

**FEMALES IN THE
RURAL AFRICAN SOCIETY:
DO THESE GIRLS HAVE A
CHANCE?**

**Dr. Anne M. Mungai
Adelphi University**



THE MANTRA

**“WHEN YOU EDUCATE A WOMAN,
YOU EDUCATE THE NATION”.**



Traditions

Traditionally, women were brought up to value the roles of wife, mother, and cultivator.

Children were also seen as additional farm labor to help the women.

Women were responsible for all household and child-related tasks.

Traditions

In the last seventy years, traditional societies have undergone considerable change, and a shift in the division of labor between the sexes has created a feeling of insecurity among women.

As more men take jobs away from home, many women are left with more responsibilities at home.

Barriers to Education: Socio-Economic

Direct cost of schooling

Child labor

School facilities

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Distance from school

Teachers' attitudes

Text books and curricula

Girls' Expulsion

SOCIO-CULTURAL

Initiation rites

Religion

Parents' Perception on schooling

Early marriages

Age group	Average hours	
	Male	Female
8-14	1.7	6.3
15-19	1.4	11.3
20-24	1.6	18.7
25-29	2.1	21.6
30-34	2.3	19.7
35-39	1.6	20.4
40-49	1.8	18.8
50-54	2.2	18.0
55-59	2.0	16.8
60-64	2.1	17.5
65-69	1.8	17.7
70+	2.7	14.0
Total	1.8	14.1

Solutions

Policy implications in many African countries where national examinations are given.

Increase an awareness among the teachers on effective instructional strategies.

This in turn would affect the way pre-service teachers are trained.

Develop policies which would permeate the teachers education programs.

Teaching workshops to inform parents of the need to give their daughters time to study at home.

Awareness of access and equity problems of disadvantaged groups of children - street children, children with disabilities, children of refugees and children of slum dwellers.

Implications

Literature shows that girls education may bring some economic benefits:

- (i) Girls' education may increase the probability of obtaining employment.
- (ii) Women participate more actively in the labor force when they are educated.

THEIR OWN VOICES

“It is not fair for my parents to expect me to do all those chores and be able to perform well in school. Though my mother says that she is training me for the future, to be a good wife and a good mother, I feel that I need time to study so that my future will be brighter and not like my mother’s and my grandmother’s. It makes me angry when my brothers and uncles tease me that if I do not learn to cook I will never find a husband. Does this mean that a husband will only want me as his cook?”

VOICES CONT.

I do not mind helping my parents with some of the chores after school but I wish they would leave me a few hours to study every night so that I will do better in school. Being the oldest among my brothers and sisters, I tend to be asked to do most of the heavy work when my mother is not home or is busy with something else. My sisters and brothers help too, but since I am older I have to be a good example to them. If I ever succeed and become a doctor then I will employ someone to help my parents so that they will not have to do so much.

VOICES CONT.

“I am always getting into trouble with my mother because I am always reading my storybooks at the wrong time. Why do I have to feed the cows when I should be reading my books?”

VOICES CONT.

“Why do we argue with the traditions that will never change? We are women and we must do as we are told, otherwise who will marry you, if they know you are so aggressive?”

VOICES CONT.

Our teachers are very traditional and they do not care about us girls. My teacher says that I will end up in the kitchen. What sort of encouragement is that? The teachers seem to believe in the boys [more] than in us girls and they do not encourage us to do well. One of my teachers says that the boys will have to provide for their families in the future so they must work harder than the girls.

VOICES CONT.

“One day a teacher, Mr. Gitonga, asked us in class to write down what we want to be 10 years from that day. I wrote down that I plan to finish high school, go to the university and become a lawyer, and even have my own practice.”

What do you think the reaction was?

