



5.5 The Case of Sierra Leone

- A. Context
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A. Context

a. General

Sierra Leone is one of the smaller West African republics, with an area of some 71,000 square kilometres. Independence was gained in 1961, and the country comprises a number of significantly contrasting environmental and cultural components.

There is a fundamental and considerable difference between the Freetown Peninsula, which includes the capital and primate city, and the rest of the country. Following the resettlement of freed Afro-Caribbean slaves from the New World on the peninsula and its environs, this part of the country not only benefited from the

trading economy of the major port but also developed an educationally oriented culture served by a number of prestigious schools and colleges. This cluster of institutions once extended its influence throughout West Africa and beyond.

While the (Krio) culture of the peninsula is relatively homogeneous, urban and Christian based, the rural interior of the country has both Christian and Islamic dimensions and is multi-tribal and multi-lingual, though two major groups predominate, the Mende and the Temne, each with about 30 per cent of the total national population.

Economically, Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world with a per capita income of about \$US200 p.a. The majority of people are subsistence farmers, and at this basic level the land is generally supportive. There are significant mineral deposits, including diamonds, and the one major trading centre of Freetown, but the general economic profile of the country has been in decline for at least a decade. One of the results of this is the chronic underfunding of public education at all levels, but particularly in the primary sector where the high birth rate is causing increasing demand for places. At the same time there is an evident disenchantment with schooling on the part of some rural parents and communities which is shared by a significant number of primary teachers who remain unpaid for considerable periods of time and are forced to revert to their land for personal survival.

However, with a total population still only about 3 million and a modest overall density of 40 per square kilometre, survival on the land is still possible, but such a scenario does not encourage participation in school by either sex.

b. Education

The diagram below (T. N. Postlethwaite, 1988, p 593) shows the educational system in Sierra Leone. The survey was conducted with pupils in Primary 7.

Table 1 shows the relative enrolment of boys and girls as proportions of the school-age population at primary level. Enrolment is low for both sexes but lower for girls in all age-groups.

Average Age	Year of School	Types of School		
24	19	University of Sierra Leone Fourah Bay College Njala University College	Agricultural College	Milton Margai Teachers' College
23	18			
22	17		Technical Institutes	Secondary Schools Secondary School for Primary Teachers
21	16			
20	15			
19	14		Preuniversity Classes	
18	13			
17	12			
16	11	Lower Secondary		
15	10			
14	9			
13	8			

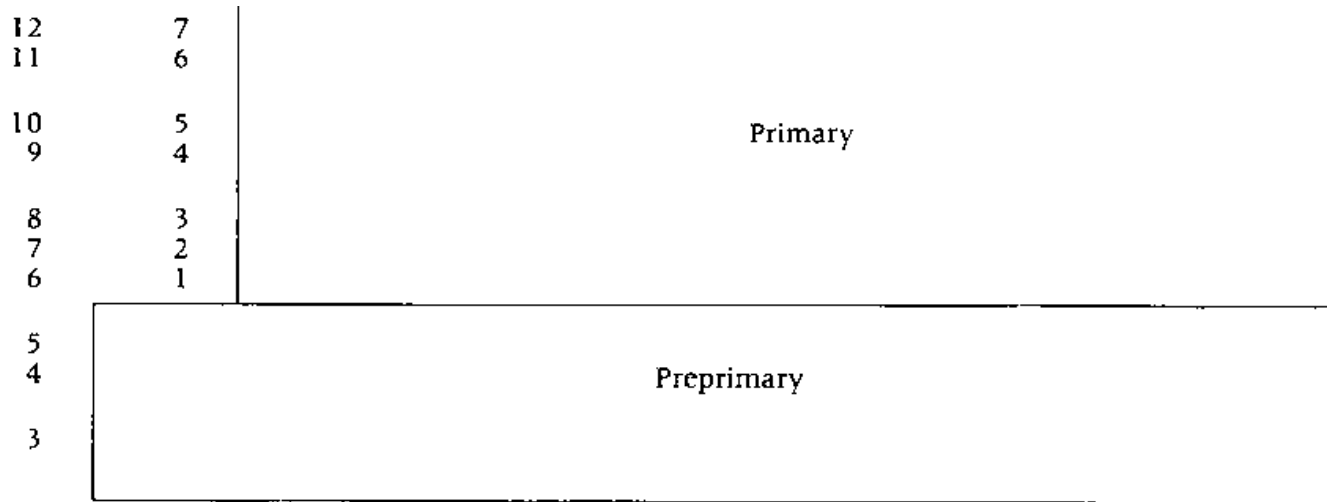


Table 1: Enrolment in Primary Schools in Relation to Number of Children of School-Going Age

Age	% Enrolment of Boys In Relation to Boys of School-going Age	% Enrolment of Girls in relation to Girls of School-going Age
5	36.7	28.0
6	47.1	33.4
7	48.1	32.2

8	42.0	28.6
9	39.4	25.7
5-9	42.6	29.6
10	35.2	24.1
11	31.7	20.8
12	27.1	16.3
13	20.6	11.1
14	12.4	4.5
10-14	25.7	15.6

(Source: J May-Parker (1986) from C. Davies et al. Final report on access to school - primary and secondary data 1977 - 1978, Government of Sierra Leone, nd.)

Secondary enrolment is lower for girls than for boys but also varies according to province. Tables 2 and 3 contrast the enrolment and retention of boys and girls in the Northern Province and the Western Area (which includes Freetown), and illustrate the extremes of the regional differences.

Table 2: School Enrolment by Class and Sex: NORTHERN PROVINCE

	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
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FORMS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
1	2,251	30.6	980	38.1	3,231	32.6
2	1,715	23.3	595	23.1	2,310	23.3
3	1,519	20.7	551	21.4	2,070	20.9
4	1,119	15.2	294	11.4	1,413	14.2
5	668	9.1	147	5.7	815	8.2
Lower 6	48	0.7	3	0.1	51	0.5
Upper 6	27	0.4	3	0.1	30	0.3
TOTAL	7,347	100.0	2,573	100.0	9,920	100.0

Table 3: School Enrolment by Class and Sex: WESTERN AREA

FORMS	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER
1	3,334	27.9	2,671	30.0	6,005
2	2,719	22.7	2,099	24.2	4,810
3	2,345	19.6	1,585	18.3	3,930
4	2,009	16.7	1,255	14.5	3,264
5	1,225	10.7	895	10.3	2,120
Lower 6	179	1.5	100	1.2	279
Upper 6	113	0.9	57	0.7	170

TOTAL	11,924	100.0	8,662	100.0	20,586
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(Source: C Davies et al., ibid p 61-62)

c. Primary Perceptions

The survey in Sierra Leone was carried out in Primary 7 classes in Freetown, in a small town in the north and in relatively remote villages in the north-east and southeast of the country. The ages of pupils ranged from 10-15 but the majority of older pupils were in schools outside Freetown. Altogether 140 girls and boys were included in the survey in roughly equal numbers.

In rural areas both boys and girls were equally and very much involved in helping with agricultural work and in such tasks as fetching water. In both rural and urban areas both sexes were concerned with caring for siblings. It was by no means a task only for girls. Cooking was also done by both sexes but to a lesser degree in the north where it is traditionally the female who prepares food. Both boys and girls were involved in sweeping and shopping. Village children agreed 100 per cent that girls help more at home than boys, but there was less consensus in the north (85 per cent) and Freetown (83 per cent). Outside Freetown a staggering 86 per cent of children agreed that they sometimes could not come to school because they had to help their mother or their father; even in Freetown however 52 per cent were in the same position. There was no significant difference between the sexes in this and 37 per cent found it difficult to get to school every day.

Pupils were largely in agreement that boys stay on longer at school than girls and

even more agreed in the villages. Outside Freetown 35 per cent thought that girls did not need to go to school as much as boys. The attitudes in the north of the country were more negative even than in the villages, in fact 77 per cent of pupils there agreed that "Girls don't really need to go to school". This was by far the most negative reaction to girls' schooling in the whole survey and was not statistically significant by sex - the majority of the girls agreed with the boys! Parental attitudes to their sons' and daughters' schooling seemed highly supportive, judging by the answers to items 5 and 10 ("My mother/my father wants me to come to school very much") and there was no sign of sex discrimination in the results for this question.

The pupils' responses to the questions on their parents' skills in reading and writing indicate much lower literacy levels for mothers than for fathers in the villages, the small northern town and in Freetown itself. The rural and northern figures for women (17 per cent and 52 per cent respectively) are the lowest in the whole survey, whilst those for Freetown, though lower than those for men, are a respectable 80 per cent. The children's perceptions of their fathers' reading and writing skills follow a similar pattern at a higher level: rural 59 per cent, northern urban 85 per cent and Freetown 87 per cent. Outside Freetown the gap between male and female literacy is a serious one: the children's responses confirm the statistics.

Pupils in Sierra Leone are extremely conscious of the costs of education: 89 per cent agreed that "it costs a lot to go to school", and this was the highest figure in the survey. In Freetown pupils are very concerned about distance 87 per cent wished school were nearer to their homes and this would appear to be related to

the lack of zoning and the poor transport system in the city. However, most of the children in all regions wanted to continue school next year.

The children's families were large and comparable in size with those in Cameroon and Vanuatu: (1-3 children: 15.6 per cent; 4-6 children: 40.7 per cent; 7-9 children: 30.7 per cent and more than 10:12.8 per cent). Whatever their intentions as regards marriage and having children themselves (this group was not specifically asked about this) their career choices seem to be, as elsewhere, far more varied and ambitious in the case of the boys. In rural areas, choices seem to be dictated for both sexes by the limited number of role models available- boys think they would like to be a doctor or a missionary, girls write down "nurse". At the moment very few rural girls complete primary school and for those who do, the nearest secondary school may be a long way off. Not many will have the chance to become a nurse.

The answers below are those of Yama who is twelve and lives in a small town in the north. Her father is a teacher, her mother a housewife and she is the middle child in the family of three girls and two boys. She fetches water, sweeps and looks after her little brother and sister every day. Her teacher considers she is average in ability.

Say whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with these sentences:

AGREE (Yes!)

DISAGREE (No!)

1. Girls help at home more than boys √ x
2. Boys usually stay at school for more years than girls √ x
3. Girls need to go to school as much as boys √ x
4. Girls are usually younger than boys when they stop going to school √ x
5. My mother wants me to come to school very much √ x
6. Girls don't really need to go to school √ x
7. Sometimes I can't come to school because there are jobs I must do for my mother or my father √ x
8. It costs a lot of money to go to school √ x
9. I wish school was nearer to my house √ x
10. My father wants me to come to school very much √ x
11. I think my mother is good at reading and writing √ x
12. I think my father is good at reading and writing √ x
13. I think I shall be leaving school at the end of this year √ x
14. I would like to go to school next year √ x
15. It is difficult to come to school every day √ x
16. I would like to go to secondary school √ x
17. I like school √ x

WHEN I GROW UP

When I grow up, the work I'd like to do is nurse .

B. Factors

i. Geographical

Sierra Leone shares with other West African states, and of course the Cameroons, a Christian/Islamic dichotomy. The Christian dimension is further divided between the Freetown Peninsula and the remainder. The Freetown Peninsula contains not only the primate city and capital, but also the distinctive Krio culture of the descendants of freed slaves from the Caribbean. The contrast between the capital and the rest of the country is even greater than in most developing states, and this includes education.

In the Western Province the position of women is far better than elsewhere in Sierra Leone, whereas to be both female and provincial leads to underprivilege. The further inland along the few roads of any note, the more remote and isolated each settlement becomes. Urban/rural dichotomy may be best described in terms of Freetown/Province dichotomy, so dominant is the primate city among the towns of Sierra Leone. Most educated working women are in Western Province. Northern Province is particularly low in the provision of post-primary education and in the proportion of the female population who are gainfully employed.

Rural/urban contrasts are sharp in secondary education enrolments and in literacy rates. Indeed the rural parents in our survey had the poorest literacy rate in the entire project. Distance from school can be quite considerable and deter attendance at primary level in the rural regions, but

for different reasons, getting to school across Freetown can also be very difficult. Secondary pupils are likely to have even longer distances, and both public and private transport are extremely poor. Parents are particularly concerned about their daughters having to travel long and insecure journeys to school.

ii. Socio-Cultural

Factors in this range are central to the poor profile of female participation in education in Sierra Leone. The traditional role of women as housekeeper, mother and community member remains strong. Outside of Freetown, men are willing for their women to have employment initiatives but only if they are based at home. Traditional forms of tribal education continue, with the Bondo bush schools fulfilling certain traditional roles. By contrast the curriculum of the rural primary school appears, and of course is, of little relevance to the realities of everyday life in rural Sierra Leone. So while the participation rates of rural girls are very low, those of boys are not much better.

The low status of women is particularly noticeable in Northern Province, mainly for reasons of custom rather than religion, though Islam tends to be held responsible. In fact some significant educational initiatives for girls in Sierra Leone have been generated by Islamic communities and professionals.

In the provinces and rural areas there is an obligation for a 'mature' girl to

marry. Early marriage and pregnancy are still major reasons for drop-out or non-enrolment. Several of the parents surveyed indicated quite independently the fact that many girls were precocious (in the sexual sense) and it is evident that the high rate of sexual relationships from an early age is a cultural element across gender.

Male domination attitudes run deep and are early acquired. For example, considerable proportions of boys in the rural primary schools visited did not consider it necessary for girls to go to school at all. The figure reached 77% in Makeni which is way ahead of anything else in the survey. On other surveys, the 'negative attitudes of fathers' figures strongly, and 'lack of encouragement from parents' is also sadly a frequent comment.

iii. Health

Surprisingly rarely mentioned in interviews, this factor is clearly an important one. Early marriage, and especially pregnancy, can have adverse effects on the physical development of girls. The massive rate of sexual activity inevitably introduces related medical problems including now AIDS, and so the International Planned Parenthood Federation has a major project running in Sierra Leone. Part of the problem according to the project director, may be ascribed, albeit indirectly, to education in that in order to reach a secondary school some girls and boys will have to live away from home and so such sanctions as have existed are inoperative. Even routine health practices learned informally in the community are forgotten. Under-nourishment, though not famine, is widespread in Sierra

Leone, and when combined with physical hardship and long journeys to school, it takes its toll. Inevitably levels of concentration are reduced.

iv. Economic

Poverty is by far the largest cause of low levels of female participation as perceived by virtually every set of respondents, teachers, students, parents and professional educators. It operates both directly and indirectly. The hidden costs would include the usefulness of the pupil at home and on the land, but the real costs are quite significant too. Primary school pupils are well aware of this and wish to try to succeed in order to make money later for themselves and their own families. Children of both sexes may be found in Freetown engaging in petty trading during school hours.

Girls may obtain money from boy friends and sometimes from "sugar daddies" - older men who will fund their education or other interests in return for a relationship. There is a danger that this may well lead to an early pregnancy. The age at which this tends to happen corresponds roughly with the onset of the academic secondary school programmes/options leading to public examinations. This is an expensive stage, requiring the recommended course texts and other costly items. It is particularly disappointing for girls who have worked hard to reach this point to have to drop out, and the support of an older man can resolve the problem.

Large family sizes are both benefit and burden, but in this context, rather the latter, being in the range of 5-10 children in the majority of cases at the schools visited. Inevitably fees cannot be raised for as many children as this, and if anyone is going to be supported, it will be a boy. Even if they do get to a school, most will also have to work hard at home or on the land. Such activities as looking after siblings, fetching water, sweeping the compound and going to market are vital to the survival of the family. So a family's opportunity costs, as well as actual costs will be considerable if one or more of their children goes to school.

Most educated women are from elite backgrounds. There are some employment opportunities for women in Freetown but hardly any in the provinces. Even in Freetown due to economic constraint, men are coming into competition with women for jobs normally occupied by females, such as typing, nursing and primary school teaching.

It is difficult to desegregate economic from socio-cultural factors. For example, the Fula, once a remote minority in the north, are now a major entrepreneurial force, using their increased wealth to educate both boys and girls. This is a modern parallel to the mercantile operations of the creoles in the nineteenth century who used their wealth to educate daughters as well as sons by establishing schools and encouraging their offspring to seek professional roles. The Fulas are now investing in real estate and property development in Freetown. Twenty-five years ago, the enrolment of Fula girls in school was rare, now it is increasingly strong.

v. Religious

The broad dichotomy between Christian and Islamic zones has been noted. Religion per se is not a direct factor according to most respondents, but it was strongly considered to be so by one particular group, the senior professionals interviewed in Sierra Leone. As elsewhere, it is custom rather than religion that tends to deprive girls of schooling in Muslim areas. In addition to the example of the Fulas mentioned above, there are other initiatives from within the Islamic communities affording opportunities to girls to acquire technical and vocational skills. The Christian denominations also have been a positive force for female education. Their institutions tend to be well organised and attract good staff who are generally committed to their task as they know they will be paid regularly.

vi. Legal

Not seen as a factor in the modern sense, though traditional custom is obviously a constraint on girls' education in many areas.

vii. Political/Administrative

Given the state of the economy, it is not possible for the political and administrative systems to serve the communities as the regulations provide. One telling example is that of the payment of teachers' salaries. It is not uncommon for these to be in arrears by several months.

Consequently many teachers become demotivated or simply have to find other sources of income. In rural areas they may work on their land instead of coming to school. If rural schools are inadequately staffed as a result there is even less reason for parents to suffer loss of labour at home or on the land.

Even though the Government is faced with severe difficulties, questions were raised about the political will required to maintain the educational effort, and within that to try harder to meet the particular needs of girls. A Women's Bureau has been set up in the Ministry of Rural Development, but it has virtually no funding at all. As pointed out by a senior researcher at the University of Sierra Leone, the issues are complex and need to be addressed by cross-sectoral efforts. An example would be the Basic Education thrust where programmes for out-of-school girls, the non-formal education of adults and improved primary programmes were all components of an integrated exercise. However, in current circumstances it is difficult to envisage such a coordinated effort being effectively mounted.

Reference was made to the fact that the Sierra Leone Government did not sign the UN Convention on Women's Rights until 1988, and even then only after considerable pressure had been brought to bear. The appalling communications problem aids Government control in that there is little (and late) reporting of complaints or demonstrations. There are only very limited networks of communication, and no television, which leads to the further fragmentation of the mass of the population.

The politics of language in Sierra Leone obviously affects education as political affiliation tends to be regional. This is reflected in the selection of the four main community languages for the new curriculum, Krio, Mende, Limba and Timne.

viii. Education

Provision is theoretically equal, but in practice is not necessarily so; and girls do not take up such opportunities as there are, due to the various pressures already mentioned. The crumbling nature of the system, physically as well as administratively, clearly renders it unattractive. Many parents complained in their returns about the state of buildings. They also called for an effort in the area of technical and vocational education, since the experience gained in the present curriculum does not seem so functional in the light of occupational and income generation needs.

To summarise some of the problems particularly affecting girls:

there is low enrolment overall, not just girls but worse for them, and especially in the provinces;

the drop-out rate is high, again worse for girls and in the provinces;

the system of repeating classes means that more costs have to

be borne by parents over a longer period of time; this makes girls older than they should be by the secondary stage when problems of pregnancy appear;

teachers' salaries remain unpaid for months and this creates demotivation and absenteeism;

the curriculum is not seen as relevant, while alternatives like technical and vocational approaches are unresourced.

ix. Initiatives

Among the initiatives noted were:

- The Women's Commission in Adult Education
- The Planned Parenthood Federation Programme
- The Bunumbu Curriculum Development Project - a six year basic education work orientated curriculum which includes skills for employment.
- PLAN International - a scheme providing financial help to cover fees, books and medical expenses to successful applicants from the Greater Freetown area. Currently there are about 1400 scholars, divided equally between the sexes.

- The Women's Bureau - Ministry of Rural Development.
- Njala University College scheme on The Participation of Women in Adult Literacy
- Peoples' Educational Association undertakes literacy work, for example the development of teaching/learning materials and the training of female literacy tutors
- MECAS/UNESCO Project on Women & Civic Education

C. Recommendations

Our major recommendations (not necessarily in order of priority) would be:

- i. that NGOs be encouraged to develop (non-formal) primary education projects for both sexes but with some positive discrimination in favour of the participation of girls;
- ii. that in situations of poverty and malnutrition, feeding schemes for primary and secondary pupils be considered for support;
- iii. incentives for enrolment and retention (waiving of fees for girls);
- iv. that encouragement should be given to efficient NGOs to promote schemes to effect the progression of girls from primary to secondary

school;

v. investigate textbooks and materials for gender bias and develop appropriate materials;

vi. more and better secondary provision in rural areas and small towns; if possible single sex schools with secure boarding facilities, especially in the northern region;

vii. in the urban areas, primarily Freetown, the further funding and development of scholarships schemes for secondary girls;

viii. that initiatives be encouraged to develop technical and vocational education for both sexes especially, but not exclusively, as a 'second chance' for drop-outs from formal schooling;

ix. a family planning and returnees scheme for teenage mothers;

x. it would seem that some sort of health/sex education initiative is needed for adolescent Sierra Leonians, especially in the Freetown area, in order to combat the high rate of teenage pregnancies;

xi. a scheme to train more female teachers for rural locations;

xii. there is a need to improve the level of educational policy implementation at the local level. This would involve the training of personnel in systems of implementation and delivery. Their role in the

implementation of policy would be a practical one of animation, advice and support rather than mere administration. The opportunity could be taken to train a significant number of women in this work;

xiii. that assistance be provided to enable the school day and the school year to be adjusted to the realities of rural life and the demands of rural economies on child labour;

xiv. the resolution of the transport problem in Freetown by zoning or developing an infrastructure;

xv. literacy and income-generating schemes for women;

xvi. that initiatives be coordinated with health, sanitation, water, income generating and other projects so that education is part of an integrated package;

xvii. that further assistance be considered for improving the standards of traditional agricultural practice especially where this will enhance the experience, status and income of females;

xviii. that, especially in rural communities, projects should be developed combining pre-school initiatives with income generation and basic literacy and numeracy skills for rural women;

xix. that aid be considered for credible women's movements with track

records of support for aspects of education and training, both formal and non-formal;

xx. that efforts be supported to raise the level of male awareness of the community and family economic benefits likely to arise from increased participation of women and girls in educational and income generating activities.



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5.6 The Case of Vanuatu

- A. Context
- B. Factors
- C. Recommendations

A. Context

a. General

Formerly an Anglo-French Condominium, known as the New Hebrides, Vanuatu gained independence in 1980. Like Cameroon, the country therefore has a dual colonial legacy, with obvious educational implications, though it is not formally divided into anglophone and francophone sectors in a geographical sense.

The indigenous population is predominantly Melanesian, but comprises a complex of numerous local languages and ethnic identities. In addition to English and French, there is also the local pidgin language Bislama, which though not spoken by all, acts as a lingua franca.

The country is also physically fragmented, being an archipelago of twelve major islands and numerous smaller ones. This inevitably affects national cohesion and the costs of educational provision. Like many small island states, while the economy of Vanuatu is inevitably limited and concentrated, the possibilities for survival, mostly on a basis of subsistence agriculture, are certainly apparent. Potential for diversification and development is another matter; these must be limited as are the employment prospects of the output of the formal education system. The per capita GNP p.a. is over \$US500, which places Vanuatu in the middle range of developing countries.

With a population of only about 120,000 Vanuatu is by far the smallest, both economically and in terms of land area, among the six case study countries in this project.

b. Education

Since Independence, the Government of Vanuatu has been attempting to fuse the separate and differing anglophone and francophone systems of education into one national system with a choice of English or French as medium of instruction. Curriculum development for the six-year primary cycle is taking place for both language mediums in parallel so that ultimately there will be a single curriculum and materials will differ only in language.

Small village schools in some areas are feeder infant schools for larger upper primaries in more central or accessible places where boarding facilities are provided. In some of these boarding primary schools there are both English and French medium classes.

At the end of primary 6 there are selection examinations for entry to Junior secondary schools/first cycle of secondary education. There is at least one junior secondary school on most of the larger islands but some do not as yet go as far as Year 10. Senior secondary classes are centralised in Port Vila at Malapoa College and the Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville and entry is regulated by a selection examination at the end of the junior secondary cycle (Year 10). Facilities for technical education and the Teacher Training College are also based in Port Vila. There is a USP campus in Vanuatu, but most students follow pre-university and undergraduate courses abroad in New Zealand, PNG or at the main USP campus in Fiji.

The figures for girls' enrolment in primary schools vary according to region, as can

be seen in Table 1. Banks and Torres in the north and TAFEA (Tanna and neighbouring islands) in the south have the lowest percentages. Percentages for Paama, Epi, Tongoa and the Shepherds are distorted by the smallness of the populations. Girls' enrolment in Efate where Port Vila is situated is consistently high throughout the primary cycle, as one would expect.

Table 1: Girls as % of Enrolment by Region and Class

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	TOTAL
1. Banks/Torres	42%	52%	41%	39%	37%	44%	42%
2. Santo/Malo	49%	43%	41%	42%	48%	40%	45%
3. Ambae/Maewo	48%	47%	50%	45%	45%	45%	47%
4. Pentecost	45 %	53 %	47 %	45 %	43 %	47 %	47 %
5. Malekula	45%	46%	51%	46%	47%	49%	47%
6. Ambrym	49%	44%	49%	41%	45%	47%	46%
*7. Paama	53%	42%	58%	42%	51%	44%	47%
*8. Epi	41%	48%	54%	43%	46%	48%	47%
*9. Tongoa/Shepherds	47%	51%	46%	52%	56%	46%	49%
10. Efate	49%	48%	49%	47%	48%	47%	48%
11. TAFEA	46%	44%	46%	43%	43%	41%	44%
TOTALS	47%	47%	48%	44%	46%	45%	46%

(Based on 1989 figures supplied by the Ministry of Education).

School enrolment rates as percentages of the whole population and at the different levels vary greatly when considered in terms of urban/rural areas and by sex. Table 2 (Asia Development Bank, 1987) indicates clearly the disadvantage of rural girls.

Table 2: School Enrolment Rate 1979 (%) Based on the 1979 Census

URBAN	Age-group	Female	Male
		6 - 9	91.8
	10 - 14	86.4	90.8
	15 - 19	33.5	33.3
	20 - 24	3.8	4.2
RURAL	6 - 9	60.9	66.1
	10 - 14	56.1	75.0
	15 - 19	23.6	37.1
	20 - 24	2.1	6.6

(Source: Asia Development Bank, Vocational Training and the Labour Market in Vanuatu 1987).

Table 3 gives some indication of schooling by region and by sex, again from the 1979 Census figures.

Table 3: Percentage of ni-Vanuatu aged 6 years and over who had attended School by Local Government Region, 1979

Percentage Attended School

Local Government Region	Male	Female	Total
Banks/Torres	72.0	54.5	63.3
Santo	66.3	59.1	63.1
Ambae/Maewo	83.7	74.7	79.5
Malekula	78.5	75.0	76.9
Pentecost	68.0	59.5	63.8
Ambrym	80.7	75.4	78.2
Paama	90.0	82.3	86.1
Epi	83.0	76.5	79.8
Shepherds	89.7	86.3	88.0
Efate	88.3	88.5	88.4
TAFEA	62.0	41.4	52.2
Vanuatu	75.5	67.3	71.6

Source - R Bedford (Ed) Population of Vanuatu Noumea 1989, p 92)

Table 4 illustrates the common phenomenon of high numbers of female teachers in

government/administrative centres (here Port Vila on Efate). Educational expansion in the 1984-89 period on Santo/Malo and in TAFEA has resulted in many more women teachers being employed but it is interesting that the latter region still has twice as many male as female teachers.

Table 4: Numbers of Teachers by Region and by Sex

	FEMALE		MALE	
	1984	1989	1984	1989
Banks/Torres	15	11	31	31
Santo/Malo	57	100	66	80
Ambae/Maewo	41	29	53	59
Malekula	74	68	94	112
Pentecost	32	50	33	41
Ambrym	16	14	41	43
Paama	4	4	18	14
Epi	10	8	23	23
Tongoa/Shepherds	13	12	33	27
Efate	83	100	77	71
TAFEA	19	63	56	117
TOTAL	364	459	525	618

(Based on figures supplied by the Ministry of Education)

c. Primary Perceptions

The survey was conducted in a range of Primary 6 anglophone and francophone classes on three of the islands of Vanuatu: Efate, Espiritu Santo and Tanna. The urban samples were taken in Port Vila, the capital. The age-range was 8-15 years and altogether there were 112 girls and 115 boys involved.

A very high proportion of children help in the "gardens" (subsistence farms) in Vanuatu; only 5 per cent were never involved. Girls and boys appear to contribute equally in "garden" work, in fetching water and in going to market/shopping but the contribution of girls is greater (and statistically significant) in tasks such as caring for younger siblings, cooking, sweeping and laundry. The pupils generally agreed (93 per cent) that girls do help more at home than boys. Interestingly, despite the high involvement of pi-Vanuatu children in helping their parents, the percentage agreeing that they sometimes could not come to school because they had to do jobs for their mothers or fathers was one of the lowest in the survey (23 per cent). Many of the rural schools in Vanuatu are boarding establishments because of problems of distance and inaccessibility and it would seem that this factor may be instrumental in ensuring attendance during the week, even if not in promoting enrolment in the first place.

Over a third of the children thought that boys stayed on longer at school than girls and again a third thought that girls did not need to go to school as much as boys. Overall 18 per cent agreed that "Girls don't really need to go to school", but as in

other measures of attitude, there were differences between the responses from the urban and the rural schools: only 11 per cent agreed in Port Vila but 20-24 per cent agreed in rural locations on other islands. Nevertheless, only Jamaica showed more positive attitudes than Vanuatu on this item.

Vanuatu has the highest percentage in the survey of children agreeing that they thought they would be leaving school at the end of the year and the lowest percentage saying that they would like to go to secondary school. Again there is an urban/rural difference within the overall figures and this again correlates with the literacy levels of the parents as perceived by the children.

The pupils themselves belong to relatively large families (58 per cent with 4-6 children and 30 per cent with 7 or more). However, the low number of children stating an intention to marry was startling. Whilst 80-90 per cent of respondents in other countries intended to marry, in Vanuatu (with the exception of one school) only 30-40 per cent planned to do so. Perhaps as the average age of marriage is relatively high, such an eventuality has less reality for a Primary 6 pupil in Vanuatu than it does elsewhere. Rural pupils planned to have larger families than did urban ones but boys and rural boys in particular, planned to have more children, especially male children, than did the girls. The rural boys also had more negative attitudes towards girls' education, as one might expect.

Overall in the results of the survey there is a strong contrast between pupils in Port Vila and those in rural schools, especially those on other islands. The female pupils in Port Vila are expected to stay at school longer, and indeed it is accepted that they need to go to school as much as boys. Their mothers are twice as likely to be

literate as mothers in rural areas on other islands. More of the girls in Port Vila expect to continue into secondary education. Their ambitions are higher and much more varied than those of their rural counterparts and they expect, like their mothers, to have fewer children when they marry. The situation for girls in rural areas appears to be more constrained by traditional attitudes.

The answers below are those of Rosina who is 12 years old and lives in a very rural and inaccessible part of Espiritu Santo. She is the third child in a family of seven and her parents are subsistence farmers. Rosina works in the "garden" every day and helps to prepare food. Her teacher considers her to be good at her schoolwork.

8. Que penses-tu des phrases suivantes? Tu es d'accord ou pas d'accord?

√	D'ACCORD (C'est vrai!)
x	PAS D'ACCORD (C'est faux!)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Les filles aident plus que les garçons à la maison | √ |
| 2. Généralement les garçons restent à l'école plus d'années que les filles | √ |
| 3. Aller à l'école est aussi important pour les filles que pour les garçons | √ |
| 4. Généralement les filles vont plus jeunes que les garçons quand elles quittent l'école | √ |
| 5. Ma mère est très attachée à ce que je vienne à l'école | √ |
| 6. En fait, les filles n'ont pas vraiment besoin d'aller à l'école | √ |

i. Geographical

The geographical factor is significant in Vanuatu as might be expected. Enrolment levels vary from island to island but generally decline from the core (Vile) to the outer islands (exhibiting a "core-periphery" pattern). Banks and Torres to the north and TAFEA*, to the south are the furthest from the centre and have the lowest enrolments overall and the lowest figures for girls. There is also however the question of remoteness and accessibility within each island: isolated, traditional villages in the interior have a different attitudes towards the role and status of women and the education of girls from those on the coast. Groups moving down to the coast from the interior to settle are making a choice about modernity and formal education.

[* TAFEA is the acronym for the southern islands (Tanna, Anatom, Futuna, Erromango and Aniwe).]

Vanuatu exhibits striking diversity in the differences between urban and rural areas and as 82% of the population lives in scattered rural locations, this affects a large part of the female school-age population. In parts of rural Santo for example, only 50% of the potential school population are recruited. Attitudes to girls' education are significantly different in the more rural areas, families are larger and access to school is more difficult.

This latter factor has been tackled by having feeder infant primary schools at local level with a junior primary (at P4, P5 or P6 level) receiving pupils

as weekly boarders. Even so, rain or rough sea crossings from off-shore islands may still stop pupils getting to school on Mondays. The boarding factor solves some problems but there are implications when a child boards particularly when it is a girl: the production and help it would normally give in the household and "garden" (subsistence farming plot) during the week is not available.

The quality of primary education is said to vary from island to island (partly according to past and present mission influence). Few proceed to secondary school from Banks and Torres, for example. Access to junior secondary education is limited and uneven and at upper secondary level, even more limited.

At secondary level, Malapoa College and the Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville with their central location and prestige act as magnets, while some Catholic parents go for Montmartre College.

Rural children in our survey had very limited ambitions and girls in particular were surprised to be asked what they would do when they grew up: subsistence farming and marriage were all that they expected. There is however considerable migration between villages and islands, and to the two urban centres Vila and Luganville (Santo). The male circular migration of the past is increasingly being superseded by permanent migration of the whole family to the towns and ambitions are rising. There is however little migration overseas.

ii. Socio-Cultural

There is a great diversity of cultural traditions in Vanuatu but generally the status and power of women is low. Overall the system is patriarchal and only males can own land, be heads of family or chiefs, attend council and drink kava. A girl's traditional role in society is to help in the home and "garden", marry young and have children. She has far less importance than a boy, particularly in rural areas: symptomatically girls' ages are commonly reported as lower than in reality and those of boys as higher! The work of a girl in domestic and garden duties exceeds that of a boy and is therefore missed more if she goes to school. The tradition of early marriage has disappeared except in remoter areas and most girls now marry in their early twenties, so that female drop-out in Vanuatu is not closely related to marriage as in some countries. The system is however patrilocal on most islands and does involve the girls moving away, making her a poor investment for the family.

Bride-price and polygamy are still practised and in remoter custom villages, women live apart during menstruation. Fear of menstrual blood by men is still common on some islands. In these communities girls are far less likely to go to school than boys. Indeed, school and access to Bislama and English or French is seen by some girls as a means of escape from the traditional life-style.

There is a low incidence of extra marital or early pregnancy, but when it occurs it incurs societal displeasure, and for schoolgirls this means

expulsion. There does not appear to be a significant problem of sexual harassment or abuse, and females can normally travel freely to school and college. There is no problem about girls boarding away from home. There is however a certain amount of domestic violence against women, often associated with drink on pay-day.

'Modern' female role models are not strongly developed, but are emerging in the business field such as in banking. Not surprisingly, there is a concentration of professional women in Vila. Some concern has been voiced in connection with discrimination involved in promotion to senior posts and award of scholarships. Traditionally females in Vanuatu did not speak in public but this no longer applies, though there is a legacy of a quieter style than that typical of males. Professional men are not keen on their wives catching them up in terms of qualifications, occupation and status. Despite the progress that is evident, activists do not accept that any fundamental change has occurred.

iii. Health

Fertility is high in Vanuatu, with an average of 5.1 surviving children per mother. Large families are found in both urban and rural locations but significantly more in the rural areas. Family size has implications for cost as far as schooling is concerned and also for early drop-out by girls to look after younger brothers and sisters. Women's mortality rate is higher than that of males and reflects the lower status, long reproductive cycle and heavy work load of ni-Vanuatu women.

Fear of AIDS, though not yet present in Vanuatu, is changing attitudes to sex. Secondary school heads run unofficial awareness campaigns, but there is no official teaching or Ministry literature on the subject as a matter of principle. The Vanuatu Council of Women has organised a drive on health education, particularly in respect of nutrition and vaccination, for village women.

iv. Economic

Rural children in Vanuatu do contribute to production at an early age by the work they do in subsistence "gardens". There is value for parents in the work of girls in particular in the home and "garden" and this militates to some extent against them being sent to school. Our survey shows however that children who are at school are less likely to be absent because they are needed to do jobs at home than in most of the other countries in the survey. This is perhaps an advantage of boarding facilities at upper primary level for rural children.

In the event of families finding it difficult to pay school fees or incidental costs, it is likely to be the boys rather than the girls who are chosen to go to school. Girls after all are useful at home, leave the family on marriage, and will not necessarily attract a higher bride-price by being educated. However, parents, especially urban parents are beginning to perceive the economic benefit of educating their daughters who are obtaining employment in the modern sector. It is easier for an uneducated man to get a job than an uneducated woman.

Girls' ambitions are more circumscribed than boys' by socio-economic background and rural locations. In a typical rural school girls will express a wish to work in a "garden" or to be a teacher (their only role models being their mothers and teachers). The boys however will typically have more ideas: mechanic, doctor, sailor, pilot, policeman, driver, carpenter, etc. Even in Luganville girls' ambitions are limited to teaching, nursing and working in a bank. Career ambitions at 12 years of age have a fantasy quality of course but clearly show the difference in attitude between girls and boys, as we have seen in the Introduction.

In a small developing country there is an obvious political danger of producing an "over-educated" population for whom there are no jobs, but there is some desire expressed by the children in the survey for more access to secondary education.

v. Religious

Western religion is not a direct factor, but there is a disparity in respect of its general influence on educational provision from the differential aspect of various Christian missions. Indigenous religion, as part of kastom has an obvious influence on traditional attitudes towards females.

vi. Legal

The Family Law Bill, drafted under the auspices of the Vanuatu Council of Women, is largely concerned with marriage and divorce but has not

passed into law. The legal age of marriage for girls is 18 but they still marry younger than that in remote, rural areas. Overall however, the average age is over 18 and the age of marriage is not a problem as far as girls' education is concerned.

Chiefs tend to retain traditional power and sanctions are locally applied if necessary. On islands such as Tanna a policeman's job is said to be a sinecure. This does mean however that rape and violence against women, for example, may be dealt with by customary law and punishment may as a result be more lenient than it might be.

vii. Political/Administrative

There is thought in some quarters to be discrimination against the francophone sector, and a questioning of regional considerations in selection and placement at secondary level. Neither of these factors affects girls only.

Some respondents felt that women's movements may to some extent be counter-productive but some progress is being made in local politics. The Vanuatu Council of Women trains women on how to organise and run meetings. Such a programme is very important in boosting the confidence of women as they have not traditionally been involved in decision making.

viii. Educational

There is a rapidly developing rash of kindergartens in Vanuatu which seems to be closely linked to enrolment in Primary 1. This may be encouraging the enrolment of girls. The figures for girls are lower than those for boys in rural areas and outer islands but progress is being made at a good rate. Primary education is not compulsory but is approaching full coverage in Vila, if not elsewhere.

There is no subject differentiation according to gender in the primary school, but neither it seem is there much awareness in curriculum development and materials production of the issue of gender bias. This is particularly important in a society where the girls have traditionally been held in low esteem - some still bow their heads when passing boys, even at secondary school. Parents still consider it more important for boys to repeat a class and to stay on at school: a girl who needs to repeat a year will often be withdrawn. The numbers of boys transferring to Primary 6 from feeder schools on Tanna by far exceed those for girls. Indeed 55% of the pupils surveyed in Tanna thought that girls did not need to go to school as much as boys. In Vila only 13 % were of that opinion.

There are a limited number of places available for junior secondary education and children seem aware, judging from their answers in the survey, that few of them stand a chance of secondary education. The percentage expecting to leave school at the end of Primary 6 is the highest in the survey and the numbers wanting to go to secondary school the lowest. This may however be connected with the fact that for the vast majority going to secondary school would mean leaving home and

boarding at the school.

There is no sex factor operating in selection procedures for secondary school but boys do seem to gain more places. Certainly boys are more assertive in the classroom, a point stressed by several interviewees and figuring quite strongly in survey responses. There is some gender stereotyping of options at upper secondary and higher education levels of the usual traditional views as to 'male' and 'female' fields of study/training.

ix. Initiatives

- Many initiatives in consciousness-raising and women's development are being organised by the Vanuatu Women's Council.
- Kindergartens are being developed by the private sector.
- Curriculum development schemes covering the whole of the primary curriculum with a view to uniting the anglophone and francophone sectors are underway.

C. Recommendations

Our major recommendations (not necessarily in order of priority) would be:

- i. a project to further encourage the emerging kindergarten schools might

help to boost female confidence at an early age;

ii. that, where necessary, incentives be increased, such as provision of free uniforms, books and meals, so that economic constraints on female participation in schooling can be overcome;

iii. an exercise aimed at raising gender-awareness and gender issues amongst pupils at school level might help to improve attitudes to girls' education in rural areas;

iv. an exercise might be considered to raise the level of gender awareness in the curriculum development and materials production units, through some form of INSET for the professionals involved;

v. positive incentives such as more secondary scholarships for girls might be considered to go along with the present expansion of junior secondary places;

vi. that support be considered for developing boarding facilities for secondary school pupils of both sexes;

vii. that initiatives be encouraged to develop technical and vocational education for both sexes;

viii. as school provision is irregular for historical reasons and the geography of the country makes for difficulties of access, a school

mapping exercise with a view to informing future plans might enable universal access even if enrolment remained voluntary. We have noted however that in TAFEA, for example, there is low enrolment but plenty of schools.

ix. projects in agricultural training and modernisation focusing on subsistence farming and aimed at women;

x. that credible women's movements, with track records of support for women and girls in need, be identified and considered for aid;

xi. that efforts be made to raise the level of male awareness of the community and family benefits likely to arise from increased participation of women and girls in educational and income generating activity.



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Appendix

The Case Of Seychelles

A. Context

B. Factors

The Case Of Seychelles

(based on fieldwork conducted May - June 1996 by N K Cammish)

A. Context

a. General

The Republic of Seychelles is an archipelago, situated in the Indian Ocean about 1000 miles east of Mombasa. The islands lie between 4° - 5° south of the Equator, outside the monsoon belt, with temperatures ranging between 70° - 80° F. and with an average rainfall of 92" per annum. The central group of about 40 islands is granitic and the 50 outlying islands are coralline. Only four islands (Maine, Praslin, La Digue & Silhouette) have a population of any size and permanence.

Seychelles gained its independence from Britain in June 1976. Settled first by the French in the late 18th century, it retained many aspects of French custom, law and culture during the period of British rule from 1814 onwards, not the least of which were the French language and a French-based creole spoken originally by the slaves brought from Mauritius & Reunion to work on the first plantations. The official languages are now Creole, English and French. The population, estimated at

75,305 in 1996, is 90% Roman Catholic and 8% Anglican, and is mainly descended from the original French settlers and their slaves with the addition of East Africans freed from slave-ships in the Indian Ocean after Abolition. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a small influx of Indian and Chinese traders whose descendants constitute about 1% of the population. Since 1911 there has been no census of racial origins since extensive miscegenation has rendered such a task impossible even were it desirable.

Despite limited resources with income coming mainly from tourism and fisheries, Seychelles has seen rapid development since Independence in housing provision and in access to electricity and treated water supplies (84% and 73% respectively, 1994 Census). Infant mortality has fallen to 8.8 infant deaths per thousand live births and life expectancy is 66 for men and 75 for women. 36% of the population are under 15 or over 65 years of age. Women constitute 51 % of the total population and 44% of heads of households.

b. Education

Table 1 depicts the present system of education in Seychelles. The strong tradition of education for girls is reflected in the 1987 census figures for literacy (Table 2). The domination of the teaching profession by women is illustrated in Table 3.

Sex stereotyping in the choice of courses in the National Youth Service year can be seen in Table 4 and in the choice of 'A' level subjects at the Polytechnic in Table 5.

Table 1: The education system in Seychelles

Table 2: Population aged 12+ by literacy & sex, (Census 1987)

Literacy	Sex					
	Females	%	Males	%	Total	%
Not stated	170	1	268	1	438	1
Not approp.	4	0	1	0	5	0
No	3,363	13	3,836	16	7,179	14
Yes	21,770	86	20,691	83	42,461	85
Total	25,287	100	24,786		50,083	100

(Govt. of Seychelles, 1987 Census Report, Victoria, 1991, p. 97)

Table 3: Number of teachers by gender and nationality

	Local			Expatriate			Total	Total	Total
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	F/M
Crèche	175	0	175	0	0	0	175	0	175
Primary	494	67	561	0	1	1	494	68	562
Secondary	202	137	339	37	36	73	239	173	412
NYS	25	47	72	11	26	37	36	73	109
Polytechnic	41	62	103	13	29	42	54	91	145

Total	997	313	1230	0192	133	990	403	1403
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(Ministry of Education & Culture, Education Statistics. 1996, p. 5)

Table 4: NYS Channel Populations - 1995

SEX	AF	AD	CT	SE	SC	AS	Grand Total
Girls	26	27	5	169	64	257	548
Boys	58	22	203	45	108	78	514
Grand total	84	49	208	214	172	335	1062

NYS CHANNEL POPULATIONS - 1995

AF Agriculture & Fisheries Channel

AD Art & Design Channel

CT Construction/Technology Channel

SE Social Economics Channel

SC Science Channel

AS Arts & Social Science Channel

(Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996)

Table 5: 1995 and 1996 'A' LEVEL ENTRIES SEYCHELLES POLYTECHNIC

ANALYSIS BY SUBJECT and GENDER

	1995		1996	
	M	F	M	F
FRENCH	7	16	5	24
ENGLISH	10	23	10	30
HISTORY	3	4	4	8
GEOGRAPHY	5	6	7	22
ECONOMICS	7	10	11	12
MATHEMATICS	35	15	29	21
Syll. C	-	-	12	2
Further	-	-	7	1
CHEMISTRY	27	14	22	14
BIOLOGY	11	19	12	22
COMPUTING	5	1	14	7
PHYSICS	28	5	27	4
ART	-	-	5	4
Total Entries	138	113	165	171
Total Candidates	47	39	54	58

(based on figures supplied by the Ministry of Education and Culture, June 1996)

c. Primary Perceptions

The children surveyed were all in Primary 6: 86 boys and 91 girls in two rural and four urban locations. The urban schools were situated in and around Victoria; one rural school was in a relatively remote part of Mahé, the main island, and the other on La Digue, a quiet island with little development except for a few hotels for tourists. Annual promotion by age meant that all the pupils were in the 10-12 age group, 82.5% being 11 years old. Not many of their families were large (1-2 children 55.9%; 3-4 children 30%; 5-6 children 6.8%; over 6, 2.3%). Because schools have neighbourhood catchment areas, 75% of the pupils walked to school. In comparison with other countries surveyed, the percentage of mothers who worked outside the home was very high (81.4%), similar only to Jamaica. The mother was still however, the main carer (86%) although grandmothers, older sisters and aunts figured as second carer in many cases.

Despite the high proportion of working mothers, and although 14% of the children, mainly in the rural sample, said that they sometimes could not go to school because they had to help at home, many of the pupils surveyed were concerned only with sweeping (99.4% - every day or sometimes), washing the pots and going on errands to the shop. Half the boys and half the girls "never" helped with younger brothers & sisters. The girls were almost unanimous (92.3%) that they helped more than boys. Rural boys tended to agree with them but urban boys were split 50:50 over this. Certain tasks such as washing clothes were certainly more likely to be done by girls: 54% of boys never did the laundry but only 10% of girls never did it.

Both boys (83%) and girls (92%) rejected the idea that girls did not really need to go to school but it was interesting how many rejected the proposition that girls need to go to school as much as boys (boys 63%, girls 36%). A third of the children had the impression that girls were likely to leave school earlier than boys.

Their perceptions of their parents abilities in reading and reading reflect the discrepancy between male and female literacy rates in Seychelles. Ten per cent of mothers were considered not to be "good" at reading and writing whilst the figure rose to 21 % for fathers. Girls were harsher judges than boys.

As regards their futures, 26% rejected the idea of marriage, the rural girls being particularly wary. Overall 82% of boys were prepared to marry but only 64% of the girls. Despite the high illegitimacy rate in Seychelles and the custom of living *en ménage*, the pupils opted for combining having children with marriage to a statistically significant degree. The numbers of children they envisaged for themselves were usually in the range of 0-2 boys and 0-2 girls although rural boys wanted more sons.

Career ambitions followed a similar pattern to those found in our Jamaican survey: girls had a wide and interesting range of ideas including becoming a singer, detective, surgeon, vet, scientist, dentist, lawyer, immigration officer, journalist or artist, etc. as well as the more sex-stereotyped jobs such as teaching and secretarial work. Rural girls tended to opt more often for teaching and nursing but were attracted to opportunities in hotels where they existed: tourist guide, chambermaid or waitress. Only four boys thought of becoming teachers compared with twenty four girls, a measure of the domination of the teaching profession by

women in Seychelles.

The survey overall reflects the dichotomy in girls' participation in education in Seychelles. At primary level they are ahead academically and have plenty of ambition but by the end of secondary education, as we shall see, they are increasingly opting for sex-stereotyped courses and are being over-taken by the boys.

B. Factors

i) Geographical

The isolation of small village communities and the resulting urban-rural dichotomy in the past has now been largely overcome, especially on Mahé and Praslin, the two main islands, by the up-grading of the infrastructure over the last twenty years: roads and local transport have been greatly improved. In addition, a system of zoning for primary schools means that the majority of children have relatively easy access to school at this level. In our survey, 75% of the pupils went to school on foot. Provision of secondary education is also de-centralised. In any case, education at primary and secondary levels is compulsory.

The National Youth Service Year overcomes problems of distance and accessibility by being residential and it is only after that, at Polytechnic level, that problems of access arise. Not only do students on Mahé often have a long way to travel but both boys and girls on the islands of Praslin

and La Digue who wish to attend the Polytechnic actually have to move to Mahé. The 1994 National Report on the Situation of Women in Seychelles suggests that a Youth Hostel should be built to enable more girls from the other islands to continue their education at the Polytechnic. This is especially important in view of the increasing number of teenage pregnancies in Seychelles.

The small population of Seychelles cannot support an educational system beyond 'A' level, vocational training, and teacher training. Higher education has to be pursued overseas. It is at this point that the difference in access for males and females widens dramatically. The figures for overseas training in 1994 show 43 females and 85 males following pre-service courses and 50 females and 67 males doing in-service courses.

ii) Socio-cultural

The family in Seychelles has been described as matrifocal or matricentric, the father having a somewhat peripheral position in the domestic unit, particularly in the lower socio-economic groups. Although the ideal is marriage, (as reflected in pupils' answers in our survey) *de facto* unions which have neither religious nor legal sanctions (known as living *en ménage* are common in Seychelles. Births are registered by birth status as being nuptial, acknowledged or other. In 1994 for example, there were 1,700 births, of which 398 were to married couples; 787 were "recognised" by the father, and 515 were not. Traditionally, in poorer families at subsistence level, the woman controlled the money because

she was in control of buying the food. The mother was a responsible figure, in a central position concerning the control of resources allocated through the household and also ultimately responsible for the children. Sociological studies suggest that Seychellois men traditionally were often seen as rather feckless in comparison, spending money on drink and their friends as a sign of male status. These traditions, added to the impermanence of many *en ménage* relationships, have meant that Seychellois women are more used to responsibility, decision-making, handling money, and working outside the home than women in many of the other countries surveyed and this accounts at least in part for the extensive use they have made of educational opportunities ever since the first schools were opened in the mid nineteenth century. The 1981-82 Census for example, shows more girls than boys in each of the age groups 12-20 pursuing full-time education although it can be argued that there were more job opportunities for boys in agriculture and fishing so that boys left school and girls stayed on. The evidence of a long history of girls' achievements in primary education and higher literacy levels is reminiscent of Jamaica, along with similar problems of lower motivation, sex-stereotyped choice of options and early pregnancy once the girls reach adolescence. In the past girls would often drop out of school in order to care for younger siblings at home but this problem has been almost completely eradicated by the establishment of a large scale system of crèches over the last twenty years. Many interviewees stressed this point.

iii) Health

Health does not appear to be a significant factor in girls' participation in education except for the problem of teenage pregnancy. In 1996 the situation was still that of girls having to withdraw from the educational system when pregnant but suggestions were being made that alternative provision for schooling might be established.

iv) Economic

Originally a plantation economy, and today coping with problems such as the costs of smallness and changing priorities in international aid, the Seychelles has nevertheless seen a big increase in employment since the early eighties. The 1987 Census shows women more predominant in tourism related work and in secretarial, domestic and social services. The two largest occupation groups were hotel-workers (chambermaids and cleaners) and teachers. The Seychelles National Gender Unit comments that women in general are still not equitably represented in the labour force. Despite the fact that they have a higher literacy rate than men, they still tend to have less prestigious and lower-paying jobs or ones which have traditionally been seen as extensions of their domestic role and functions. With equal opportunities in education and considerable national investment in education, training, health and the social services made to improve their position, nevertheless 48.5% of women are still economically inactive and 53% of skilled job seekers are women (1991 figures).

High teenage fertility rates force girls to drop out of school to look after the children and women who are heads of households with children can often only work part-time or in casual jobs. Low marketable skills and the many responsibilities faced by many women as single parents and heads of households appear to be among the main factors holding women back.

v) Religion

The missions of both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in the Seychelles have always been very supportive of education for girls, ever since St. Joseph's Convent School for Girls was established in 1861. All the mission schools founded throughout Seychelles in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were either mixed or had a girls' school alongside the one for boys. Although one can smile wryly at the compliment intended by the Director of Education in his report in 1938 when he said - "As one has come to expect from all Convent Schools throughout the Colonies, excellent needlework is done", there is a strong tradition in Seychelles, still active today, of girls working hard at school and being more literate than their brothers. Primary schools, even those for boys, have usually been staffed by women, partly because this was easier when the schools were run by nuns. The 1943 Regulations for Catholic primary schools list rules of conduct for school-mistresses and make no mention at all of school-masters. Teaching is seen today as a largely female profession and the female ethos of the primary schools is held accountable by many interviewees for the under-achievement of boys, if not for the good performance of girls. Although the schools are no longer

run by the missions, the factor of religion has had a strong influence on girls' participation in education and through the churches' encouragement of women to become teachers, has opened up opportunities for them in terms of status and earnings.

vi) Legal

Equality of opportunity in education and training is part of a comprehensive set of rights in Seychelles under the constitution and other laws. In practice inequalities do still persist, despite the efforts of legislators to provide the social protection for women and their children which must underlie any attempt at providing equality of opportunity. As in some of the other case-studies in this report, traditional attitudes and practices may militate against adolescent girls fulfilling the promise they demonstrate so ably in the primary school, despite the legal rulings.

vii) Politico-Administrative

Over the last twenty years there has been strong political encouragement for equality of opportunity for girls and women as can be seen in efforts such as the creation of crèches and the involvement of women in local political activities. Women are represented at all levels of government including the ministerial and a National Gender Unit has been established. The Government's Gender Strategy is articulated in the Human Resource Development Programme and includes the developing of programmes to ensure for example the availability of gender disaggregated data and

information and effective career guidance.

viii) Education

Within the education system itself, which provides free and unsegregated opportunities at all levels, there are however factors which affect both boys' and girls' participation. Erroll Miller's phrase "the marginalisation of the black male" springs to mind when one looks at the primary level of education.

Primary schools are staffed largely by women. In 1996 there were only three male Headteachers to twenty-nine females and only 7 out of 47 Directors of Studies were male. In the schools in our survey, Primary I-IV classes were taught entirely by women; a few men taught in Primary V and VI (where there is some semi-specialisation), often in the areas of mathematics, science & craft.

Just as women dominate among the teachers, so do the girls dominate in the classroom. As soon as streaming starts in Primary 3/4, the top streams are full of girls and the boys predominate in the bottom groups. The figures for one school in the survey tabled below are typical:

PRIMARY THREE CLASSES: SAMPLE URBAN SCHOOL		
STREAM	GIRLS	BOYS
A	25	8
B	22	11

	♂	♀
C	12	22
D	13	22
E	10	15

In Primary 6 in the same school there were 2 girls and 22 boys in one bottom set and 7 girls and 20 boys in the other. A rural school with similar figures at primary level found that the pattern also continued into the secondary classes.

The female ethos is also apparent where parents are concerned. Headteachers said that it is the mothers who are most involved. It is the mothers who come in to school, who serve on committees and who are the initiators and organisers.

Causes of strong female participation in education at primary level are seen to include:

- the availability of places and strong enrolment and attendance procedures.
- the accessibility of schools which is good because of zoning and the provision of transport where necessary.
- the low costs for parents: education is free & so were lunches until recently - even now they are very cheap.

- pre-school provision is good: crèches in all districts mean that girls are not kept off school to look after younger siblings.

It was however stressed by interviewees that in the past when there were fees and transport costs to pay, parents did not usually discriminate against girls where school was concerned. If they could not pay, both boys and girls left.

Female enrolment at primary, secondary and polytechnic level is on average equal to that of boys. The problem area as far as girls are concerned starts with option choices in the secondary school, in the National Youth Service Year and at the Polytechnic. The sex-stereotyped choices (see Tables 4 and 5, p. 90-91) affect later career options, vocational training and higher education.

Beyond 'A' level, women are very much in the minority apart from in teacher-training. Academic and professional courses at tertiary level are taken up mainly by males: females constitute only one third of this group. In addition there are very limited opportunities of re-entry for those girls and women who drop out of the education system at an earlier point.

ix. Initiatives

There are many initiatives at all levels to develop awareness of gender issues in education. As far as girls are concerned, future developments

are seen to lie in the area of the actual range of options at secondary and polytechnic level (as well as in stereotyped choices), and in the encouragement of girls to go on into higher education. Interestingly however, as in Jamaica, there is also the problem of boys' performance in the primary school which needs to be addressed.



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