GENDER INEQUALITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLING: THE ROLES OF POVERTY AND ADVERSE CULTURAL PRACTICE*

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SUMMARY

This paper suggests a simple model for the relationships between poverty, schooling and gender inequality. It argues that poverty – at both national and household levels – is associated with an under-enrolment of school-age children, but that the gendered outcomes of such under-enrolment are the product of cultural practice, rather than of poverty *per se*. Using detailed case study material from two African countries, evidence is presented to show the variety and extent of adverse cultural practice which impede the attendance and performance of girls at school, relative to boys. It follows that gender inequalities in schooling outcomes, measured in both qualitative and quantitative terms, will not necessarily be reduced as incomes rise.

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is well known that there is a pronounced gender gap in access to, and achievement in, school in many developing countries. There is also a wide discrepancy in total school enrolment rates between countries, particularly, but by no means only, between those at different levels of development. It is important to understand the reasons for these phenomena. In particular, it would be useful to know whether both stem from the same broad cause, or whether there are different causes which interact – and perhaps reinforce each other. So, for example, if both underenrolment and differential access for boys and girls were primarily caused by poverty, the gender gap could be expected to disappear as development progressed. If, however, gender differences in enrolment and performance were caused by a set of factors other than poverty, they would need to be the subject of separate policy attention. This paper suggests a simple model of the relationships between poverty, schooling and gender. Using detailed case study material from two African countries, evidence is presented to show that a wide variety of cultural practices impede the attendance and performance of girls at school, relative to boys. The paper argues that, as incomes (national and household) rise, so enrolments will tend to follow. However, the speed with which a shift towards greater gender equality occurs will be slow, without measures designed to target cultural practice, and, in their absence, both quantitative and qualitative inequities in school outcomes would be likely to remain entrenched.

2 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN POVERTY, SCHOOLING AND GENDER

Children who do not attend primary school are overwhelmingly from poor households in poor countries. The majority of such non-attendees are girls. Why is this? Figure 1 sketches a simple model which connects poverty and gendered outcomes of schooling. Its main constituents are as follows. The main loci for poverty/schooling interactions are at the levels of the household and of the State.[1] As regards households, in cases where the ease of access to schools of reasonable quality is similar for all, there are two main reasons why poorer households may choose not to send their children to them. The first is that the direct costs which parents have to meet may be too great. Such costs exist even where school fees are not charged. In most cases, parents incur some expenditures for school uniforms, text and exercise books. Many also have to contribute to the construction or upkeep of school buildings, and provide other inputs in cash or kind. Poor households may judge such costs to be beyond their means.[2] The second reason is that poorer households may depend, more so than richer households, upon the labour of their children in order to supplement household income – either directly, on the farm or in the market place, or indirectly, by children undertaking household tasks which liberate adult labour for other remunerated work. For each, or both, of these sets of reasons, poor households may decide not to enrol some or all of their children in school.

Quite separately, however, this outcome may arise from there not being schools sufficiently close at hand, or from those which are accessible being of such poor quality that parents do not wish to use them. Although there is no compelling set of reasons why even the poorest States cannot provide their populations with sufficient primary schools of reasonable quality, it remains the case that shortages of school places, of

materials and of trained teachers, are much more prevalent in poorer than in richer countries, and that they tend particularly to affect the poorer households and communities within them.

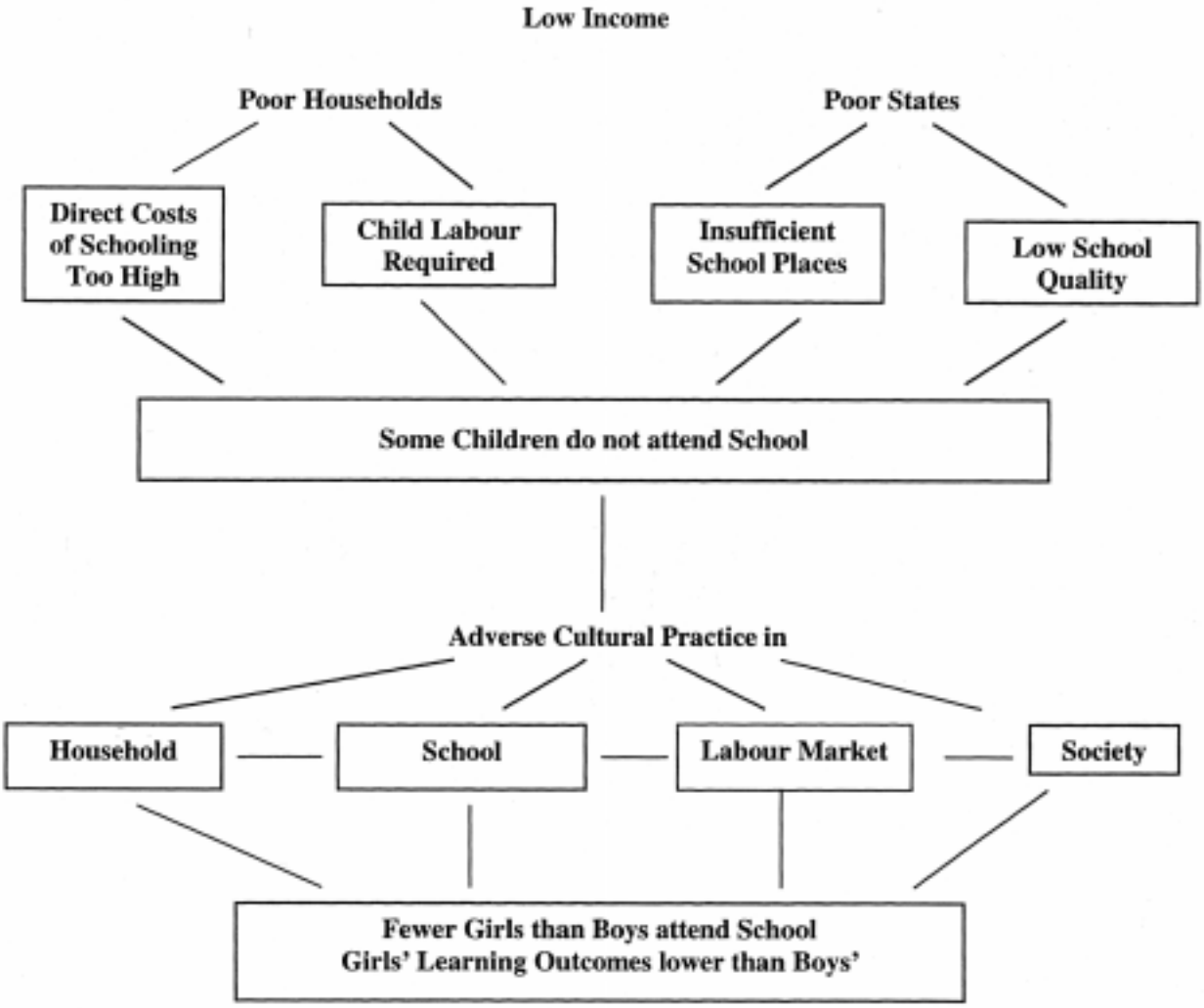
The above are the four main factors which link poverty, at the level of the State and at the level of the household, to a circumstance where not all children in the eligible age group attend primary school. The gendered characteristics of this under-enrolment are, however, determined by a further, more diverse, set of factors, which are broadly grouped together in Figure 1 under the heading 'cultural practice'. These are phenomena which cause rationed enrolment opportunities to be unequally allocated between boys and girls. They operate in the domains of the household, the school, the labour market and the society as a whole.

As regards the latter, gendered roles in society change the balance of incentives for girls and boys to attend school. In societies where the main leadership roles in local and national life are occupied by males, where marriage of girls occurs at a much younger age than of boys, where religious or customary belief discourages social interaction between the sexes, or where conventional opinion encourages women to see their future as being centred on the home and the family, the incentives for girls to attend and to perform well in school are less than those for boys.

The labour market has a critical influence upon the perceived benefits of schooling. Where many jobs are reserved – whether formally or informally – for males, where unemployment is high and the gender balance of formal employment is strongly male, and where gender discrimination in the labour market reduces the average earnings of women relative to men with similar abilities and qualifications, the perceived benefits of schooling will be greater for boys than for girls.

The environment of the school may also be more conducive to the attendance and perfomance of boys than of girls. Male teachers may not provide girls sufficient support, and they may even be sexually threatening. Toilet facilities for girls may be inadequate, and other facilities (such as a shortage or absence of chairs) may be unfriendly to girls. Harassment from boys may occur, and the journey to school may have greater attendant risks for the safety of girls than of boys.

Finally, much household behaviour is responsive to the broader contextual conditions of the society and the labour market. However, the gendered division of labour within the household can sharply affect the relative chances of girls and boys attending school. Where girls are expected to perform household chores, and to look after younger siblings, the demands on their time may be greater than upon the boys, and their school attendance may be more affected. Where a girl's allegiance after marriage is mainly to her future husband's family, the balance of perceived benefits to parents are likely to favour the education of sons over daughters. Where schooling decisions in families are mainly taken by men, the education of boys may again find greater favour.


Low Income
Poor Households
Poor States
Direct Costs of Schooling Too High
Child Labour Required
Insufficient School Places
Low School Quality
Some Children do not attend School
Adverse Cultural Practice in
Household
School
Labour Market
Society
Fewer Girls than Boys attend School
Girls' Learning Outcomes lower than Boys'

In each of the above ways, custom and circumstance lead to a range of cultural practices which cause the outcomes of schooling to be less favourable for girls than for boys. This paper provides evidence for the diversity and strength of this adverse cultural practice. A key question is whether increasing income will change such practice in ways which can facilitate the achievement of equal schooling outcomes. The evidence presented suggests that more profound changes are also likely to be required, if this goal is to be attained.

3 INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

Rapid expansion of educational systems has occurred in developing countries over the past forty years. On average gross enrolment ratios at primary level have increased by about 25 per cent – to around 100 – across developing countries as a whole. The expansion has been dramatic in some regions. GERs have increased from less than 70 to around 100 in South Asia, and they have almost doubled to about 74 in Sub-Saharan Africa over the period 1965-94 (Table 1).

Table 1: Trends in primary GER by region and gender, 1965-1994

		1965	1980	1985	1990	1994
SSA	male	52	87	84	79	81
	female	31	68	68	66	67
	total	41	77	76	73	74
Arab States	male	n.a.	92	94	93	94
	female	n.a.	67	72	75	77
	total	n.a.	80	83	84	86
LAC	male	99	106	108	109	112
	female	96	103	104	105	108
	total	98	105	106	107	110
South Asia	male	83	92	98	103	110
	female	52	61	71	77	85
	total	68	77	85	91	98
Developing countries	male	84	104	107	106	105
	female	62	85	90	92	93
	total	78	95	99	99	99

NB: Group averages are population weighted.
Source: *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1996*

Strong increases in enrolments have happened for both girls and boys. However, an aggregate gender gap in enrolments persists in all regions. Table 2 shows that the enrolment of girls at primary level in developing countries as a whole is still less than 90 per cent of that of boys. Furthermore, in some parts of the world the gap remains very wide: in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the Arab States and South Asia, girls' enrolments are only about 80 per cent as high as those of boys.

Table 2: Female enrolments at primary level in developing countries, relative to male enrolments (%)

	1980	1994
Sub-Saharan Africa	78	83
Arab States	73	82
Latin America and Caribbean	97	96
South Asia	66	77
All Developing Countries	82	89

Source: Calculated from Table 1.

On the other hand, Table 2 shows that the enrolment gap between the sexes is narrowing: the female/male enrolment ratio increased by about 10 percentage points in South Asia and in the Arab States over the period 1980-94, whilst in SSA the ratio between female and male enrolments increased at about half that rate, from about 78 to 83 per cent over those years. Does this suggest, as some have argued (Knodel and Jones1996), that gender inequalities are disappearing, and that we can expect the normal process of development to deliver gender equity? Unfortunately, even when confining our attention to this macro level, there are reasons to be strongly sceptical about this suggestion.

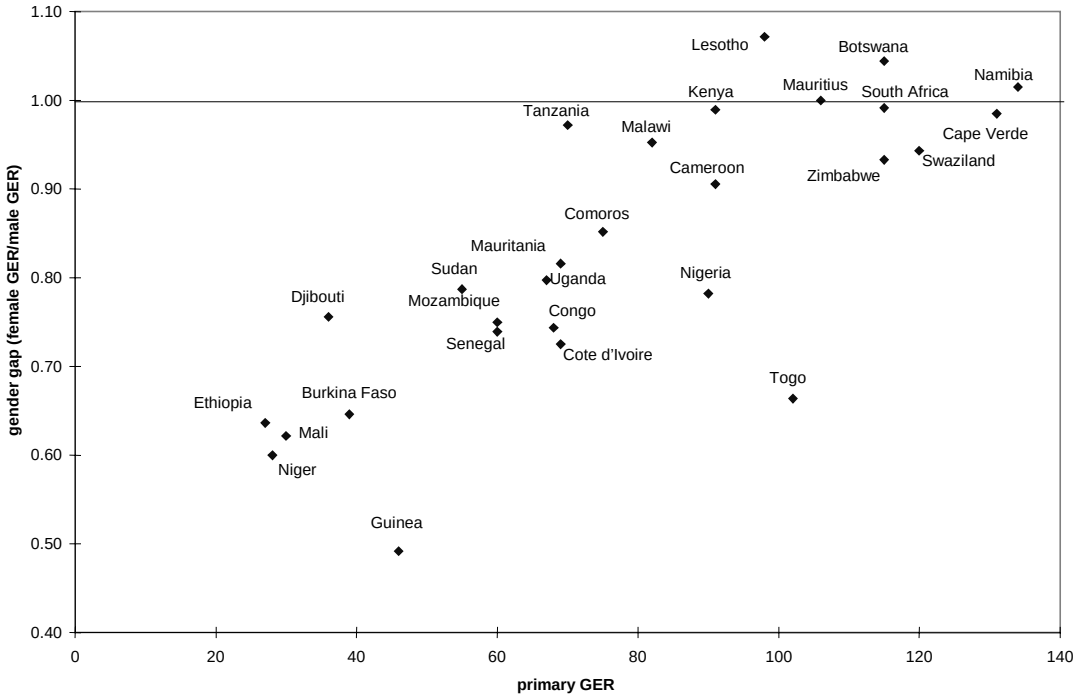
First, the rate at which the gender gaps are closing is slow. In SSA, for example, if the rate at which the female/male enrolment ratio narrowed over the 14 years 1980-94 were maintained, it would take fully 42 years for it to reach unity, the value at which equal enrolments between the sexes would be achieved. In the cases of South Asia and the Arab States, the interval would be 24 years in each case.[3] These time periods are much greater than those adopted by governments in these regions as targets for the achievement of schooling for all (SFA).[4]

Second, it should be noted from Table 1 that the overall enrolment situation in SSA actually deteriorated over 1980-94. This was a period, in much of Africa, of declining per capita and household incomes, and families experienced greater difficulties in sending their children to school. Thus, the apparent increase in the female/male enrolment ratio over the period was not due to an improvement in the enrolment of girls. In fact it resulted from boys' enrolment ratios falling substantially (the average male gross enrolment ratio (GER) for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa fell by about 8 percentage points over the decade 1980-90), whilst girls'enrolment ratios fell to a much smaller extent (about 2 percentage points over the same years). This is hardly a mechanism which, for the creation of greater gender equality, could, or should, be universalized.

Third, the argument which asserts a natural elimination of the gender gap as enrolments increase confuses the symptoms of a definitional necessity, as the move towards GERs of 100 occur, with those of reduced gender discrimination inside and outside schools and households. We know that the gender gap tends to be wider in countries with low GERs (Colclough with Lewin 1993:62). Figure 2 displays the pattern for SSA. The majority of countries have fewer girls than boys enrolled in school (a gender gap below unity on the vertical axis). However, it can be seen that the gap narrows as GERs rise to 100. A moment's thought will confirm that this is inevitable. Since the GER measures school enrolments relative to the size of the school age-group for both sexes, GERs of 100 require[5] the enrolment of roughly equal

numbers of girls and boys. So, the fact that the gender gap decreases as enrolment ratios rise is unremarkable. The questions are, first, whether adverse cultural practice is sufficiently strong as to slow the growth of enrolments (and, therefore, sustain gender inequalities), even where incomes rise. Secondly, whether significant gender discrimination remains – sufficient to affect schooling outcomes – even where female/male enrolments tend towards equality.

Figure 2: Relationship between GER and ratio of female/male GER in SSA, 1993/94



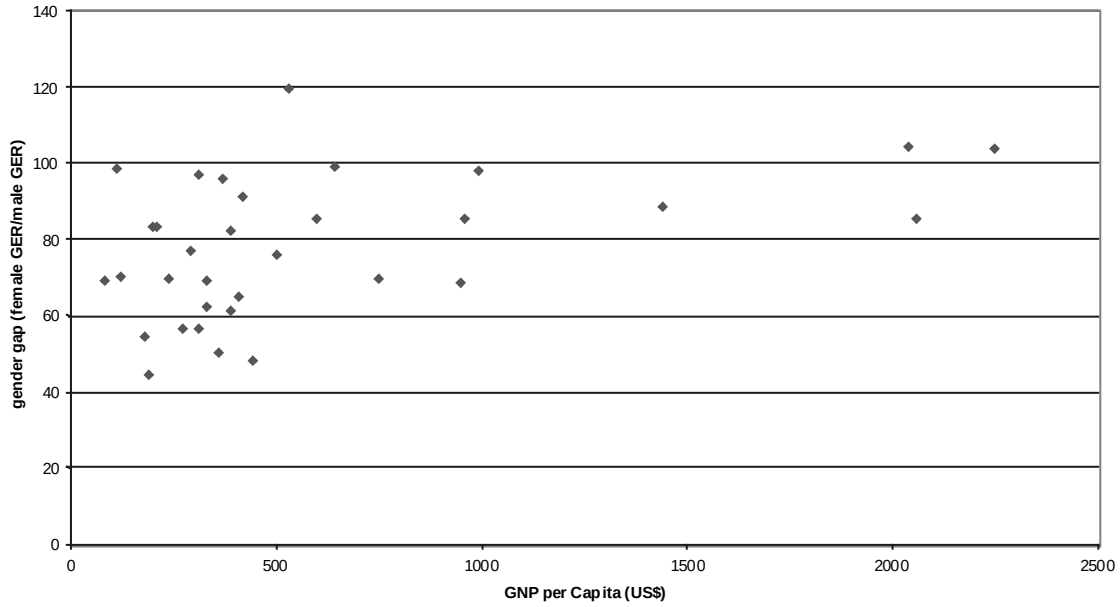
Source: *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1996*

Fourth, as shown in Figure 3, there is very high variation in gender gaps for given levels of GDP per capita. It can be seen, for example, that for African countries with per capita incomes of around $400, the ratio of female/male enrolments varies from around 0.5 to 0.95. Furthermore, although the relationships between per capita income, primary GER and reduced gender gaps in enrolments are positive and significant, there is considerable dispersion around the regression line with less than 60 per cent of the variance being explained (Colclough with Lewin 1993:Table 2.6c). Poverty, then, does not **account** for gender inequality. It is associated with it, but there are many other things going on. It is, then, plausible that variations in cultural practice could explain a good part of the variation in gender inequality, for given levels of per capita income. The idea that income growth alone will not be sufficient to eliminate gender inequality, as measured by female/male enrolment ratios, is consistent with these facts.

Finally, it should be recognized that the achievement of equal enrolment ratios, where GER = 100, does not necessarily mean that the balance of disadvantage against the schooling of girls at primary level is removed. A problem hitherto obvious in only quantitative terms may now be detected as a qualitative problem – or one that is perhaps more easily identified by analysing female/male progress at secondary or

tertiary levels. Even if all children attend primary school, examination success for girls may be less, and continuation rates to secondary or higher levels may be lower than is the case for boys. Thus it is ironic that FGER = MGER = 80 may indicate a higher level of gender equity in school performance than FGER = MGER = 100, precisely because for the former, but not for the latter, to occur, there is prima facie evidence that at least some of the negative effects of adverse cultural practice have been assuaged.[6] Thus, where discriminatory forces are entrenched, we cannot assume they have disappeared merely because universal enrolment has been achieved. The latter is too blunt a criterion to be able to reveal what is happening. Accordingly the best way to judge the extent and importance of unequal opportunities between the sexes is to study them. This is done, for the cases of Guinea and Ethiopia, in the next section of this paper.

Figure 3: The relationship between GNP per capita and the ratio of female/male GER, Africa 1990



4 THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

The economic and social circumstances of Ethiopia and Guinea differ in important ways. Whilst Ethiopia has the second largest population in sub-Saharan Africa (54 million in 1995), that of Guinea is small by comparison (6.2 million in 1995). Their peoples are varied in terms of ethnicity and language, with approximately 80 ethnic groups and languages in Ethiopia and 20 in Guinea. Almost two-thirds of the population of Ethiopia is reported to be Orthodox Christian and one-third Muslim, whereas in Guinea the vast majority (87 per cent) of the population is Muslim, with the remainder being either Christian or Animist. Partly as a result of Guinea's mineral wealth (bauxite, diamonds, gold and iron), its GNP per capita ($520 in 1994/5) is close to the SSA mean, and substantially higher than that for Ethiopia (US$100 in the same year), which is reported to be the second lowest in the world. However, notwithstanding Guinea's greater wealth, both countries have low levels of social and human development even compared with the averages for both SSA and for the world's least developed countries (Table 3).

Table 3: Socio-economic indicators, 1993

	GDP pc (US$)	Life Expec at Birth (years)	Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)	Adult literacy rate (%)		Access to water, health and sanitation facilities(%)		
				Male	Fem	drinking water	health facilities	sanitation facilities
Ethiopia	100	48	118	44	24	25	46	19
Guinea	520	45	133	48	20	55	80	21
SSA	555	51	110	65	45	45	57	37
Least Developed Countries	210	51	70	58	36	52	50	31

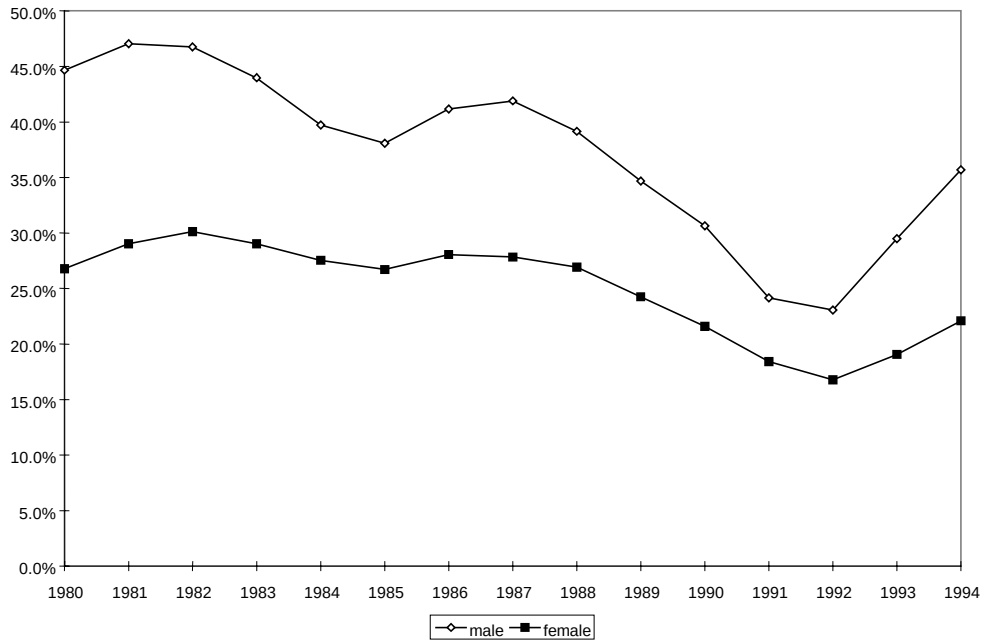
Source: *United Nations Human Development Report, 1996*

Recent trends in enrolments

Between 1987 and 1992, Ethiopia was engulfed by civil war. Primary enrolments in the country had never been high, but during the war they plummetted from around 35% to scarcely 20% of the age-group. The enrolment of girls has lagged those of boys. However, during the war years, the gender gap in enrolments narrowed substantially (Figure 4) because the enrolment of boys fell most, owing mainly to their wish to avoid conscription, the risks of which were greater for school attendees. With the end of the war and the installation of a new government, enrolments rose from 1993 onwards. However, the growth of girls' enrolments has recently been considerably slower than those of boys and the gender gap has widened again.

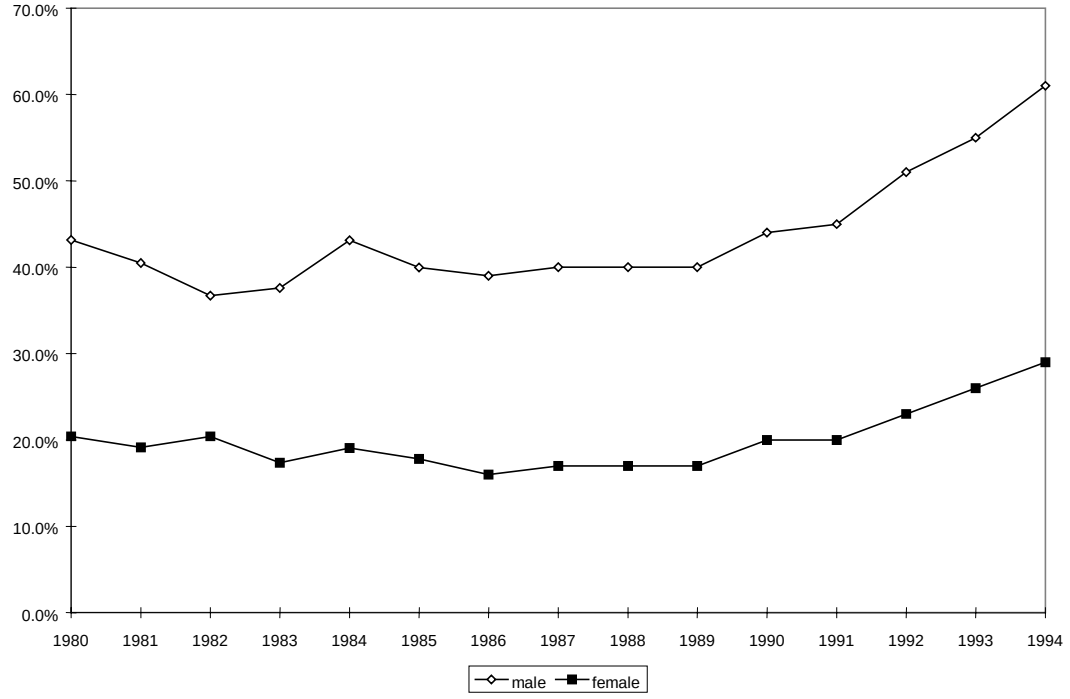
In Guinea, enrolment trends have shown a different pattern. Having been stagnant during the 1980s, they began to increase from 1990 (Figure 5), when a number of educational reforms and system improvements were introduced. Here, too, the gender gap widened during this recent growth: girls' enrolments were only 34 per cent of the total in 1994/5, compared with 37 per cent in Ethiopia, in spite of Guinea's substantially higher income and overall enrolment ratio. These national trends, however, mask rural/urban and regional differences which can sometimes be considerable. In general, the gender gap is wider in regions with lower enrolments and in rural areas, compared with urban areas (where, in both countries, enrolments of boys and girls are almost equal).

Figure 4: Ethiopia, Primary GER, 1980 – 1994



Source: *Ministry of Education 1995; 1996*

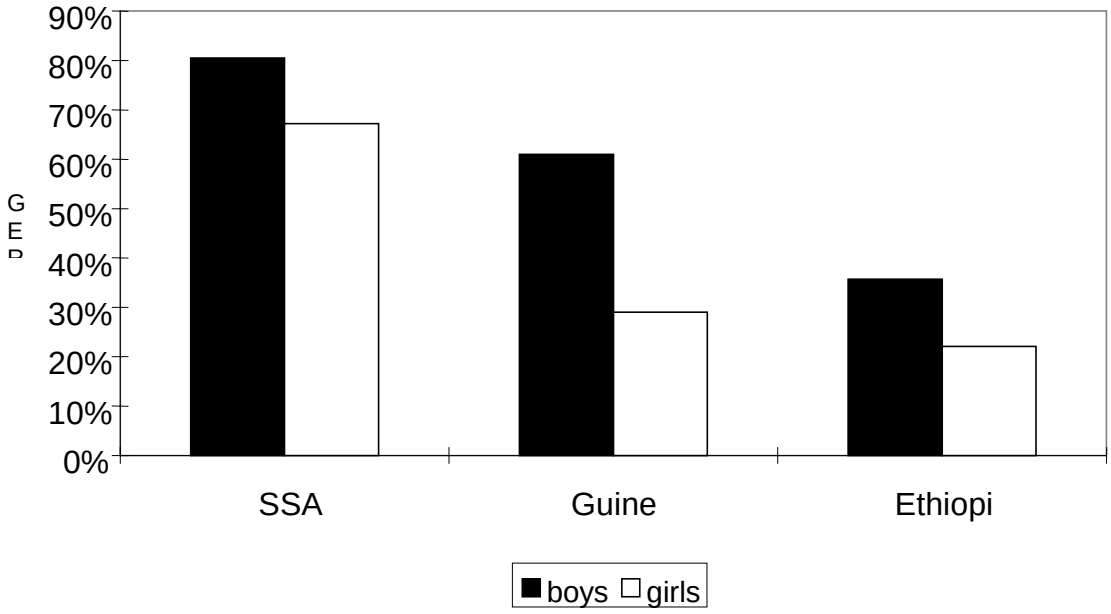
Figure 5: Guinea primary GER 1980 –1994



Source: *MEPU-FP (various years)*

Gross enrolment rates in Ethiopia and Guinea are amongst the lowest in SSA, and both compare poorly with the overall average for the region (Figure 6). In 1994/95 the GER for Ethiopia was 36 per cent for boys and 22 per cent for girls, compared with 61 per cent and 29 per cent, repectively, in Guinea. Net (age adjusted) enrolment ratios are considerably lower than gross ratios in both countries because of high rates of over-age enrolment, repetition, and drop-out with later re-entry into the system. The disparity between gross and net enrolment ratios is, however, larger for boys than for girls in both countries, because girls are less likely to be in school when they reach the age of puberty, despite their having higher rates of repetition (see below).

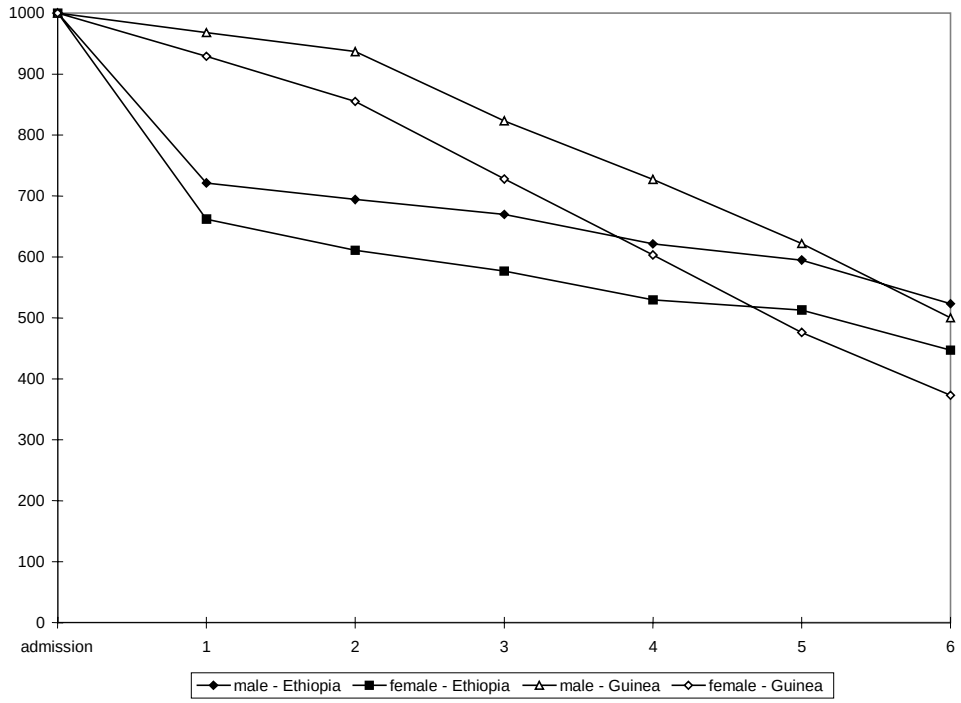
Figure 6: Primary GER by gender, 1994/95



Source: *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1996; Ministry of Education 1996; MEPU-FP 1996*

The education systems in both countries suffer from severe internal inefficiency. In Guinea, 24 per cent of girls and 21 per cent of boys in primary school were repeaters in 1993/94, compared with 11 per cent and seven per cent, respectively, in Ethiopia. In the same year, 28 per cent of girls and 24 per cent of boys dropped out before completing the first grade of school in Ethiopia. In both countries, repetition and drop out rates are higher for girls than for boys in most primary grades. Cohort analysis, shown in Figure 7, reveals that, of 1,000 pupils starting school in 1993/94, 523 boys and 447 girls could be expected to complete grade six in Ethiopia within eight years, and that the comparable figures for Guinea would be 500 boys and 373 girls. Although the repetition rates are high, they are not atypical for SSA, but the survival rates indicated above are amongst the very lowest in world (see UNESCO 1998: 136-139).

Figure 7: Cohort analysis of primary grade completion in Ethiopia and Guinea, 1993/94-1999/2000



Source: *Calculated from Ministry of Education 1995; and MEPU-FP 1995*

5 EXPLANATIONS OF LOW ENROLMENTS AND GENDER GAPS IN ETHIOPIA AND GUINEA

This section compares the results of intensive school-based surveys undertaken at the school and community levels in Ethiopia and Guinea in 1995.[7] The survey work focused on two areas within each country[8] using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research tools. Qualitative methods included focus group discussions and interviews with education officials, teachers, pupils, school committees, parents and community elders. These provided a more detailed understanding of the processes and issues explored in the quantitative work. The surveys were designed on the basis of purposive, rather than random sampling methods, and were intended to provide case-study information which could throw fresh light on the constraints affecting the participation and performance of girls and boys in school.

The sampling procedure followed in each country involved the selection of two geographical regions, based on their differences in enrolment ratios and gender gaps in school enrolments, and in language, religion and economic conditions. Within each region, districts were selected which reflected the region's broader characteristics. Districts were stratified into rural and urban areas, where schools having sufficient pupils in the sixth grade were selected. Within the selected schools, random samples of grade 6 pupils for the urban schools, and complete enumerations of such pupils in the rural schools, were undertaken.

More emphasis was given to rural areas in each country since a larger proportion of the population in both countries reside in these areas. The selected schools and their catchment areas provided the basis for the fieldwork, and formed natural clusters of pupils, drop outs and non enrolees. Individual questionnaire-

based interviews were conducted with each of the respondents. Results are discussed below under the five main headings, representing constraints to primary schooling, identified earlier – namely direct costs, opportunity costs, the extent and quality of physical provision, and the presence of adverse cultural practice.

Direct costs

An inability to meet the direct costs of schooling was found, in the field surveys, to be one of the most important causes of non-attendance in both countries. Those who had dropped out of school cited most frequently, as an important reason, a lack of money to pay for school expenses (Table 4). A similar pattern of reasons to that shown in the table was also given by those who had never attended school.

Table 4: Reasons for dropping out of school

	Ethiopia				Guinea			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Lack of money to pay for school expenses	25	40	16	30	10	38	2	6
Wanted to earn money	7	11	0	0	1	4	2	6
Needed to work at home	3	5	14	26	1	4	6	17
Needed to work on the farm	14	23	1	2	1	4	1	3
Illness	3	5	8	15	3	11	6	18
Family problems	3	3	5	9	1	4	5	15
School problems	2	3	2	4	7	27	10	29
Other	5	8	7	13	2	8	2	6
Total	62	100	53	100	26	100	34	100

Source: Field Surveys

In one of the Ethiopian regions surveyed, school fees had just been abolished. In the other region, fees were still charged, and, during focus group discussions, parents claimed to find difficulty in paying them, especially since they became due in September, when family income was at its lowest prior to the harvest. Parents also complained that, because they were unable to buy exercise books, pens and the necessary clothing for school, they were not able to enrol their children.[9] Some parents also mentioned that, even when their children did enrol in school, they often had to drop out during the first grade because they found it difficult to meet the direct costs involved.

The problem of meeting the direct costs of schooling was found to be equally prevalent in Guinea. Even though tuition fees were not charged at the primary level, parents were expected to pay GF 2000 ($2) for registration, and to buy the necessary textbooks, exercise books, stationery, and the prescribed uniforms for their children. In Guinea, textbooks were the most expensive item of direct costs, followed by uniforms.[10] In addition to making these payments, parents were obliged to produce certified true copies of a child's birth certificate as a requirement for school admission. Acquiring these documents was sometimes expensive, especially for parents in rural areas where administrative offices providing such services do not exist.

The costs of sending a child to school were not always predictable in Guinea. For example, in one of the schools visited, parents had been required to pay GF.16,000 ($16), to secure their child's entry to Grade one. A local contractor, who had recently finished building a government secondary school, had been informed that the government could not meet his costs. The Grade one levy was introduced by the district education authorities in order to allow the bill to be paid. Parents asserted, in the focus group discussions, that such levies (which had included contributions towards the construction of classrooms, the purchase of furniture, and other school equipment) undermine the ability of parents to send their children to school.

To make up for parents' inability to pay for schooling, some children undertake paid work to finance their education. The surveys in both countries revealed that a larger proportion of boys than girls earn money to help pay for their school expenses (Table 5).

Table 5: Pupils Working for Cash to Pay for their Schooling

	Region 1				Region 2			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Ethiopia								
Yes	39	55	17	38	23	40	5	13
No	32	45	28	62	35	60	34	87
Total	71	100.0	45	100.0	58	100.0	39	100.0
Guinea								
Yes	36	41	8	21	17	23	2	7
No	54	59	30	79	58	77	28	93
Total	90	100	38	100	75	100	30	100

Note: In this, and in subsequent tables, Region 1 is Jimma in Ethiopia and Forest Guinea in Guinea, and Region 2 is East Gojjam in Ethiopia and Middle Guinea in Guinea.
Source: Field surveys.

In both countries, parents considered that the direct costs of schooling were similar for boys and girls.[11] However, boys were more able to attend school because, to some extent, they could support themselves. For example, a father in Ethiopia noted that, because boys were involved in trading activities, they could buy their own exercise books and pens. He noted that girls, on the other hand, were involved in household chores and in some farm activities, which, he felt, did not help families so much in sharing the cost of their education. This suggests that, even though girls' labour directly assists the family economy, it may not be recognised as being as beneficial as that of boys, in cases where it does not directly generate cash income.

Both boys and girls often engage in petty trading. In Guinea, for example, it is common in the villages and towns to see young girls carrying large trays of groundnuts, fruits or other food items for sale. They also help their parents in food stalls in the market place. Girls in both countries are sometimes withdrawn from school and sent to work in urban areas as housemaids. However, rather than being able to use the money they earn as a contribution towards school expenses, girls are usually obliged to give the income to their parents.

The ability to pay for children's schooling depends on the income of parents or households. Measuring this, in Africa, can be quite difficult, given that many rural households are hardly incorporated into the cash

economy. However, parental education, occupation, and assets are often used, either singly or in combination, as an indication of the socio-economic status of a household. In the present study, socio-economic status was estimated by compiling a weighted index which included parents' education, occupation, ownership of household possessions (radio, car, bicycle and/or television), whether or not the house in which the child lived had a corrugated iron roof and used electricity for lighting, and whether or not the respondent was wearing shoes and/or socks at the time of interview.[12] The estimated mean wealth index of pupils in school, drop-outs and non-enrolees for both countries is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Average index of socio-economic status

		Region 1			Region 2		
		Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees	Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees
Ethiopia	male	5.7	4.0	2.5	5.7	4.1	3.7
		(2.8)	(2.1)	(1.7)	(3.2)	(2.2)	(2.3)
	female	6.8	4.7	2.7	6.4	4.3	3.7
		(2.9)	(2.0)	(1.7)	(3.1)	(2.2)	(2.0)
Guinea	male	7.4	7.2	5.3	8.8	7.7	6.0
		(3.2)	(3.1)	(2.7)	(4.9)	(3.3)	(3.3)
	female	11.0	7.3	7.7	12.8	9.0	5.6
		(5.0)	(3.4)	(2.7)	(3.7)	(4.5)	(2.2)

Note: Figures in brackets are standard deviations.

It can be seen that, in both regions of the two countries, the mean wealth index of male and female pupils was higher than that of respondents not attending school (drop-outs and non-enrolees). Furthermore, amongst those out-of-school, the mean wealth index for school drop-outs was generally higher than for those who had never enrolled. Thus, as expected, children at school were, on average, from better-off households than those who had dropped out, who were, in turn, from richer backgrounds than school-age children who had never enrolled. It is also evident from the table that the index for the families of female pupils was consistently higher than its value for male pupils, whereas this was much less evident, and was sometimes the reverse, for drop-outs and non-enrolees. Furthermore the value of the index for male pupils was, in Forest Guinea, lower than its value for non-enrolled girls, and in Middle Guinea it was lower than its value for female school drop-outs. Thus, for the households of children included in our surveys, it seems that incomes or assets had to be higher to secure girls' enrolments than was the case for boys.

Opportunity costs

Where families use their children as a source of labour, sending them to school can be costly because the benefits of such labour are thereby lost, at least for the duration of the school day. The combined impact of these opportunity costs, together with meeting the direct costs of school attendance, can be substantial for poor families and can be an important cause of children not being enrolled. Our field surveys revealed that opportunity costs were influential in explaining why children had not completed the primary cycle. Amongst the reasons for dropping out of school given by survey respondents, the needs to earn money, and

to work at home or on the farm accounted for 39 per cent of the replies from Ethiopian male drop-outs and 28 per cent of those from girls (see Table 4). In Guinea, the relevant magnitudes were 12 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively. However, the types of activities which are the source of these opportunity costs appear to differ sharply between the sexes. In both countries, the girls who dropped out for these reasons did so mainly in order to help the family in the home, whilst the boys who did so cited work on the family farm, or earning money as their main intent.

Discussions with those who had dropped out of school revealed that, whilst some boys are able to combine their income-earning activities and schooling, others find it difficult to do so, and eventually leave. Some of those interviewed in Guinea were disinclined to return to school because their current activities were more profitable in the short term. In Ethiopia, many children, of both sexes, who enrol in September, at the beginning of the school year, leave by November because demands on their labour during harvest time are so great. In some cases, they re-enrol the following year in grade one but, again, are unable to complete the year.

It is not possible to achieve accurate estimates of the duration of work undertaken by children for their families, using survey methods which are dependent upon recall by the children themselves. However, it proved possible, in our surveys, for children to indicate both the range of their different tasks, and the frequency with which they undertook them. The responses to such questions allowed the construction of a weighted 'household help' index, based upon the frequency with which pupils, drop-outs and non-enrolees performed certain chores – every day, every week, sometimes, or never. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Average index of household help

		Region 1			Region 2		
		Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees	Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees
Ethiopia	male	25.3	15.0	14.0	20.9	12.5	12.71
		(16.4)	(6.5)	(8.0)	(14.0)	(10.2)	(8.0)
	female	44.9	25.6	25.5	41.1	26.7	23.9
		(18.0)	(9.6)	(6.8)	(15.7)	(9.0)	(8.4)
Guinea	male	23.0	13.1	17.8	12.7	9.7	15.3
		(15.8)	(8.2)	(9.7)	(10.8)	(7.1)	(10.0)
	female	34.3	28.9	24.7	31.1	28.1	23.7
		(14.8)	(8.7)	(8.1)	(15.2)	(8.9)	(9.3)

The major result which emerges from this exercise is that the household help index is, consistently, significantly higher for girls than for boys. This is true for each of the samples of pupils, drop-outs and non-enrolees, in both of the regions surveyed, in each of the two countries. It is important to note that this index measures both the range of activities practised, and their frequency, but that it does not measure the duration of each activity. However, unless boys consistently spend longer working upon each activity than girls, these results strongly suggest that girls help their families more than boys, and that the opportunity costs of girls' schooling may, accordingly, be greater.[13] The surveys also revealed evidence of a strongly gendered division of labour. Female pupils, in both countries, were generally more involved in household activities such as looking after siblings, preparing and cooking food, cleaning the house and fetching water and

firewood. Boys, on the other hand, were mainly involved in working on the family farm, ploughing and harvesting crops, looking after livestock and fetching firewood.

No evidence is apparent from Table 7 that drop-outs and non-enrolees helped their families at home more than pupils. Indeed, with the single exception of male pupils in Middle Guinea, the task-loads carried by pupils in our surveys appear to have been greater than those of their peers who were not attending school. If the opportunity costs of schooling are high, one would expect the school drop-outs and the non-enrolled to be undertaking more, rather than less, tasks than their pupil colleagues. However, we know that some of those who were out of school were conducting economic activity on their own account – and, therefore, contributing to household income. Thus, the average value of both household and income-earning tasks, taken together, could have been substantially greater for those not at school than for pupils. Furthermore, we know that the families of pupils and of those who are out of school differ in terms of socio-economic status, and other characteristics, which may be related to the incidence of opportunity costs. These inter-group comparisons could not, therefore, provide evidence for the relative levels of such costs unless such differences were taken into account in the analysis. Again, as was the case with pupils, a close examination of the data revealed that, for these groups, there was generally a distinctly gendered division of labour in the tasks performed.

It is to be expected that the relative number of adults and children in a household would affect the opportunity cost of schooling. As regards the former, the more adults in the household the lower the demand for children's labour might be, and the freer the children might be to attend school.[14] Furthermore, a larger number of adults in the household provides greater opportunity to earn income to support the family. In both countries, however, the pattern appears to be mixed (Table 8). For boys, there appears to be no tendency for pupils to come from households with more adults than is the case for those who are not enrolled in school. However, for girls, pupils come from households with more adults than is the case for those not at school, in three of the four regions surveyed – the exception being Middle Guinea. However, the differences are small and too much significance should not be attached to these results.

Table 8: Number of Adults in the Household

		Region 1			Region 2		
		Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees	Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees
Ethiopia	male	2.9	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.5	2.6
		(1.6)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.2)	(2.4)
	Female	3.0	2.0	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.6
		(1.6)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.2)	(1.1)	(2.4
Guinea	Male	3.5	4.1	3.4	2.9	2.9	3.3
		(1.7)	(2.3)	(1.5)	(1.3)	(1.4)	(1.4)
	Female	3.4	2.9	3.1	2.2	3.0	3.1
		(1.6)	(1.5)	(1.3)	(0.9)	(1.2)	(1.2)

The number of children in the household is also likely to affect the opportunity costs of schooling – although the direction of this impact is uncertain. On the one hand, the larger the number of children in the household, the more household work there is likely to be (especially for girls) and, therefore, the higher will

be the opportunity costs of their time. Direct costs also increase with sending each additional child to school. On the other hand, a particular child from a larger household might have a higher probability of attending school because work is spread over a larger number of household members. Thus, the direct costs of schooling for all children taken together are greater in larger households, but the opportunity costs for at least some of them are likely to be lower than for children with fewer siblings. The evidence from our surveys on these points, summarized in Table 9, is ambiguous. In Guinea, there was no particular relationship between the number of siblings and schooling status. However the table shows that, in Ethiopia, both male and female pupils, from both areas visited, came from larger families than those who were not attending schools, and that, as the above analysis would suggest, the differences in numbers of siblings between pupils and non-pupils were greater for the girls than for the boys. This, then, is consistent with the view that children, and particularly girls, had a better chance of attending school if household work could be spread amongst a larger number of siblings (who themselves may or may not be in school).

Table 9: Number of children in the household

		Region 1			Region 2		
		Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees	Pupils	Drop-outs	Non-enrolees
Ethiopia	male	3.8	3.5	2.7	3.8	3.1	2.9
		(2.4)	(2.3)	(1.5)	1.3	(1.6)	(1.7)
	female	3.9	3.7	2.9	3.3	3.3	2.8
		(2.2)	(1.9)	(1.2)	1.6	(1.8)	(1.5)
Guinea	male	6.2	7.6	5.6	5.3	6.5	5.3
		(3.4)	(3.6)	(3.5)	(2.9)	(3.8)	(4.9)
	female	6.5	6.8	6.2	5.5	5.5	4.5
		(3.4)	(4.2)	(4.2)	(2.1)	(2.8)	(2.3)

Physical Provision

Problems of insufficient demand for primary schooling, owing to high direct and opportunity costs, are compounded by an inadequate supply of schools, or of enough school places, in many countries. Ethiopia and Guinea are both cases where the distribution of primary schools is very uneven. In both countries, schools are concentrated in urban areas, whilst rural areas remain under-served. Here, as elsewhere, the greater is the distance from home to school, the less likely it is that a child will attend.[15] In our surveys, the distance between home and school was estimated by drawing a map of the local village, showing key landmarks and the location of children's homes. In both countries, the boys and girls who were in school lived relatively nearby (two kilometres from the school, on average, in Ethiopia, and less than one kilometre, on average, in Guinea). In both countries, however, the rural schools visited were serving homes which were widely dispersed, suggesting that many more children, than those who actually attended, should have been in school. Although the length of the journey to school affects the attendance of both boys and girls, the effects of distance are more severe for girls. During focus group discussions in both countries, parents expressed their reluctance to send girls to schools which were far from home. This was partly because girls were considered by parents to be weaker than boys, and unable to expend the energy required

to walk to and from school. However, their reluctance was also due to parental concern for girls' safety *en route* and to their fear that their daughters may be subject to sexual harrassment.

Inadequate school facilities also lead to non-enrolment. In Guinea, more than two thirds of rural schools are incomplete, having only two or three grades. In such schools, admissions into the first grade are staggered – happening once every two or three years. This means that some children are forced to start school later than the official starting age, bringing negative implications for children's, and particularly for girls', chances of completing the primary cycle.

The absence of latrines in schools, and particularly of separate latrines for girls, causes girls to be absent from school, especially when they are menstruating (Brock and Cammish 1995). Only five of the 11 schools visited in Ethiopia had latrines, and, of these, only one was separated for boys and girls. Furthermore, in most cases, the latrines were not in a suitable condition for use. In Guinea, only two of the six schools surveyed had latrines. Some girls in both countries expressed their need for private facilities, which were often absent in their schools. The discomfort of not being able to clean themselves, and change clothing at school during menstruation, provided an additional cause of absence, and of subsequent poor performance or drop-out of girls. In Ethiopia, only 16 of the 84 girls interviewed in school had started menstruating. This relatively small proportion reflects the tendency for girls to drop out of school before reaching puberty.

Quality of Provision

Poor school quality is associated with poor academic results, with higher levels of repetition and drop-out and with lower progression ratios to higher levels of the education system than is the case for better schools. Communities served by poor quality schools often recognize that they are likely to gain a more restricted range of benefits from schooling than people elsewhere. This therefore leads to lower demand, and to more children being out of school than in communities with high quality schools. Although it was not the intention, in our surveys, to measure and compare, in a strict quantitative sense, the differences between the quality of different schools, a number of aspects of school quality were shown to have an impact upon enrolment and performance outcomes.

One of these concerned the health environment of the schools. In both countries, poor health, which is a consequence of either malnutrition or of common diseases, was found to be a constraint on schooling. The illnesses found most commonly amongst pupils included malaria, stomach problems, headaches, colds/flu, wounds and diarrhoea. In Ethiopia, not only was poor health an impediment to school attendance, it was also found to be a barrier to enrolment, because some parents were afraid of their children catching contageous diseases at school. The prevalence of these illnesses was further compounded by the fact that none of the schools visited, in either country, had their own water source, and in most cases pupils had to walk to the nearest stream to fetch it. The conditions under which the water was stored and served were often unhygienic and could lead to diarrhoea. In Guinea, for example, in one of the schools visited, each

classroom had a bucket of water for drinking at the front of the class. However, the buckets had no lids and all the children used the same cup.

The distribution of female teachers has an important impact on school quality for female pupils. Their presence is important to provide girls with role models and to provide counselling, especially on issues related to puberty. In fact, however, the proportion of female teachers varies widely between schools in both countries. In Ethiopia fewer than one-third of the teachers in five of the schools visited were female while in the other six schools over two-thirds were female. In Guinea, in the schools visited, only one-third of the teachers were female. Some of the rural schools visited, in both countries, had no female teachers. The imbalance of female to male teachers in rural schools derives partly from working conditions. After graduating from teacher training colleges, female teachers in both Ethiopia and Guinea tend to be posted to urban schools which are more accessible by public transport, have better access to markets and other social amenities, and bring fewer problems for those with partners working in towns.

Within schools, female teachers in Guinea were generally assigned to teach in lower classes (grades 1-4) whereas male teachers were teaching the top grades. This unequal distribution of teachers tends to have a negative effect on girls in the last grades of primary school, who might be approaching or have attained the age of puberty. The problem of a lack of female teachers was evident from one school in Ethiopia in which all the teachers were male. The teachers themselves were aware of the problems girls face when they reach puberty. They noted that they were unable to provide guidance concerning menstruation because girls were shy and they were afraid that girls might take it as sexual provocation. They were conscious, however, that girls stopped coming to school when they started menstruating. No school in either of the two countries had made provisions for guidance and counselling for girls. Each of these factors undoubtedly made it more likely that girls would drop out of their primary course before reaching the final grade.

Adverse Cultural Practice

The above discussion of factors which lead to under-enrolment of school-age children – high direct costs, high opportunity costs, and the inadequate extent or quality of physical provision – has already alluded to aspects of cultural practice which lead to differentiated outcomes in school enrolments and performance for girls and boys. The most important of these is the existence of a gendered division of labour within the household, which has probably led, in Ethiopia and Guinea, to higher opportunity costs being associated with the schooling of girls relative to boys. There are, however, other aspects of cultural practice which conspire systematically to reinforce such outcomes, and which have been revealed by our work. These are discussed below, under the four headings – society, labour market, school and household – indicated in Figure 1.

Factors related to cultural norms, traditional beliefs and practices can have a strong influence on girls' enrolment, persistence and performance in school. Some societies regard the pregnancy of unmarried daughters as culturally shameful. To avoid embarassment, parents, in some rural areas, give their daughters in marriage as soon as they reach the age of puberty, and sometimes earlier. In one of the regions visited in

Ethiopia, girls are married as early as the age of eight years. In this region, amongst those interviewed, almost half of the girls who had never enrolled in school, and one third of those who had dropped out, were either married or divorced. Their age of marriage varied between eight and 14 years. In many parts of Ethiopia early marriage is hardly voluntary. It was reported in one of the regions that girls sometimes get 'kidnapped' on their way to school, or even from within the school compound itself, by the parents of boys, for marriage to their sons. As a result of this risk, some parents refuse to send their daughters to school. Early marriage is also common in Guinea, and was mentioned in the groups as a constraint on the schooling of girls.[16]

In some societies, initiation ceremonies are performed when children reach the age of puberty, which is considered to be the onset of adulthood. During the ceremony, knowledge and values concerning procreation, morals, sexual skills, birth control and pregnancy are passed on to the girls concerned. Boys undergo similar rituals preparing them for manhood. Where initiation ceremonies are socially obligatory, as in some areas of Guinea, they were found to be a constraint on primary schooling, but this was not the case in the areas visited in Ethiopia. In one of the survey areas in Guinea, these ceremonies were sometimes performed during term-time and they could cause absenteeism from school for periods ranging from one week to one month – sometimes with withdrawal from school being the end result. The impact was perceived to be greater for girls' schooling because it is often considered shameful for them to return to school after initiation, unlike the case of boys.

As regards the labour market, in most countries, the tangible benefits of schooling are linked to the availability of employment opportunities in the formal sector. In Ethiopia, the lack of opportunities for such employment, particularly so in the rural areas, and thus the absence of many school graduates who had succeeded in obtaining such employment, was a deterrent to parents sending their children to school. In focus group discussions, some parents reported that they had lost confidence in the education system and that the educated youth had become frustrated, sometimes leading school-leavers into crime. Some groups noted that high failure rates in the school certificate examination at grade 12, amongst those who proceeded that far, added to the difficulties of finding a job. This was particularly important for girls since there were judged to be even fewer employment opportunities for them, and very few female role models. In one region, it was interesting to note that uneducated traders were often perceived to be more important role models than teachers or other educated people, because of the larger amounts of money they were able to earn.

As for the schools, the importance of achieving a better distribution of female teachers has already been mentioned as a means of securing higher quality schooling for girls. However, teachers' attitudes, including those of both men and women, may merely reflect, rather than question, the gendered attitudes prevalent in the wider society. In some cultures, girls may be expected to be quiet, obedient, more submissive and less active in certain school activities than boys. This is also reflected in the tasks that teachers expect girls and boys to undertake during school time. Both male and female pupils in Ethiopia and Guinea revealed that, in general, girls spent more time performing non-school activities during school hours,

such as cleaning the classroom and offices, cleaning the latrines (which in some cases in Ethiopia was proposed by boys to be 'girls work'), fetching water for the school, and undertaking tasks for teachers. Such expectations result in girls being timid and less self confident of their abilities. This feeling perpetuates itself and manifests in their poor performance at school.

Gender sensitivity of teachers can be inculcated via training. However, none of the teachers in Ethiopia and less than one-fifth in Guinea had attended gender training courses. In the surveys, teachers were asked to give their views about pupils' performance in school. The results, shown in Table 10, reveal that teacher attitudes were biased against girls. In Guinea, male teachers had more positive views about boys' participation and interest, whereas the much smaller number of female teachers tended to have more positive views about girls than boys. However, in the Ethiopian surveys, the majority of both male and female teachers believed that boys were more intelligent, participated more in class, and were more interested in learning, than girls. Although schooling, in both countries, was considered by teachers to be of equal importance for boys and girls, it is not surprising that female pupils conform to the rather strong expectations of their teachers that they will be less successful than their male peers.

Table 10: Teachers' attitudes

	ETHIOPIA				GUINEA			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Whom do you think is most intelligent?								
Boys	50	66	29	66	12	43	4	44
Girls	6	8	1	2	6	21	5	56
both the same	19	25	14	32	10	36	0	0
Who participates most in class?								
Boys	70	93	39	89	16	57	3	33
Girls	3	4	0	0	4	14	6	67
both the same	2	3	5	11	8	29	0	0
Who is more interested in learning?								
Boys	43	57	29	66	18	64	2	22
Girls	10	13	4	9	3	11	4	45
both the same	22	30	11	25	7	25	3	33
For whom is schooling more important?	4	5	1	2	2	7	1	1
Boys	7	9	7	16	4	14	5	56
Girls	64	86	35	88	22	79	3	33
both the same								

Finally, as regards households, expectations of gender roles associated with the traditional image of women as home-makers (wives and mothers) was also found to be an explanation for negative parental attitudes to girls' schooling. In Ethiopia, some parents mentioned that after twelve years of schooling, their daughters would be unable to perform housework and may not be able to find a husband, on account of being too old. Similar attitudes were expressed in Guinea, where some parents mentioned that primary schooling is irrelevant to girls' future roles. Girls are traditionally expected to know how to prepare meals, to clean the home, to do the laundry and care for young children, and to be obedient and submissive. To ensure that these skills are properly developed before the girls are given in marriage, some parents prefer to keep their

daughters at home with their mothers. This is partly because parents believe that these skills are not properly taught in school and partly because they are ignorant of the overall benefits of girls' schooling. Some parents in Guinea also believed that daughters were not as intelligent as sons. Thus, sending them to school was considered more likely to be a waste of time and money, because, in the end, they were judged less likely to perform as well as boys.

Cultural practice and the opportunity costs of schooling are closely linked to age. As children become older, the more likely are they to be withdrawn from school. The chances of girls being withdrawn to help with work at home, or to be given in marriage, increase with age, as does the probability of boys dropping out of school to work on the farm or earn income. Girls in the schools visited were, on average, younger than boys, especially in Ethiopia (Table 11).

Table 11: Pupil's age

		Region 1	Region 2
Ethiopia	male	15.5	13.0
		(3.1)	(1.2)
	female	14.1	12.6
		(2.1)	(1.2)
Guinea	male	14.7	13.9
		(1.6)	(1.5)
	female	14.3	13.4
		(1.6)	(1.5)

The differences in age between male and female pupils could be due to the fact that girls, in both countries, started school at an earlier age than boys (Table 12). However, it is important to note from the table that the starting age of pupils in both countries was lower than that of drop-outs, which supports the view that age has an effect on persistence in school, especially for girls.[17]

Table 12: Average school starting age

		Region 1		Region 2	
		Pupils	Drop-outs	Pupils	Drop-outs
Ethiopia	male	8.3	9.4	7.1	8.7
		(2.0)	(2.4)	(2.0)	(2.4)
	female	7.6	9.9	7.0	8.2
		(1.5)	(2.0)	(1.5)	(2.0)
Guinea	male	8.0	8.4	7.3	8.0
		(1.7)	(1.5)	(1.4)	(1.5)
	female	7.4	7.3	6.9	7.2
		(1.4)	(1.2)	(1.0)	(1.4)

The decision to enrol a child in school is determined by the perceptions that his/her parents hold about the benefits of schooling (relative to the peceived costs of so doing). The perceptions of benefits are linked to expectations of the child's role when (s)he grows up. Male children, in most African cultures (including in Ethiopia and Guinea), inherit the family's assets – and continue to support their parents in old age – whereas female children become a part of their husbands' families after marriage. Thus, investing in a girl's

education is often perceived as not being beneficial to her own family, because any benefits of her education will go to her future husband's family, rather than her own.[18] Some of the group discussions in Guinea revealed that, compared with ten years ago, parents believed that many more of them are now aware of the broader benefits of girls' schooling, such as being able to read and write, earning incomes to help themselves and taking better care of their own families. In general, however, negative attitudes towards girls' schooling, relative to that of boys, remain.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Poor households tend to have lower demand for schooling than richer households: whatever the benefits of schooling, the costs, for them, are more difficult to meet than is the case for richer households. Poor States tend to allocate insufficient resources to provide sufficient schools of reasonable quality, so as to be able to accommodate the entire primary age group. Both of these manifestations of poverty lead to the under-enrolment of school-age children. The gendered outcomes of such under-enrolment are caused, however, by adverse cultural practice rather than by poverty itself. Such practice is found at the levels of the society, labour market, school and household, and comprises a powerful set of forces which impede the enrolment, persistence and performance, in school, of girls relative to boys.

It follows that economic development, in the sense of achieving growth in national income per capita, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for securing moves towards gender equity in schooling. The relationship between poverty and low demand for schooling is such that merely increasing the supply of schooling of reasonable quality – which can be expected as development, defined as above, proceeds – would have little effect. For the development process *per se* to increase the effective demand for schooling, some particular distribution of the benefits of economic growth would also be implied. Household perceptions that both the direct and the opportunity costs of schooling are high, which result in low levels of demand for schooling, are functions not only of the level of national per capita income, but also of its distribution.

Even where economic growth proceeds, and where the benefits of that growth are widely spread – thereby allowing significant reductions in poverty at the household level – the relationship between it and changes in cultural practice is extremely uncertain. We have shown that in Ethiopia and Guinea – both of which had low GERs and wide gender gaps in the early 1990s – the recent growth in enrolments has been associated with a widened gender gap, rather than the reverse. Moreover, more generally, the existence of poor countries with less than complete enrolment at primary level, yet with relatively low gender gaps, and of richer countries with higher enrolments, yet with larger gender gaps, both indicate that 'cultural practice' has a causal relationship with gender equity in schooling which operates somewhat independently of poverty.

This paper has documented something of the power and complexity of adverse cultural pratice in these two African States. There is much that could be done to improve the availability of schooling to, and the demand for education by, the poor in Ethiopia and Guinea. But we have shown that adverse cultural

practice, in the domains of society, labour market, school and household, runs deep. Its removal – which is necessary if gender equity in schooling is to be achieved – will require specific policy interventions, rather than merely waiting for the long sweep of history to do its work.

NOTES

[1] In some cases, the community is also an important locus, and grows in importance as more States devolve responsibility for school provision to communities. But such circumstances are as yet a minority, and their addition to the framework shown in Figure 1 would provide little additional analytic insight for present purposes.

[2] It is assumed here that, under the conditions specified, the incidence of benefits from primary schooling would be independent of the income level of the parental household.

[3] These projections are calculated on the basis of the rates of change implied by the data in Table 2.

[4] SFA is defined as 'the circumstance of having a school system in which all eligible children are enrolled in schools of at least minimally acceptable quality'. This would require gross enrolment ratios (GERs) of at least 100 per cent, unless repetition and over-age enrolment were significantly reduced (see Colclough with Lewin 1993:41).

[5] To the extent that there is over-age enrolment, caused by, for example, late enrolment and/or high levels of repetition, significant gender gaps could remain even where GERs of 100 obtain. This possibility is illustrated by the case of Togo, shown in Figure 2. There will be an upper bound to this phenomenon, however, and its incidence is reduced as school systems become more efficient.

[6] An example of such a case is Tanzania, where male and female enrolments have remained closely similar, even during many years of economic adversity and enrolment decline. The equal importance of schooling for girls and boys has been a strong theme of the ruling party since the 1970s, and is well espoused by both rural and urban society. Not all of the effects of adverse cultural practice have been removed – but the country is closer to this goal than most in Africa (see Peasgood, et.al., 1997).

[7] Full presentations of the results of these surveys can be found in Rose et al. 1997 and Tembon et al. 1997.

[8] The areas visited were East Gojjam and Jimma in Ethiopia and, in Guinea, Forest and Middle Guinea.

[9] Textbooks were provided free, or in return for a modest book rental charge.

[10] Earlier work in each country suggested that clothes for school in Ethiopia and school uniforms in Guinea were the highest direct cost items facing parents (USAID 1994; Sow 1994).

[11] In Ethiopia two earlier studies, which identified economic constraints as providing one of the main reasons for not sending children to school, also found that the direct private costs of schooling were similar for girls and boys (USAID 1994; Yelfign et.al 1995). In Guinea, however, earlier work had suggested that the private direct costs of schooling were higher for boys than for girls, owing to the former's uniforms being more expensive.

[12] Each of these items were assigned a numeric value, and were totalled separately, for each of the individuals included in the surveys. The data in Table 6 are simple averages of these values for each of the respondent categories shown.

[13] Earlier work which has examined gender differences in schooling in these two countries has also suggested that opportunity costs are higher for girls than boys. Girls have also been shown to be involved in a wider range of tasks than boys, many related to domestic work, which have contributed to their absence, or to their arriving late at school. See Sow 1994; USAID 1994; Yelfign et.al 1995.

[14] For example, in one of the schools visited in Guinea, a girl aged nine had been withdrawn from school by her mother. When asked why this was so, the mother explained that she had no one else to help with the numerous domestic chores she had to perform.

[15] In two earlier studies in Ethiopia (Anbesu and Junge 1988 and USAID 1994) the majority of pupils lived within 30 minutes' walk of their schools, which, the authors argued, implied that enrolment was influenced by school accessibility. These studies gave no clear indication that distance to school has a greater impact upon the enrolment of girls than of boys, although such an argument has been made in the case of Guinea (Anderson-Levitt *et.al*. 1994).

[16] Some previous studies in the two countries have also acknowledged the impact of early marriage on girls' schooling. In Ethiopia, most of the studies mention that early marriage is an important reason for girls not enrolling in, or dropping out of, school (Anbesu and Junge 1988; Asseffa 1991; USAID 1995). The extent of the problem differs across the country with one study proposing that early marriage was not a problem in the district surveyed (Yelfign et al. 1996), and another suggesting that parents believed that early marriage is a less important constraint than economic factors although it is seen as an important consideration in deciding between whether to send a boy or girl to school (USAID 1994). Early marriage has also been highlighted as a constraint on girls' schooling in Guinea (Kourouma 1991; Sow 1994). Sow reports that, in Guinea, where the lack of 'complete' schools results in higher grades being available at the expense of lower grades, the delay in the opportunity to enrol children discourages parents from sending their daughters to school because they would already have reached marriageable age before completing schooling.

[17] An earlier study in one region in Ethiopia also found that girls who started school at an early age were likely to complete their schooling, whereas over-age children were more likely to drop-out, which, the authors suggested, could be related to the onset of puberty (Anbesu and Junge 1988).

[18] Earlier studies have also confirmed these findings. In Ethiopia, parents perceived that their own returns to investment in a son's education was greater than for daughters, because the son remained at home after marriage whereas the daughter was expected to move away so that "the investment in her education is lost to her family" (USAID 1994). Various studies have shown that societal expectations of gender roles result in negative parental attitudes towards sending girls to school (Long 1990 and Kourouma 1991 in Guinea; Asseffa 1991 and Yelfign et al. 1996 in Ethiopia). It has been suggested that one reason for such attitudes is parental ignorance about education and that parents are more likely

to send their children to school if they themselves are literate (USAID 1994; UNICEF 1995). A study in one district of Ethiopia further suggested that mothers' education was positively related to girls' enrolment in school (Yelfign et al. 1996).

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