 5.

59 Ms Rebecca Lim, Ms Felicity Mashuro, and Ms Louise Woodley (Rebecca Lim *et al*), *Submission 70*, p. 5.

60 A Djajadikerta in Amnesty International Group, University of Western Australia (UWA), *Submission 58*, p. 5.

61 UN, *2015 Millennium Development Goals Progress Report*, 2015, p. 26, viewed 23 September 2015.

Ghana and, in particular, noted the success of the Asha Slum Program in Delhi, which works with women to improve their lives.<sup>62</sup> Mr Howell highlighted the necessity of a ‘two generation’ timeframe to get debt-bonded slum children to university:

Asha has taken 20 years to build solidarity in these slum communities in Delhi, to get kids sufficient stability in their families, to get kids into university.<sup>63</sup>

- 6.55 In its submission, Caritas Australia pointed to Afghanistan, where approximately five million school aged children are not in school, and 70 per cent of these are girls.<sup>64</sup> Oxfam suggested that, in addition to ongoing conflict, a contributing factor to this is the shortage of trained teachers in specialist subjects, such as maths and sciences, which is a key obstacle to students’ higher education opportunities in Afghanistan, particularly for girls and for students in remote areas.<sup>65</sup>
- 6.56 Oxfam also advised that it is working to improve the quality of education through distance education programs that use live television broadcasts from teachers in Kabul to classrooms across Parwan province. Oxfam also explained that it supports the development of an educational radio serial, *Maktab-e-Sokhta* (Burnt School), which is broadcast in 19 provinces across Afghanistan to raise awareness of the importance of education, especially for girls.<sup>66</sup>

## Educating girls—the obstacles

- 6.57 Women and girls face significantly higher barriers than boys in accessing education. According to Plan International, girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school because of:
- poor quality and gender biased curricula and teaching that excludes and alienates girls;
  - poverty;
  - violence at school and on the way to school;
  - child marriage;

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62 Asha (meaning ‘hope’ in Hindi) is a Delhi-based NGO that works in partnership with women in slum communities to improve living conditions and access healthcare, education and financial services. See ‘Asha – India’ <[asha-india.org/](http://asha-india.org/)> viewed 15 July 2015.

63 Mr Stephen Roscoe Howell, Founding Director, Slavery Links Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 May 2015, p. 2. Note: The need for long-term funding for projects is discussed in the final chapter of this report.

64 Caritas, *Submission 42*, p. 3.

65 Oxfam Australia, *Exhibit 7: Oxfam in Afghanistan*, May 2014, p. 2.

66 Oxfam Australia, *Exhibit 7: 2014*, p. 2.

- a lack of gender inclusive facilities (including toilets);
- the difficult transition from primary to post-primary education;
- limited access to gender transformative Early Childhood Care and development; and
- deficiencies in measuring and monitoring the progressive fulfilment of girls' right to education.<sup>67</sup>

## Socio-cultural expectations

6.58 Evidence presented to the inquiry indicated that there are a number of socio-cultural barriers that can limit girls' access to education. Plan explained that, in some countries, including Pakistan:

... the combination of a lack of female teachers coupled with a fear of male teachers or the belief that it is inappropriate for male teachers to teach female students, also deters girls from going to school.<sup>68</sup>

6.59 Dr Chattier argued that in many Pacific Island countries parents do not prioritise 'investing in their daughter's education' to the same extent as their sons. This is further exacerbated by

... heavy domestic workloads, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, the prevalence of gender-based violence and mistreatment of non-conforming girls by families, and poor infrastructure and transport ...<sup>69</sup>

6.60 Plan agreed that many Indo-Pacific families and communities value boys' education much more highly than girls. Plan argued that:

This prejudice usually originates from the widely held and discriminatory belief that the primary role of women is to produce children and care for the household rather than become a skilled worker or leader in the community.<sup>70</sup>

6.61 Referring to the Highlands region of PNG, Plan explained that girls are often kept at home 'since it is assumed that they will become homemakers following marriage at an early age'. Plan also suggested that families in Vanuatu, for instance, were reluctant to invest in girls' education, assuming that the girl would be 'lost' to family once she married.<sup>71</sup>

6.62 The Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality reported that, in Timor-Leste, girls often share the view that their education is less

67 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

68 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

69 Dr Chattier, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

70 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

71 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

important, with around one quarter of girls surveyed believing ‘that teachers treat boys better than girls’. The Secretary of State added:

Prevailing gender attitudes are also evident among girls, with 30 [per cent] thinking that boys should stay longer in school and a similar proportion thinking that boys are smarter than girls. Little evidence exists on the extent of gender bias in textbooks and teaching materials.<sup>72</sup>

6.63 A Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit study cited research indicating that women and girls’ transgression beyond accepted gender roles can be strongly resisted, even met by violence.<sup>73</sup>

6.64 The Abt JTA submission provided a case study from PNG indicating the way in which strong socio-cultural expectations can impact on women, even after they have received higher level education:

Ms X is a young PNG woman who has an Australian university degree and a job with an international resource company. She is also the daughter of a conservative highlands family, who place her under constant pressure to marry and have children – the last suitor already having 3 wives. Most of her income goes to support family obligations. She faces huge social pressure to conform, marry and bear children – career development for women is not culturally condoned. The strongest pressure comes from her mother. Ms X’s education and employment successes can contribute to her empowerment, but without cultural shifts in perceptions of women’s roles and abilities in her own family and community, her broader sense of empowerment will be restricted.<sup>74</sup>

## Early marriage age and school retention

6.65 As discussed in chapter two, while legislation protecting girls from child marriage has been advanced across many countries in the region, the official marriage age in some nations remains low for girls compared with boys.

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72 Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, *Submission 45*, p. 2.

73 Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit, Monash University, *Submission 7*. Refers to: N Godden, ‘Case Study: Men’s Violence against Women and Girls in Solomon Islands’, p. 11.

74 ‘Case Study: Challenges of Empowering Women in Repressive Cultural Contexts’, Abt JTA, *Submission 59*, p. 5.

- 6.66 Amnesty International Group UWA cited evidence that, even in developed nations like Indonesia, the marriage age is 16 years for women and 19 years for men, with early marriages particularly prevalent in poor and rural areas.<sup>75</sup> Ms Rebecca Lim and colleagues also reported that, although the rate of education for girls is relatively high in Indonesia, 'there are barriers reinforcing gender stereotypes including inadequate programs to address inequalities in school and early marriage of girls'. The submission added that Timor-Leste faces similar issues, where 18.9 per cent of girls are married by the age of 18.<sup>76</sup>
- 6.67 DFAT confirmed that early and forced marriage is closely related to women's low educational achievement. The Department cited estimates that nearly 50 per cent of women in South Asia are married by 18 years of age, with rates as high as 66 per cent in Bangladesh (ranked fourth in the world for child marriage) and 48 per cent in India (ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the world for child marriage).<sup>77</sup> The Shakti Community Council also advised the Committee that approximately a third of all under age marriages occur in India.<sup>78</sup>
- 6.68 Early marriage is also a barrier to education for many women in East Asia. DFAT submitted that, in Madagascar 'the legal age for marriage is 14 years and it is estimated that almost 35 per cent of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed'. The Department added that in Mozambique 'the figure is as high as 47 per cent'.<sup>79</sup>
- 6.69 Plan reported a clear correlation between low education levels and higher rates of early marriage. Plan also submitted that education can offer a 'protection' against early marriage:
- Schooling can protect against marriage in several important ways. First, just being at school helps support the perception that a girl is a child and therefore not ready for marriage. Secondly, when girls stay in schools longer, this helps challenge ideas about the normality of child marriage as well as harmful gender beliefs about girls inferiority to boys. Thirdly, when schools have a gender transformative curriculum, when combined with broader community engagement strategies, this may help girls improve their social networks and improve their ability to negotiate what they want including when and to whom they will marry.<sup>80</sup>

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75 J Ruscoe in Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 7.

76 Rebecca Lim *et al*, *Submission 70*, p. 5.

77 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 15.

78 Shakti Community Council (Shakti), *Submission 84*, p. 1.

79 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 16.

80 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 12.

- 6.70 According to Plan, girls are often forced to end their education in preparation for marriage ‘as soon as they get their first period’, and a lot of schools around the world ‘refuse enrolment of girls and women who are married, pregnant or have children’. Further, once girls are married, caring responsibilities, ‘restricted mobility and pregnancy hamper their ability to return to school’. Plan added that children of women who marry young and drop out of school often repeat the cycle.<sup>81</sup>
- 6.71 ChildFund submitted that a similar process occurs in Laos, where girls taken out of school to marry between ages 14 and 16, never complete their education.<sup>82</sup>
- 6.72 Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA (Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad) emphasised the importance of programs that provide a ‘second chance’, through vocational training, to women and girls who have left school. Union Aid Abroad referred to a range of program it operates, along with regional partners, in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, Burma and the Philippines which address low levels of literacy and improve employment prospects for women.<sup>83</sup>
- 6.73 Mr Howell from Slavery Links Australia, told the Committee about programs that work to assist girls to stay at school:
- The second example is of postponing marriage with incentives – a very practical suggestion of providing scholarships, in effect, or bursaries so that girls will be kept at school. The next example ... is of empowering young people’s direct action in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal – programs training young people themselves, if someone disappears from school: what do you do; who do you go and ask; who are the trusted adults in your village or community that you can go to enlist support to ensure that this girl will finish school?<sup>84</sup>

## Economic factors

- 6.74 In many parts of the Indo-Pacific region, women’s economic and social value remains focussed on their role as mothers, wives and carers. Ms Jacqueline Zwambila, former Ambassador to Australia from Zimbabwe, explained that in many parts of Africa ‘[t]here is an expectation that girls will carry out domestic and household work’, and ‘a tendency of the poor

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81 Plan, *Submission 46*, pp. 11–12.

82 ChildFund, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

83 Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA (Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad), *Submission 68*, p. 5 and Appendix from p. 9 for programs.

84 Mr Howell, Slavery Links Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 May 2015, p. 3.

families to spend available money on the education of boys, because they are viewed as the future breadwinners'. Ms Zwambila also stated that:

There is pressure in some cultures for girls to marry young, particularly where they are seen as an economic burden on families.<sup>85</sup>

6.75 Ms Rebecca Lim *et al* agreed that in many countries there are widely held views that a woman's duty is to look after the children and household, and a man's job is to work and provide income.<sup>86</sup> Oaktree agreed that the perception that boys have more economic opportunities than girls contributes to families prioritising the education of boys over girls.<sup>87</sup>

6.76 Women's Plans Foundation described how cultural practices such as the bride price in PNG are underpinned by the economic value placed on the future fertility of girls:

The assumption is that the bride price paid ensures that the bride must bear babies at her husband's requirement. Ownership of girls and women is thus an issue, with men assuming ownership of women's bodies, resulting in early pregnancy, resulting high mortality rates, low education and limited identity for half of the population. Social education reduces economic dependency on child bride practices.<sup>88</sup>

6.77 Plan asserted that:

Girls in the poorest households are at greatest risk of being denied the right to go to school ... When poor parents make a decision about which of their children is more likely to gain from education, they will weigh up factors such as a girl's worth as a bride, or the potential contribution to domestic or other labour that would be lost if she were to go to school. These immediate factors often outweigh the chance of the more uncertain and delayed benefits of an education.<sup>89</sup>

6.78 Even in countries on track to meet global targets for gender parity in enrolment, girls from the poorest communities often remain underrepresented. Plan reported:

- In Cambodia, sons are more likely to be educated than daughters, as daughters are often taken out of school to earn a living.

85 Ms Jacqueline Zwambila, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 May 2015, p. 35.

86 Ms Rebecca Lim *et al*, *Submission 70*, p. 4.

87 Oaktree, *Submission 11*, p. 3.

88 Women's Plans Foundation, *Submission 4*, p. 1.

89 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 7.

- In Pakistan, girls living in poor rural areas are ‘16 times less likely to be in school than boys from the wealthiest households in urban locations’.<sup>90</sup>
- 6.79 Plan argued that school fees represent a further barrier to girls’ education, with poor families struggling to afford the cost of educating their children, and prioritising boys under the assumption that girls will marry.<sup>91</sup> Plan pointed to Thailand, as an example, where ‘the poorest families spend almost 50 [per cent] of their income on their children’ education every year’.<sup>92</sup>

### Child labour and exploitation

- 6.80 Evidence to the inquiry advised that child labour is an issue across the Indo-Pacific region and represents both a barrier to girls’ education, and, in many cases, an abuse of their rights. International Labour Organisation (ILO) research cited by Amnesty International Group UWA indicates that:
- in 2014, around 250 million children aged between five and 17 were engaged in child labour globally; and
  - 122.3 million children aged between five to 14 are ‘economically active in Asia and the Pacific region, making it the region with the highest number of working children worldwide’.<sup>93</sup>
- 6.81 The ILO submission commented on the particular vulnerability of girls and young women in many parts of the Pacific region:
- The problem of child labour and exploitation, particularly affecting girls and young women, remains persistent in many parts of the Pacific, in occupations ranging from domestic service, market trading and hotel work and agriculture. Commercial sexual exploitation is also evident in several Pacific Island countries. In Fiji and PNG, available data shows significant numbers of working children, many in the worst forms of child labour such as child prostitution, drug trafficking, begging, carrying heavy loads, and collecting and/or handling scrap metals and chemicals.<sup>94</sup>
- 6.82 Amnesty International Group UWA’s Ms Theodosia Kirniawan quoted ILO findings that:

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90 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 7.

91 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 11.

92 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 7.

93 International Labour Organisation (ILO), cited in T Kirniawan, Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 13.

94 ILO, *Submission 50*, p. 3.

In many countries child domestic work is not only accepted socially and culturally, but is also regarded in a positive light as a protected and non-stigmatised type of work and preferred to others forms of employment especially for girls. The perpetuation of traditional female roles and responsibilities, within and outside the household, as well as the perception of domestic service as part of a woman's apprenticeship for adulthood and marriage, also contribute to the persistence of child domestic work as a form of child labour.<sup>95</sup>

- 6.83 Ms Kirniawan noted that a major problem in the region is that labour laws protecting children from such work are often not applied or are poorly developed. She advised that while Cambodia's minimum work age is 15 years, with 12-14 year olds allowed to perform light non-hazardous work outside school hours, in 2006 there were 760 000 underage workers in paid work, including in hazardous work.<sup>96</sup>
- 6.84 The GLASS Research Unit advised that in Nepal there is no prohibiting child labour, and 2.1 million children aged 5-14 are in work with the impact disproportionately falling on girl children. A study in 2009 revealed that 65 per cent of domestic workers below 14 years in Kathmandu were girls.<sup>97</sup>
- 6.85 Witnesses also highlighted the issue of child prostitution across the Asian region, with sex tourism driving a market that sees young Asian women and girls join the industry to escape poverty in countries such as Thailand.<sup>98</sup> The Committee was also advised of the market for young prostitutes in parts of the region.<sup>99</sup>
- 6.86 Ms Kirniawan advised that the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)'s identification of female child labour as a priority target in 1992 has underpinned broader progress for girls.<sup>100</sup> Data on the IPEC website suggests that child labour among girls has dropped 40 per cent since 2 000, compared with 25 per cent for boys. Overall the global number of children in child labour had also declined by

95 ILO, *Child Labour and Domestic Work* 2014, May 2014, cited in T Kirniawan in Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 14, footnote 4.

96 For detail see Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 15.

97 GLASS Research Unit, *Submission 7*, S Khadka, 'Case Study: Child Protection in Nepal', p. 9.

98 C Graville in Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, pp. 20, 21.

99 The Coalition Against Trafficking in Woman Asia Pacific in GLASS Research Unit, *Submission 7*, S Khadka, 'Case Study: Child Protection in Nepal', p. 9.

100 Initiated in 1992 the IPEC is substantially financed by the German Government. See T Kirniawan in Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 13.

one third since 2000, with more than half of the reduction involving children in hazardous work.<sup>101</sup>

- 6.87 Union Aid Abroad–APHEDA, however, noted that progress has slowed in recent years and that a third of all children affected live in countries which have not ratified ILO child labour standards.<sup>102</sup>
- 6.88 Witnesses identified an opportunity in some countries for the development or enhancement of systems to protect children from forced labour and abuse. For instance, the GLASS Research Unit submitted that Nepal lacks a formal child protection system, with most efforts being ad hoc and NGO-led, making systematic case management impossible.<sup>103</sup>

## Safety and security

- 6.89 Another barrier for girls in accessing education, particularly at the secondary level, is the desire to protect girls from perceived or actual threats to their safety. DFAT's Ms Moyle told the Committee:
- Parents do not feel that they can safely put their girls in school, so they do not. They are concerned about their honour, which is a gender norm issue. They do not get an education, so they need to be married off. There is no economic opportunity for the young women. So one simple answer is not going to address the problem. We need to recognise that gender inequality is kind of spread across the whole society.<sup>104</sup>
- 6.90 The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) explained that while girls and boys 'participate fairly evenly' in primary school, 'worries about personal safety pose barriers' in senior schooling. The Secretariat also highlighted the risks of travelling to school, 'insecure toilet facilities', and a risk of harassment and sexual assault.<sup>105</sup>
- 6.91 Oaktree also asserted that violence in schools plays a role in preventing girls from attending: 'This can include violent methods of discipline and non-girl friendly schools'.<sup>106</sup>
- 6.92 However, Oaktree also revealed that, in some circumstances, school can provide an escape from violence in the home, and expose girls to new 'social networks that they can seek help from'. Oaktree added:

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101 'Facts and Figures', The International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) < [www.ilo.org/ipecc/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/lang--en/index.htm) > viewed 23 September 2015.

102 Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA, *Submission 68*, p. 33.

103 GLASS Research Unit, *Submission 7*, S Khadka, 'Case Study: Child Protection in Nepal' p. 9.

104 Ms Moyle, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2014, p. 3.

105 Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), *Submission 24*, pp. 1–2.

106 Oaktree, *Submission 11*, p. 2.

We have found that training teachers on the particular issues facing their female students can help them support these students to stay in school. It can further increase their ability to support students who are facing issues of family or sexual violence.<sup>107</sup>

- 6.93 Oaktree explained that its programs in Cambodia have ‘trained teachers on non-violent methods of discipline’, to develop ‘a much safer schooling environment’ for both girls and boys :

The training aims to ensure that students feel safe and secure in their learning environment and students know how to get assistance if they are dealing with violence or abuse at home or at school.<sup>108</sup>

- 6.94 Referring to an ActionAid program in Bangladesh, Plan explained:

... almost half of all girls surveyed and three quarters of their parents considered ceasing their education due to concerns about sexual harassment on the way to school.<sup>109</sup>

- 6.95 In addition, Plan’s research in Pakistan indicated that girls were concerned about ‘teasing and receiving “bad eyes”’ while travelling to and from school. In fact, Plan cited UN research suggesting that ‘the further a girl has to travel to get to school, the higher her risk of assault’, especially in conflict zones.<sup>110</sup>

- 6.96 In many Pacific nations, such as Vanuatu, girls often need to live away from home to attend secondary school. In these contexts, Plan asserted that sexual assault is common and ‘legitimate parental concerns’ for the safety of their children make parents reluctant to support continued education for female children. Plan provided an example from Fiji where, among children living away from home to attend school, 26 per cent of girls who dropped out of school reported having been sexually abused by male relatives while living away from home.<sup>111</sup>

- 6.97 Referring to experience in Cambodia, PNG and Timor-Leste, Oaktree similarly noted:

Girls and their families can fear community violence and this can prevent them physically getting to school. Some parents we have worked with worry about letting their daughter go to school because they fear she will be attacked on her way there.<sup>112</sup>

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107 Oaktree, *Submission 11*, p. 3.

108 Oaktree, *Submission 11*, pp. 3–4.

109 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 8.

110 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 8.

111 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 8.

112 Oaktree, *Submission 11*, p. 3.

- 6.98 Caritas Australia provided the example of a program in Afghanistan that addresses concerns about girls travelling to and from school. The program involves Catholic Relief Services conducting community-based education classes, 'often in a local mosque or within a family compound'. Caritas reported that since 2006 the program has educated 18 000 children, with more than 60 per cent of them girls.<sup>113</sup>
- 6.99 Oaktree also listed relevant projects, including the Girls' Education Initiative and Beacon Schools' Initiative, both in Cambodia, which it submitted 'have provided students bikes to help them get to school. This has helped make the road to school less dangerous for girls'.<sup>114</sup>

### Infrastructure and access

- 6.100 Witnesses proposed that school facilities can play a significant role in impeding or promoting women and girls' participation in education.
- 6.101 Father Czuba reported that in PNG lack of educational facilities is an ongoing problem, requiring more planning:
- In terms of primary and secondary education, we have a free education policy, and government put the money there. Money is reaching the schools even in remote areas. However, those schools receive the money directly but there is no capacity in planning how the money will be used – to enhance, for example, the physical infrastructure of the school, with more classrooms, more staff houses; or maybe they should buy books and start to think about building libraries, because there are no libraries in the schools in remote areas. The money is not used for that. The money is sent to primary schools and secondary schools, but those in charge do not have the capacity to plan how the money could be used and spent. That is one of the big issues right now which we are facing.<sup>115</sup>
- 6.102 Plan noted that UNICEF and the World Bank have stressed the importance of providing girls-only toilets at school, which reduces the 'number of days missed due to menstruation'. As well as 'making the lives of children in schools more comfortable', access to safe, accessible and appropriate toilet facilities enables girls to attend school 'without some measure of shame, or risk to their health'.<sup>116</sup>

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113 Caritas, *Submission 42*, p. 3.

114 Oaktree, *Submission 11*, p. 4.

115 Father Czuba, Divine Word University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 11.

116 UNICEF cited in Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 9.

- 6.103 Professor Hilary Bambrick also highlighted the role of adequate toilet facilities for keeping girls in school, saying ‘it does come down a lot to infrastructure holding back women’s education’.<sup>117</sup>
- 6.104 Amnesty International Group UWA presented evidence from a study on education in India, which found that a failure to provide ‘appropriate infrastructure’ negatively affected girls’ attendance at school. The study observed:

The [Indian] *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act* was introduced in 2010 as an attempt to provide equitable education to all. Though a three year deadline was set to meet standards of improvement, most schools were not even able to meet requirements for basic facilities such as adequate drinking water and separate toilets for males and females.<sup>118</sup>

The study concluded that the provision of adequate school infrastructure needs to be prioritised.<sup>119</sup>

- 6.105 ChildFund submitted that it is working in this area through the ‘Rehabilitation of Schools project’ in PNG, which ‘has facilitated renovation of classrooms in 13 schools in the Oman and Koko program areas’.<sup>120</sup>

## Curricula and gender

- 6.106 Witnesses to the inquiry, including Plan, Oaktree, ChildFund and Caritas, emphasised the part education plays in shaping the gendered roles of girls and boys. Plan highlighted the role ‘curricula and school books’ play in ‘entrenching discriminatory gendered stereotypes such as the need for girls to focus on domestic chores, to be mothers, or to not excel in certain academic subjects’.<sup>121</sup>
- 6.107 Plan also referred to the role that male and female teachers can play in ‘reinforcing negative gender stereotypes in their teaching practices and interactions with students’. Plan cited research in Pakistan that found both female and male teachers ‘accepted and reinforced gender stereotypes and that most were unaware of the concept of gender, or its impact on learning and the school environment’.<sup>122</sup>

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117 Professor Bambrick, *Committee Hansard*, 7 May 2015, p. 19.

118 A Djajadikerta in Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 6.

119 A Djajadikerta in Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 6.

120 ChildFund, *Submission 2*, p. 6.

121 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

122 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

- 6.108 The Australian Bahá'í Community highlighted the importance of 'a quality education for all', which it considered should include 'education on gender equality for boys as well as girls'. The Bahá'í submission argued that education and training of all children and youth is thus:
- ... a crucial tool for transformation of attitudes and behaviours ...  
in a manner that cultivates in them a sense of dignity as well as  
responsibility for the well-being of their family members and for  
the wider community.<sup>123</sup>
- 6.109 In particular, the submission considered a focus on ages 12 to 15 is critical, noting: 'At this pivotal age, young people are beginning to develop a sense of personal moral responsibility and decision making, are refining their critical thinking skills'.<sup>124</sup>
- 6.110 ChildFund acknowledged the role of education in addressing the high incidence of gender-based violence in PNG, but identified a need for more public programs that target men, noting:
- While education and awareness-raising activities have proven to be effective in stopping violence before it starts, more public messaging is essential in PNG.<sup>125</sup>
- 6.111 ChildFund also told the Committee about a school-based education program it is implementing in PNG primary and secondary schools 'to teach students about respectful relationships, gender equality and conflict resolution'.<sup>126</sup>
- 6.112 Father Czuba of PNG's Divine Word University highlighted the importance of educating boys and girls about women's human rights, as well as a man's 'rights and responsibilities'. He advised that the transitioning of PNG's primary and secondary education from an 'outcome based to standards based' system provided an opportunity for the Australian Government to assist by providing experts to write appropriate text books for students from grade 1 to grade 12, noting there was a lack of expertise in PNG for this. He further suggested that the project would need to be long term, and must be relevant to the many PNG cultures and values so as to 'educate the future generation of Papua New Guineans'.<sup>127</sup>
- 6.113 DFAT explained that the Department sees the quality and character of education as a key area for further focus. Ms Moyle said:

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123 Australian Bahá'í Community, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

124 Australian Bahá'í Community, *Submission 61*, p. 3.

125 ChildFund, *Submission 2*, pp. 2-3.

126 ChildFund, *Submission 2*, p. 7.

127 Father Czuba, Divine Word University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, pp. 8-9.

It is what girls are learning and what boys are learning in school and what gender norms are imparted that we are really focusing on, so it is about the quality of education and what is being taught – and by whom, I think, is the next step for us. So that is a real site for the empowerment of girls – or conversely, if it is done poorly, the disempowerment of girls.<sup>128</sup>

## Improving girls' access to education

6.114 Education has historically been a priority area for Australian Official Development Assistance (ODA) that targets gender equality. DFAT submitted that:

Globally, the total amount of bilateral aid targeting gender equality and women's empowerment tripled from USD 8 billion in 2002 to USD 24 billion in 2012. Most of this went to education and health.<sup>129</sup>

6.115 DFAT further explained that 82 per cent of Australian ODA investments in the education sector have been 'principally or significantly focused on promoting gender equality'. This percentage is much higher than in other sectors, such as environment and governance, where 'the percentage drops below 30 per cent'.<sup>130</sup>

6.116 DFAT's *Performance of Australian Aid 2013–2014* states that Australia invested \$1 billion or 21 per cent of ODA in education in 2013–14, including \$362 million for Australia Awards, which is addressed in chapter nine.<sup>131</sup>

6.117 The Department's ODA commitments within the region for education over 2013–14 are listed in the following table:

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128 Ms Moyle, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 9.

129 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 29.

130 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 7.

131 DFAT, *Exhibit 82: DFAT, Performance of Australian Aid 2013–2014*, February 2015, p. 54; most current evaluation at time of writing.

Table 6.2 Australia's ODA on education across the region 2013–14

Region	Total regional budget (\$m)	Percentage spent on education programs
East Asia	1355.3	30
PNG and Pacific	1070	22
South and West Asia	435.3	33
Africa and Middle East	422.5	20

Source Data drawn from DFAT, Performance of Australian Aid 2013–2014, February 2015.

- 6.118 RESULTS Australia argued that ‘international funding for basic education has declined’ in recent years. However, the Australian aid program provides ‘an exception to this trend’. RESULTS asserted that it ‘is imperative that education remains a high priority for Australian aid’, suggesting Australia should maintain an education investment of ‘approximately 20 per cent of total aid in 2014–15 and subsequent years’.<sup>132</sup>
- 6.119 Witnesses to the inquiry made a number of recommendations intended to sustain and build upon the progress in girls’ access to quality education across the Indo–Pacific region. Plan advocated that Australian support programs take an ‘inter-disciplinary’ approach, including the following four components, which form the basis for Plan’s own work:
- parenting education;
  - community managed [early childhood care and development] early learning;
  - support for smooth transition to primary school; and
  - advocacy, partnerships and collective action to help improve [early childhood care and development] policy and practice.<sup>133</sup>
- 6.120 Plan advised that monitoring and evaluation of their own programs demonstrates that this approach is ‘leading to an improvement’ in:
- girls’ attendance at school;
  - awareness among adult women of a range of issues including harmful cultural practices; and
  - men’s awareness of the importance of their involvement in caring for their children.<sup>134</sup>
- 6.121 AVI highlighted the role of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which AVI said ‘is the only global partnership supporting the education sector in developing countries through its global pooled funding

132 RESULTS Australia, *Submission 72*, p. 9.

133 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 11.

134 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 11.

mechanism'.<sup>135</sup> The GPE seeks to raise primary completion rates for girls globally from 74 per cent in 2014 to 84 per cent in 2018, and the lower secondary completion rate for girls from 44 per cent in 2014 to 54 per cent in 2018.<sup>136</sup> Australia's last pledge to GPE was made in 2014 and included '\$140 million ... [bringing] our total commitment to GPE to date, to \$410 million'.<sup>137</sup>

- 6.122 AVI recommended that DFAT continue to provide funding for the GPE, and that DFAT:

... specifically ask the Partnership to target such Australian aid dollars to those countries in the Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific region, and to seek the agreement of the Partnership to report back on the success of the program in the region.<sup>138</sup>

RESULTS also recommended the Australian Government pledge AUD \$500 million to the GPE for 2015–2018.<sup>139</sup>

- 6.123 Plan noted Australia's funding of early childhood care and development programs in East Timor and Uganda, and advocated for an expansion and extension of this approach more broadly across the region.<sup>140</sup>
- 6.124 Some witnesses praised Australia's work in PNG. Father Czuba commended Australia's support in standards based auditing of universities in PNG, emphasising that Australia's technical assistance was more valuable than funding of local organisations. Father Czuba argued that strategic investments in the accountability of PNG institutions had yielded great benefits:

In a short period of time, you have made a huge impact. For example, all the universities in PNG went through an independent external academic audit and now they are addressing issues in leadership, transparency, accountability, management, quality of education. So in a short period of time, you have made a huge impact. The European Union is still talking about it and you are

135 Australian Volunteers International (AVI), *Submission 43*, p. 9.

136 *ABC News*, 'Former PM Julia Gillard announced as Chair of Global Partnership for Education', 11 February 2014 < [www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-11/julia-gillard-global-partnership-education/5251230](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-11/julia-gillard-global-partnership-education/5251230) > viewed 24 September 2015.

137 Senator the Hon Brett Mason, Former Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 'Australia's Global Partnership for Education Pledge: Statement from the Government of Australia', < [www.globalpartnership.org/docs/replenishment/2014/Pledge-Australia-EN.pdf](http://www.globalpartnership.org/docs/replenishment/2014/Pledge-Australia-EN.pdf) > viewed 24 September 2015.

138 AVI, *Submission 43*, p. 9.

139 RESULTS Australia, *Submission 72*, p. 10.

140 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 10.

already making a huge impact. I congratulate you. You did well and you are doing well.<sup>141</sup>

- 6.125 Witnesses highlighted the need to target adolescent girls. For instance, Plan argued that Australian aid ‘strategies have not considered how to respond to the gender-based barriers to education commonly encountered by adolescent girls’. Plan also noted that the MDG framework offers ‘limited capacity’ to measure progress for, or evaluate the educational needs of, adolescent girls.<sup>142</sup>
- 6.126 RESULTS Australia’s 2012 report *Education for All: or Just Those Easier to Reach?* proposed that the following accountability measures, among others, need to be adopted by countries in relation to education:
- *Setting clear equity targets:* gender policies developed at agency head office must be incorporated into all educational programs at the country level. This involves setting realistic gender equity targets and capturing the outcomes through sex-disaggregated data.
  - *Monitor gender policy :* ... This includes incorporating equity measurements into relevant results frameworks, developing and accessing gender disaggregated data and determining best practice equity interventions.
  - *Country level accountability:* gender policy needs to be implemented more uniformly at the country level.
  - *... [M]ultilateral institutions:* [As a major donor] DFAT should take on the role of supervising entity in GPE countries to ensure robust equity approaches are used in education development strategies and financing.<sup>143</sup>
- 6.127 Plan identified problems with Australian ODA targets and measures, where the current focus is on quantitative measures, such as school enrolment and retention rates and male to female ratios. Plan proposed DFAT could measure the following factors to glean a better understanding of girl’s access to, and experience of, education in the region, including:
- economic security of families with school age children;
  - access to contraception or sexual health information or services;
  - personal safety and security of girls and boys both on the way to school and at school;
  - working conditions of teachers;
  - gender sensitivity of teachers in the classroom;
  - incidence of child marriage;

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141 Father Czuba, Divine Word University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 10.

142 Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 10.

143 RESULTS Australia, *Submission 72*, pp. 8–9.

- gender sensitivity and relevance of teaching and learning methods; and
- sex-disaggregated learning achievements and participation of children and parents in education governance and management.<sup>144</sup>

## Committee comment

- 6.128 The right to education is a basic human right, and an essential foundation for efforts to empower women and girls and enable them to achieve their potential.
- 6.129 There is no doubt promoting equitable access to education for girls has the potential to bring very beneficial economic and social effects, including increased economic participation and incomes and better health outcomes. Increased education for girls can contribute to a virtuous cycle in improving literacy, with mothers with primary school education being more likely to send their children to school.
- 6.130 Conversely, poor levels of education for girls are a significant economic and social burden in terms of lower levels of women's economic participation, productivity and social engagement.
- 6.131 The Committee acknowledges the progress made by many countries in the Indo-Pacific region in increasing overall primary and secondary school enrolments, and working towards gender parity.
- 6.132 The Committee also recognises Australia's role in supporting equitable access to education for girls in the region, including through pledges made to the Global Partnership for Education.
- 6.133 However, the Committee notes that there is still a long way to go, especially in relation to secondary school enrolments and the tertiary education of women in the region.
- 6.134 The Committee also notes with concern that increasing enrolments in education have often failed to translate into better employment opportunities, and greater economic independence, for women in the region. Evidence presented to the Committee highlighted a range of factors that contribute to lower levels of education and poorer outcomes for girls and women.
- 6.135 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government support further research in this area, and utilise that evidence in the design of future education programs to achieve greater effectiveness.

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<sup>144</sup> Plan, *Submission 46*, p. 13.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government maintain its support for increasing primary school enrolments generally, and gender parity in enrolments specifically, across the Indo-Pacific region where the levels of female enrolment remain low.

The Committee also recommends that Australian funding and programs in education should include a particular focus on the most disadvantaged communities; notably, children with disabilities, and disadvantaged ethnic minorities.

### Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government increasingly target aid funding towards girls at the secondary and tertiary levels, by:

- providing additional funding that focuses on secondary school enrolment and completion initiatives for adolescent girls in key countries in the region;
- increasing support to programs designed to encourage more young women to complete tertiary qualifications throughout the region; and
- supporting research and programs designed to address the gap between educational attainment and employment/economic opportunities for women in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Recommendation 21**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government seeks to address the quality and character of education in the region, including through:

- supporting government bodies and local education advocates who are working to change the curricula and methodology in teaching to promote gender equality; and
- offering to provide expertise in drafting gender-sensitive, culturally appropriate resources for schools, particularly in the Pacific, and/ or funding the development of such expertise in-country.