

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2004

Thank you

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THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2004

Girls, education and development

Carol Bellamy
Executive Director
United Nations Children's Fund

CONTENTS

With a foreword by Kofi A. Annan,
Secretary-General of the United Nations

1

**TO JUMP-START
DEVELOPMENT**

Page 1



2

**EDUCATED GIRLS,
A UNIQUELY POSITIVE
FORCE FOR
DEVELOPMENT**

Page 17



3

**GIRLS LEFT OUT,
COUNTRIES LEFT
BEHIND**

Page 31



Panels

| | |
|---|----|
| 1 The acceleration strategy: 25 by 2005 | 3 |
| 2 Education, rights holders and duty bearers | 9 |
| 3 Egypt: Dreams realized | 19 |
| 4 The 'karate girls' of Bihar, India | 25 |
| 5 Goodbye to school fees | 35 |
| 6 The Fast-Track Initiative | 39 |
| 7 Teachers spark hope | 47 |
| 8 African countries move closer to education goals..... | 53 |
| 9 Turkey: A school play touches a nation | 61 |
| 10 Sudan: The community that made a difference | 65 |
| 11 Afghanistan: Coming back | 73 |

Boxes

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 United Nations Girls' Education Initiative | 5 |
| 2 Children out of school | 7 |
| 3 The Indicative Framework of the FTI | 38 |
| 4 The Global Campaign on Education update | 41 |
| 5 Male/female net school attendance | 61 |
| 6 Budgets and human rights | 77 |
| 7 A child-friendly school | 89 |

Maps

| | |
|--|----|
| Pictorial representations of the indices that illustrate the relationship of girls' education, gender equality and women's empowerment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals | |
| 1 Poverty and hunger | 14 |
| 2 Primary education | 28 |
| 3 Child mortality | 42 |
| 4 Maternal health | 56 |
| 5 HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases | 68 |
| 6 Environmental sustainability | 80 |

4

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT OF EDUCATING GIRLS

Page 45



5

WHAT ABOUT BOYS?

Page 59



6

THE RIGHT THING TO DO

Page 71



Figures

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 1 | Projections for the Millennium Development Goals | 6 |
| 2 | Trends in gender disparities | 12 |
| 3 | IMF/World Bank loans versus growth | 22 |
| 4 | Human development and economic growth | 23 |
| 5 | Double jeopardy | 27 |
| 6 | Primary net enrolment/attendance rates..... | 32 |
| 7 | Primary-school-completion progress | 33 |
| 8 | Female participation in secondary education | 36 |
| 9 | Children's opinions on gender and education | 39 |
| 10 | Government expenditure on education in East Asia and Pacific | 40 |
| 11 | Orphans less likely to attend school | 50 |

Annexes

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| A | A solution to almost every problem | 83 |
| B | Human rights-based approach: Statement of common understanding | 91 |

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| References | 94 |
|-------------------------|----|

Tables

| | | |
|----|------------------------------|-----|
| 1 | Basic Indicators | 102 |
| 2 | Nutrition | 106 |
| 3 | Health | 110 |
| 4 | HIV/AIDS | 114 |
| 5 | Education | 118 |
| 6 | Demographic indicators | 122 |
| 7 | Economic indicators | 126 |
| 8 | Women | 130 |
| 9 | Child protection | 134 |
| 10 | The rate of progress | 138 |

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Index | 142 |
|--------------------|-----|

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Glossary | 147 |
|-----------------------|-----|

“...there is no tool
for development
more effective
than the education
of girls.”

Kofi A. Annan

FOREWORD



Within a family, there are invariably times when one child will need more attention than another. To respond to the needs of that child is not to say that the others are loved any less. Rather, at that particular moment, the needs of one are more pressing, more critical. Every parent knows this to be true; every child realizes it at some intuitive level.

What is true of the family is also true of the international community. Every boy and girl around the world has a right to expect that we will do all we can to ensure that they will enjoy their right to an education. But in most countries, girls are the most disadvantaged when it comes to school. As this year's *State of the World's Children* reports, millions of young girls never attend school at all, millions more never complete their education, and countless numbers never receive the quality education that is their right. These millions of girls slip easily to the margins of our societies – less healthy than they could be, less skilled, with fewer choices in their lives and less hope for the future. As they grow into women, they are ill-prepared to participate fully in the political, social and economic development of their communities. They – and their children in turn – are at higher risk of poverty, HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation, violence and abuse.

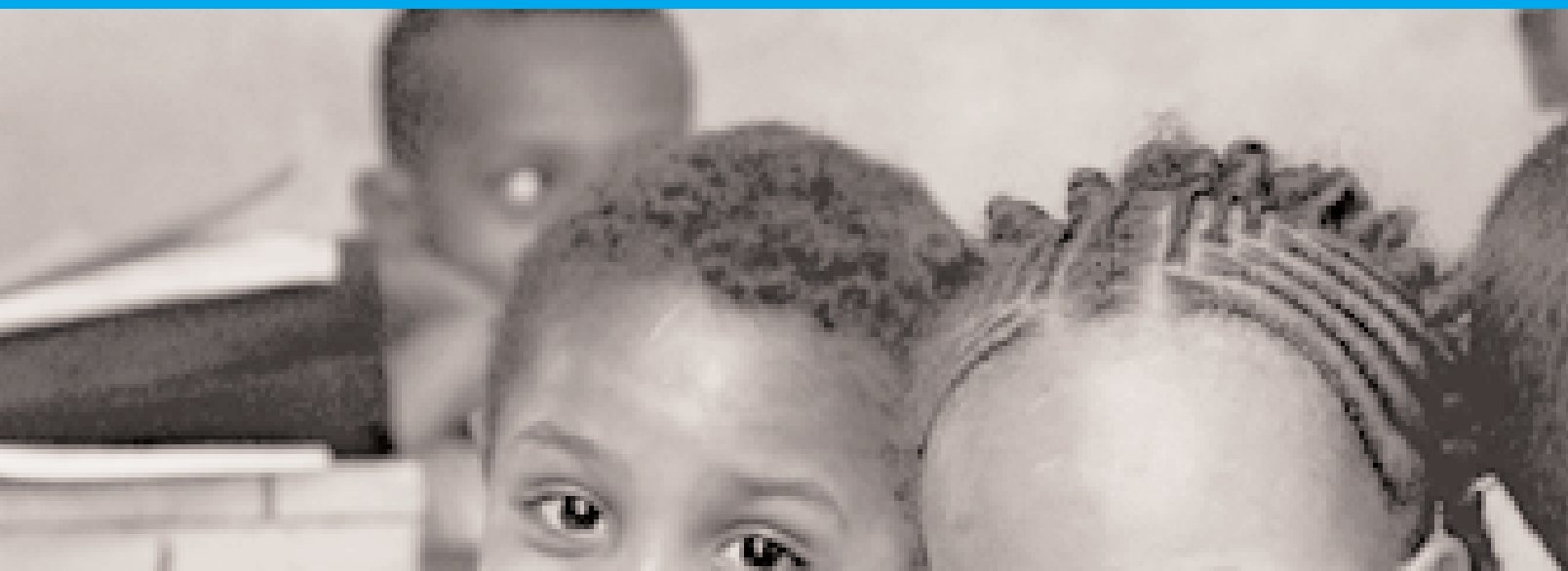
Conversely, to educate a girl is to educate a whole family. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, ultimately, whole countries. Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health – including helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation.

Two of the Millennium Development Goals – agreed by all the world's countries as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century – are focused on education for girls and boys alike. These are not only goals in their own right; how we fare in reaching them will be crucial to our ability to reach all the others. Only by translating them into reality can our international family grow stronger, healthier, more equitable and more prosperous.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'K. Annan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a dark ink on a white background.

Kofi A. Annan
Secretary-General of the United Nations

1 TO JUMP-START DEVELOPMENT



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