Foreword

As one of the earliest signatories of the Education For All declaration, Vietnam has repeatedly dedicated itself to achieving the goals laid out in that framework. In this spirit, Vietnam has successfully achieved the universalization of primary education and is working towards the elimination of gender inequality throughout all levels of the sector. Further, by the year 2010, Vietnam will have achieved universal education for lower secondary students, and by 2015, will have universal upper secondary education, as well. Nevertheless, the Government of Vietnam recognizes that some segments of society remain underserved despite its best efforts. In particular, the challenges of providing quality education services for boys and girls of the many ethnic minority groups in the country has raised a significant barrier to the achievement of the government's targets.

To address these concerns, the Ministry of Education and Training, UNICEF, and UNESCO have joined their common pursuits of institutional capacity building, gender mainstreaming, and the attainment of quality education for all to conduct a joint research on the status of ethnic minority girls focusing on the barriers to continued learning these girls face when transitioning from primary schools to lower secondary schools. The study is the product of a partnership under the framework of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), an Education For All flagship for girls' education which seeks to narrow the gender gap in access to all levels of education.

Though a complex time for many children, ethnic minority girls in particular are confronted with numerous challenges as they attempt to navigate the passage to early adolescence. Ethnic minority girls are constantly tested by new modes of learning, establishing relationships, forming distinctive identities, and gaining social skills. It is a time of many risks, and great rewards. Unfortunately it is also a time when girls are most vulnerable, and many of them begin to drop out of school. This study seeks to identify and learn more about the specific factors that prevent ethnic minority girls from completing their education. At the conference of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) organized in Hawaii in April 2006, the preliminary findings of this study were shared and met with a great deal of interest from the international practitioners and educators in attendance.

In this light, we have the honor to introduce and share with you the joint research report on "The Transition of Ethnic Minority Girls from Primary to Lower Secondary Education." These findings have been made on the basis of a careful analysis of all available data. Information was collected from many education sources, but the report also made use of numerous interviews and focus group sessions conducted with a variety of stakeholders. Therefore, both the barriers that

the report identifies, and suggestions for ways to overcome the constraints, are directly drawn from the experience of the ethnic minority populations. It is our great hope that these findings will help policy makers to identify practical solutions, and make informed recommendations to help all ethnic minority girls to enroll in primary school, complete a quality primary education, and continue their learning with a successful transition to lower secondary education.

Our most sincere thanks goes to UNICEF, UNESCO, Dr. Shirly Miske, Dr. Joan DeJaeghere as well as the many Vietnamese experts who provided their active contributions to the research. We also noted the active participation of the Provincial People's Committees, the Provincial Education Services, the principals, teachers, parents and especially the boys and girls from the three provinces of Lao Cai, Gia Lai and Tra Vinh.

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ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DEPUTY MINISTER

Distinguished teacher, Dr. Dang Huynh Mai

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Acronyms

HEPR Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Programme

OOS Out-of-school

PRA Participatory Research and Action

RCEME Research Center for Ethnic Minority Education

UNESCO United Nations Education and Scientific Organization

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Summary

Viet Nam has made great strides in improving access and retention to quality education for both boys and girls at the primary and secondary levels. Nevertheless, educational access and participation are lagging among Viet Nam's ethnic populations, and particularly for girls. This study provides important insights into the barriers to girls' education among four ethnic groups in Viet Nam and possible solutions for overcoming them. In the study, local stakeholders were asked to identify barriers and solutions. Recommendations for short and medium/long term strategies also are given, grounded in international experience and research.

The four ethnic groups included in this study are the H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar, and Khmer. The study was conducted in three regions: the North (Bac Ha District, Lao Cai province); the Central Highlands (Mang Yang and Chu Pah districts, Gia Lai province); and the South (Cau Ngang, Tra Vinh province). The research was based on a mixed-methods approach that integrated Participatory Research and Action (PRA) with qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observation. Quantitative data and analysis also were used.

The findings show the existence of multiple barriers in the transition from primary to lower secondary school level for girls in all four ethnic groups. Of particular importance, however, is the finding that barriers are manifested and experienced differently within the four ethnic groups. The findings also show that barriers tend to be interlinked in complex, non-linear ways. Contextually targeted education interventions at different scales may therefore have cascading effects and multiply positive outcomes.

Each ethnic group identified five key barriers to girls' education. They are: economic and financial barriers, the need to work, the poor quality of teaching and learning in schools, inadequate school infrastructure; and parents' and girls' perceptions of the value of educating girls. Although each barrier applies to each ethnic group, the barriers ranked differently in importance for each ethnic group. The economic and financial barrier was the most important barrier for three out of four ethnic groups. Inadequate school infrastructure and perceptions of the value of educating girls were the least important barriers. Stakeholders from each ethnic group also identified different sub-categories within each barrier. For example, the need to work included unremunerated domestic chores in some cases, and participation in the formal economy in others.

The study shows that barriers are intimately shaped by the geographic, economic, and socio-cultural contexts of ethnic groups. Girls - as members of families and communities - are part of this larger, interlocking system. The perceived benefits of schooling are shared, yet differentiated, as are the constraints.

The study also identifies stakeholder solutions to address the barriers to ethnic girls' education. The solutions are based on the suggestions of girls, their parents, community members, and officials, who reflected on the findings above. Stakeholder solutions are presented in a framework that begins with the individual and household level, and broadens out to the school, community, and policy and programme level.

Household solutions stakeholders identified dealt primarily with direct costs. At the school level, solutions included professional development for teachers, adapting curriculum and materials, bilingual education, gender training, improving school facilities, and providing safe and friendly learning environments. Solutions at the community level included community advocacy and enablement, capacity building, and parents' and girls' clubs. At the macro level, solutions included community infrastructure and economic development, micro-finance schemes, vocational education, and financial support for girls and families.

The study's concluding recommendations draw on the solutions identified by the stakeholders and are grounded in international experience and research. The recommendations are divided into immediate or short-term strategies, and medium- and long-term strategies. Immediate strategies include advocacy and community enablement, stipends or elimination of direct costs, boarding and sanitation facilities, and building secondary schools. Medium- and long-term strategies include support to school leaders, providing child-centered and culturally appropriate pedagogy, creating safe learning environments, bilingual education, gender sensitivity training, teacher recruitment from ethnic groups, vocational education and livelihood training, community capacity development, poverty reduction, and micro-finance schemes.

Introduction

Girls from minority ethnic groups in Vietnam have extremely low educational attainments, despite the physical presence of schools; yet, the plight of these ethnic adolescent girls is largely invisible. Ironically, as we shall see, the nature of this problem remains hidden precisely because Vietnam has made significant strides in achieving universal primary education and gender parity for its children.

Nationally, primary enrolment rates are high for both adolescent girls and boys. Little gender disparity exists in educational attainment. In 2005, Vietnam's net enrolment rate at the primary level was 88 percent and at the secondary level, 69 percent, with a three percent difference in favor of boys at the secondary level (UNESCO, 2005). Therefore, national education statistics mask a persistent and puzzling question: Why do so many ethnic girls fail to transition to lower secondary school or even to complete primary school?

Education is highly valued in Vietnam. The Government of Vietnam is committed to quality education for all children and has acknowledged international agreements such as the Dakar Framework for Action (2000). Within this framework, Goal 5 focuses on the importance of "achieving gender equality in education by 2015, *with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.*"

Yet Vietnam's progress in achieving universal primary education masks significant gender disparities at local levels. Much of the gender disparity at district levels overlaps with the presence of ethnic groups. In addition to the majority Kinh ethnic group, Vietnam has 53 ethnic groups. Together, these minority ethnic groups account for about 14 percent (11.5 million people) of the population (Kosonen, 2004; GSO, 2005). Although the ethnic groups have different origins, languages, dialects, traditional dress, and customs, they share certain common characteristics. One of these common characteristics is greater gender disparity in education. In a recent analysis of the 2004 Household Living Standards Survey (Lee, 2006), disparities in school enrolment among non-Kinh ethnic groups for 15- to 17-year-olds have declined substantially compared to previous years, especially among males. No difference exists in terms of male school enrolment between Kinh and ethnic minorities (73 percent for both). On the other hand, there still is a 10 percentage difference for female enrolment by ethnicity (71 percent for Kinh and 61 percent for ethnic minorities; p. 20). The continuing gender gap among ethnic minorities suggests that ethnic minority females have not benefited as much as their male counterparts in increased school attendance. The gender gap is even larger among certain ethnic groups. For example, the gender gap at the primary

level is 20 percent among H'mong boys and girls (Baulch, Chuyen, Haughton, and Haughton, 2002).

These statistics suggest, as pointed out by the *Gender Desk Review in Education* by UNICEF Vietnam (2004), that gender issues are not sufficiently mainstreamed in national policy frameworks. Ensuring the right to education, including the education of girls and non-majority ethnic groups, is an important component of a nation's human capital and socio-economic development framework.

Additionally, the *Desk Review* noted a lack of data and analysis regarding girls' transition to lower secondary levels. Many minority ethnic groups are located in rural, non-Vietnamese speaking provinces, where data collection is difficult and communication across ethnic groups is limited. Therefore, a better understanding of the educational barriers ethnic girls face is needed to design appropriate policies to make universal primary and secondary education a reality.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to better understand the underlying reasons for gender gaps in the rates of transition from primary to lower secondary schools among four ethnic groups in Vietnam, and to identify suggested solutions from stakeholders that will help address these challenges. This study assumes that understanding the lived experiences and contexts of ethnic girls is essential to designing appropriate policies.

This study addressed two specific research questions:

1. What are the reasons for low transition rates from primary to lower secondary education for girls from specific ethnic groups (H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar, and Khmer)?

2. What short - and long-term strategies or measures could create favourable conditions so that girls from these ethnic groups can complete their primary education and transition to the lower secondary level?

The findings from this study will be used to inform policy and programme initiatives by the Government of Vietnam, UNICEF, and UNESCO.

Target Groups

This study focused on four ethnic minority groups: the H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar, and Khmer. These ethnic groups were selected based on low primary and secondary enrolment rates, and/or a large gender gap at lower secondary level. The ethnic groups reside in three provinces that represent each of the main geographical regions (mountainous, highlands, and delta) of Vietnam: Lao Cai, Gia Lai and Tra

Vinh. Vietnam's ethnic groups live primarily in Vietnam's inland mountainous and remote areas, which make up almost two-thirds of Vietnam's territory. This is unlike the Kinh, who live mainly in urban centers and coast areas.

Lao Cai Province
(H'mong)

Gia Lai Province
(Bahnar and
J'rai)

Tra Vinh
Province
(Khmer)
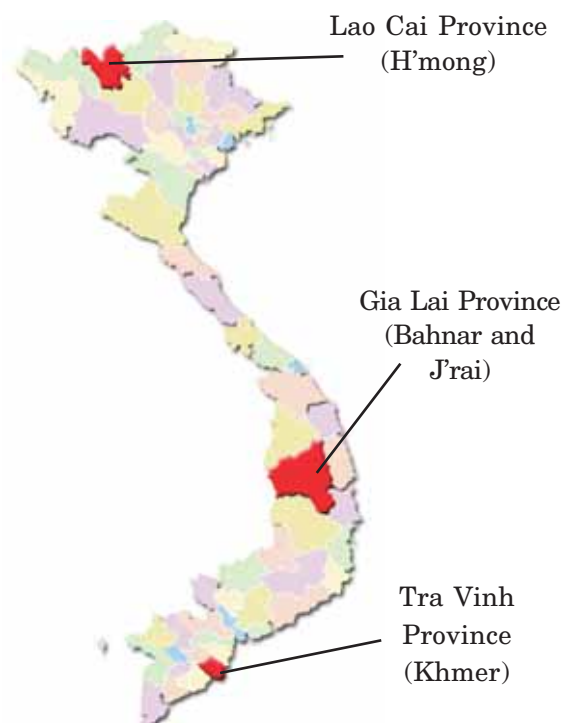
The H'mong in Lao Cai

Lao Cai province is in northeast and northwest Viet Nam, on the border with China. It is about 300 kilometers away from Ha Noi, and is mountainous with different altitude levels. There is one city, and eight districts. The population is more than 556,900, and includes 25 different ethnic groups. The largest group is H'mong. Formerly the H'mong practiced slash-and-burn agriculture, but increasingly they are settling in lower lying regions. In Vietnam, their population is nearly one million.

The Bahnar and the J'rai in Gia Lai

Gia Lai province, located in the Central Highlands, is mountainous, with a total area of 15,485 square kilometers. The major city is Pleiku. This study focused on Bahnar people in Mang Yang district, about 40 kilometers east of Pleiku city, and on J'rai people in ChuPah district, in the north. There are a total of about 1.1 million people in Gia Lai province.

The J'rai, who number around 300,000, make up 30.2% of the population. They tend to live in small villages, and are usually animists or Christians.

The Bahnar number around 150,000, composing 12% of the population.

The Khmer in Tra Vinh

Tra Vinh is a coastal province in the Mekong Delta and has a population of 1,017,000. Three ethnic groups are represented: Kinh (majority), Khmer (30%) and Chinese. Tra Vinh consists of 2,369 square kilometers, with one town and seven districts.

The Khmer are one of the largest ethnic groups in Vietnam, with a population of more than one million. They are concentrated in southern Vietnam, particularly in the Mekong River delta. They are Theravada Buddhists, as are most Cambodians and Thais.

Research Design

Methodology

The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Researchers primarily used qualitative methods and analysis, which included in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations. Participatory Research and Action (PRA) methods were integrated into the qualitative methods so that communities would identify the barriers as well as possible solutions. Quantitative data used in the study included education indicators and descriptive characteristics of the sample communities. Quantitative analysis was used to rank the barriers and strategies across the various stakeholder groups.

Reseachers used interviews to collect in-depth data from out-of-school (OOS) secondary age (11 to 14 years) girls and boys about the barriers they faced in continuing their studies in lower secondary school. Data collected through interviews also addressed the question: Which interventions or strategies can assist girls in transitioning on to lower secondary school, and how?

Reseachers used interviews to collect in-depth data from out-of-school girls and boys about the barriers they faced in continuing their studies.

Researcher interviews a J'rai female student who dropped out of school.

Researcher gathers in-depth data from a Bahnar male student who dropped out of school.

Photo: RCEME

Researchers learned about the ideas and opinions of various stakeholders through focus group discussions. The groups from which information was collected via this method included: in-school girls from primary (Grade 3 or 5) and lower secondary (Grade 6); parents of OOS girls; principals and teachers; community leaders, village heads, and district education officials; and district and provincial People's Committee members. In addition to open questions about the barriers to and

possible interventions for girls' transition to lower secondary, the focus group discussions incorporated two types of PRA methods: card sort and problem/solution matrix (Kane, 2002). A card sort was used in the focus group in order to determine the most prevalent or important factors that prevented girls from continuing on to lower secondary school. Following the ranking of key barriers in the card sort activity, the focus group questions probed how the barriers prevented girls in the community from continuing their studies.

Focus group discussions elicited the ideas and opinions of various stakeholders
Girl students of Lau Thi Ngai primary school,   *Teachers of De Ar lower secondary school,*
Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province   *Mang Yang district, Gia Lai province*

Photo: RCEME

A second PRA method, the problem/solution matrix, enabled communities to work together to identify possible solutions to identified problems. The community members were asked to identify possible solutions at various levels of the education system. From these proposed solutions, the most desirable and most feasible solutions were selected. Additional focus group questions addressed community members' perspectives regarding how these solutions could be implemented. Researchers also observed primary (Grade 3 or 4) and lower secondary school (Grade 5, 6, and 7) classrooms, collecting both quantitative data about representation of girls, boys, and ethnic groups in the classes and the classroom lessons. Also collected was collected qualitative data about the environment, interactions, and the quality of teaching for girls, boys, and ethnic groups.

Stakeholder Groups and Sample Selection

The main stakeholder group for this study was adolescent girls from ethnic minority groups who completed primary grades but did not transition to lower secondary school (ages 11 to 14). Other stakeholders included boys (ages 11 to 14), parents, community leaders, village heads, school personnel, district education officials, and provincial and district People's Committee members.

Ethnic Groups. Two criteria were used for selecting ethnic groups: (1) the primary and secondary enrolment rates for boys and girls,[1] and (2) the gender gap at lower secondary among the ethnic groups.[2] The selected ethnic groups were: H'mong, (Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province); J'rai (Chu Pah district) and Bahnar (Mang Yang) from Gia Lai province; and Khmer (Cau Ngang district, Tra Vinh province).

Provinces. The research sites at the province, district and commune levels were determined by two primary criteria: (1) the most disadvantaged areas (provinces, districts and communes); and (2) the areas inhabited primarily by the ethnic groups. Based on these, the following three provinces were selected: Lao Cai (H'mong), Gia Lai (J'rai and Bahnar), and Tra Vinh (Khmer). The districts selected for the study were those that were categorised as the most disadvantaged, based on government criteria.

Communes. Communes were chosen based on two main indicators: (1) a gender gap in enrolment in lower secondary; and (2) the percentage of ethnic group children in the school and community. Using purposeful sampling, the selected communes were different in their geography and distance to the district center. At least two schools in each commune were selected for data collection, one primary and one lower secondary school.

Girls and Boys. Girls currently in school were chosen randomly from class lists from primary Grade 3 or 5 and from lower secondary Grade 6 to participate in focus groups. OOS girls and boys were selected based on the criterion of being a recent dropout (i.e., within the last year, and, if not available, within the last two years). Parents of OOS children who participated in a focus group were selected based on the selection of their daughter or son for individual interviews.

Teachers. The selection of teachers was stratified by sex, and purposefully chosen by the grade they taught. Teachers of Grades 4, 5, 6, and 7 were chosen first.

Community leaders were selected by their role in the community (government leader, commune chairman, business owner, Women's Union, Youth Union). An equal representation by sex was sought.

Likewise, the selection of participants from the District Education Office and Provincial Department of Education and Training were balanced by sex, and included officials who were responsible for secondary education, girls' education, and education of ethnic groups. The selection of participants from the People's Committee at both the District and Provincial level reflected nearly equal representation of males and females. The participants were chosen based on their responsibilities for education and commune development.

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[1] These indicators are used since other indicators, such as primary completion or transition rate, are not disaggregated by ethnic group.

[2] National education data are not disaggregated by ethnic group. This selection is based on the most recent available data collected for nine ethnic groups.

Timeline and Scope

Research teams carried out a pilot study with two ethnic groups: H'mong (Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province) and Khmer (Cau Ngang district, Tra Vinh) for five days at each site, from August 3 to 10, 2005. The pilot study introduced researchers from the Research Center for Ethnic Minority Education (RCEME) to the mixed methods approach to research and allowed them to determine the effectiveness of the research methods proposed for this study with different ethnic groups. After the pilot phase, a series of workshops were organized for research teams to exchange lessons learned from the data collection process Research teams decided what needed to be changed and adjusted, and consultants trained the teams how to code collected data.

The full research study included four phases for the identified ethnic groups lasting from January 2006 to May 2006. The duration of field research at each research site was 11 days, resulting in 86 in-depth interviews (62 girls, 24 boys), 79 focus group discussions, and 42 classroom observations. After each field visit, a review meeting was organized for interviewees to share comments and experiences.

Research personnel. Teams of five researchers collected the data from all the sites. In addition, two local assistants were trained prior to data collection; one assistant helped with data entry; and translators provided access to the community and translation services. Researchers also used several technical devices for collecting, transcribing, and saving data (e.g., digital cameras and audiotape recorders).

Data analysis. Researchers analyzed and interpreted the qualitative data using NVIVO software. Researchers summarized quantitative data from three methods: observation, focus group card sort activity, and matrices of the barriers and solutions.

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities. Before starting the research, the researchers received training on qualitative research methods and gender awareness. The research implementation process was supported with budget, research tools (including NVIVO software for analysis), and ongoing cooperation between UNICEF, UNESCO, international consultants, and the RCEME researchers. This helped enhance knowledge and skills of the team to conduct the research effectively.

Constraints. The research sites were all disadvantaged areas with inconvenient transportation. The roads for travel sometimes were very narrow and unsafe. Research targets and stakeholders were ethnic minority people who frequently did not speak Vietnamese fluently, thus communication required the assistance of interpreters and translators. Although the interpreters had received training, the translation process was time consuming, and not all aspects of the conversations could be communicated as clearly as in direct, same-language communication.

Research Analysis and Findings

Part 1

COMMON BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS

Table 1 below shows the five top-ranked barriers identified by stakeholders from each ethnic group. The first (1) shows the most important barrier ranked by stakeholders of a particular group for keeping girls out of school. (See Annex 3 for a summary of common barriers identified by stakeholders.)

Table 1: **Barriers to Girls' Education by Ethnic Group**

Ethnic Group	Barriers
H'mong	1 Economic and financial 2 Need to work 3 Education lacks value for parents and girls 4 Poor quality teaching and learning in schools 5 Inadequate school infrastructure
J'rai	1 Economic and financial 2 Need to work 3 Poor quality teaching and learning in schools 4 Inadequate school infrastructure 5 Education lacks value for parents and girls
Bahnar	1 Poor quality teaching and learning in schools 2 Economic and financial 3 Need to work 4 Education lacks value for parents and girls 5 Inadequate school infrastructure
Khmer	1 Economic and financial 2 Need to work 3 Poor quality teaching and learning in schools 4 Inadequate school infrastructure 5 Education lacks value for parents and girls

The barriers that keep ethnic girls out of school are varied, and in many cases reinforce each other in complex, non-linear ways. Girls can face different barriers at different points in their school careers, with no single intervention sufficient to address all the challenges that may - and often do - arise.

To illustrate this interrelatedness, economic and financial barriers may refer to girls being malnourished before they even enrol in school. Once at school, girls' relatively limited opportunities to learn Vietnamese put them at a further disadvantage compared to boys. At older ages, girls face additional barriers, such as lack of clean toilets, difficult peer-to-peer relationships, and cultural customs particular to ethnic groups, such as the need to take a leadership role in lengthy community festivities or to support families economically.

As will be discussed in greater detail below, direct and indirect costs of schooling are perceived uniquely through the socio-cultural beliefs and values of particular ethnic groups, who in turn are situated within specific political-geographic contexts. This is not to say this is a static situation. To some extent, processes affecting girls' schooling are in a constant state of flux. Norms regarding the age of marriage for girls, for example, are changing, from early teens to late teens. New low-wage economic opportunities in cities are altering the earning potential of girls, and thus the opportunity costs of going to school. Therefore, barriers exist in a dynamic context, with some taking on lesser or greater importance as change occurs. Nonetheless, formal education remains out of reach for many ethnic girls in Viet Nam, despite the physical presence of schools in Vietnam's remotest regions and communes.

1. Economic and Financial Barriers

Poverty, in both its economic and financial aspects, is far more likely to be prevalent among ethnic minority households, according to a recent analysis of the 2004 Household Living Standards Survey (Lee, 2006). More than half of ethnic minority households (56 percent) live in poverty compared with only 13 percent of Kinh households. The incidence of food poverty is also 10 times higher for ethnic minority households than for Kinh households (30 percent vs. 3 percent). For the stakeholders of the four ethnic groups who participated in this study, household poverty and its effects on adolescent girls is the most important barrier, with three out of four ethnic groups identifying it as their number one concern. However, poverty affects girls in many ways, and it can differ greatly by ethnic groups and even by district. This section examines some of the different manifestations of poverty for ethnic adolescent girls, and how they are similar or vary across ethnic groups.

Poverty is more than the simple measure of living below a level of household income or consumption. Amartya Sen (1999) has suggested that poverty, particularly as it

affects women, is an economic status that affects one's ability to address basic needs, as well as access to opportunities and achievements in life. In this study, for example, not being able to afford school supplies - a direct cost- is an experience shared by girls across ethnic groups, since lack of financial assets is a type of poverty. Indirect costs, by contrast, include the opportunity cost of sending a girl to school. In this study, Khmer girls and their parents often weigh the cost of and time spent at school versus the time that girls could be putting into earning wages. Indirect costs depend on an individuals' valuation of the labour market, and the valuation of an individual's own labour. Both direct and indirect costs figure into the economic and financial constraints that affect girls' education.

Table 2: **Types of Economic and Financial Constraints (Dimensions of Poverty)**

Lack of food and hunger	All ethnic groups
Poor health and lack of health care	J'rai
Care for family welfare and desire to reduce costs	All ethnic groups
Social demands and expectations	J'rai and H'mong
Poor study conditions at home	J'rai

Lack of Food and Hunger

Economic and financial barriers are most starkly manifested in terms of adequate food intake. Due to a variety of reasons, girls from all ethnic groups are likely to experience hunger at school. But the underlying causes leading to hunger differ according to ethnic group.

H'mong girls, for example, are unlikely to experience hunger at home, where a diverse topography and varied altitude levels allow the cultivation of maize, fruits, some rice, and the breeding of animals. For example, in Bac Ha, an especially difficult district in the mountainous area of Lao Cai, crops such as plums and apricots are grown on sloping terraces, which also support the breeding of horses, buffalo, and pigs. Lack of food does, however, become a barrier once H'mong girls attempt to go to boarding schools. H'mong families generally do not have the ability to convert their farm products and crops into income due to difficult transport issues. Thus, at lower secondary school H'mong girls may experience lack of food for the first time. For example, girls attending lower secondary boarding schools often cannot afford to buy rice that can be prepared easily at school. Neither do they have the five to 10 thousand dong needed to buy food at school, because H'mong tend to have large families with many children, which stretches families' financial resources. Thus, while H'mong families generally have enough

maize to eat, maize takes a long time to cook, often leaving H'mong girls with a dilemma - to eat and miss school or to go to school with an empty stomach.

As one H'mong girl explained, she was late for school because of eating maize. It takes time to cook maize, and although she started cooking very early in the morning, she could not eat the maize until 8 a.m., which made her late for school. As a result, she stopped going to school.

A father of a H'mong girl commented, "If the girls stay home or study close by the house, they can eat *men men* (a finely ground maize dish) with the parents. But if they go to school, they need to bring rice. But we do not have rice, and neither do we have money."

In contrast to the H'mong, J'rai, Khmer, and Bahnar girls often suffer from lack of food and hunger at home. This affects girls' ability to concentrate and learn at school. It also can lead to erratic attendance, when food is available only sporadically. A complex array of economic and financial barriers affects access to food, and thus girls' attendance and performance at school.

Both Bahnar and Khmer girls experience hunger that is often persistent. Bahnar girls often said they had no food before going to school, although they could count on something later in the day. In Gia Lai Province, for example, a Central Highland region of natural beauty with fertile highland and alluvial soil, ethnic groups such as Bahnar and J'rai produce agricultural products on a small scale. They often live in remote areas close to forests and mountains, and thus are cut off from the mainstream economic activities of the province and pervasively cultivated industrial crops such as coffee, black pepper, and cashew nuts. This means ethnic families may have little home-grown food to eat, as well as lack of economic opportunities to buy food.

As one Bahnar girl explained, "I had nothing to eat in the morning. At noon there is lunch, but not enough. We eat cassava leaves for vegetables, and for dinner, we eat rice mixed with cassava."

In Tra Vinh Province, poor households make up more than 20 percent of the one million-plus population. Most of these poor households consist of Khmer, whose main economic activity is rice agriculture, when land is available. As with Bahnar girls, Khmer girls also reported worrying about food, as they depended on day-to-day supplies from their parents, who worked for other people. Their daily living habits of searching or preparing food resulted in their being late for school.

A Khmer girl in Nhi Truong commune, Tra Vinh Province, said she and her siblings did not have enough food at home, and were dependent on their parents, who worked far away in Long Khanh. "The family does not have enough food. Sometimes I do not eat for two to three days", she said.

Another Khmer girl explained she was often late to school because she could not start cooking until noon, when her mother would return home with rice after

harvesting it for other people. She stated, "The teacher asked (why I was late) and I answered that we didn't have rice to cook any earlier in the day, so I didn't come to school." The girl became embarrassed, and dropped out of school.

The government's Programme 135 is addressing basic infrastructure needs in Cau Ngang District, a remote coastal region of Tra Vinh Province where Nhi Truong commune is located. Schools are some of the structures slated for improvement, and yet, even when girls found the conditions at school adequate, hunger was enough of a barrier to stop them from attending.

"It is fun at school," said a Khmer girl. "I am only sad because my family does not have rice to eat. At school, friends teased me that I studied one day, skipped one day. The reason was because at home I didn't have rice to eat. Only after my parents harvested did I have rice to cook, so I could not make it to school on time."

Poor Health and Lack of Health Care

Economic and financial barriers not only result in hunger, but can lead to poor health, a problem compounded by lack of adequate health care. This barrier was most prominent for J'rai girls, who frequently said they and their mothers did not have enough food on a daily basis and tended to get sick often. Illnesses included stomachaches, gastric pains, headaches, and flu. One J'rai girl said, "My family eats only once a day - dinner." Another J'rai girl added, "We eat *mi* leaves… we have no money to buy meat or fish. We eat no breakfast, only lunch and dinner."

The reason so many J'rai women and girls have poor health may be connected to heavy workloads and nutritional deficiencies caused by the main vegetable in the J'rai diet. Women and girls reported they ate rice with *la mi* or ate *la mi* while tending cows. J'rai mothers appear to be thin and pale, regardless of age. Few J'rai families have money for medicine and treatment, regardless of the illness. Thus, girls sometimes drop out of school to support sick parents, supplement parents' incomes, or because they themselves are sick or have become orphans.

Other illnesses include those related to the history of the particular region. One fifth-grade girl from Ia Ka, a poor commune in the Chu Pah District of Gia Lai Province described her family situation: "My father is disabled and I myself am disabled due to Agent Orange. I have one normal hand and one shorter hand - I can only use my left hand to hold dishes when I wash dishes at home. My younger sibling is 10 years old. Due to Agent Orange, he does not understand anything. My father's legs are both disabled, so he cannot work."

A lack of access to or the unaffordable costs of healthcare compound the situation of hunger and illness. An assessment of the Hunger Elimination and Poverty Reduction programme found that some poor families do not receive a health care card by which to receive reduced costs in services because they are not registered in the district. Further, the poor do not use health care services considerably more

even if they have a health care card, in part because the fee reduction is negligible (World Bank, n.d.).

A J'rai father described the context of illness in his family, pointing out that his family's plight is not unusual among J'rai families. "Many families are in the same situation," he stated. "I have four children attending school. It is very difficult to afford clothes and school fees. Having a family is difficult - I have many children attending school at the same time, not enough money to pay school fees, a mother who is always sick, and it is very difficult to work. Many girls have sick family members," he continued. "They are needed to help out at home."

Concern for Family Welfare

Concern for their family's welfare and economic viability also keeps girls from going to school. Often, school supplies are seen by families and girls as a direct cost that negatively impacts the family's collective welfare, and when household income is inadequate, girls are disproportionately affected compared to boys. Besides school fees, school supplies can include uniforms, notebooks, books, stationery, and bicycles. Girls often reported attempting to make do with limited or a creative use of supplies, but embarrassment - especially among poorer families - often led them to drop out of school. Sometimes, parents make the decision for their children to drop out, as explained by one J'rai father: "I have four children attending school. It is very difficult to afford clothes and school fees."

A Khmer parent also found paying for school supplies difficult, suggesting that the only recourse was for her daughter to work. The daughter, who is from Nhi Truong commune in the Cau Ngang District, reported that lack of school supplies often kept her from school. For some children, the distance to the secondary school was as much as 10 kilometers. "I don't have a bicycle, enough books or pen, and only one uniform," said the daughter. "When [the uniform] got wet in the rain, I stayed home or wore my own clothes. I did not have notebooks. I asked Mother for money, and Mother said, 'Mother does not have money. You have to work and earn money to buy your own things'."

A Khmer girl from Truong Tho commune, where 73 percent of the population is Khmer and 49.6 percent are poor households, described how lack of school supplies affected her ability to take notes and the amount of time she could spend studying. She said, "I didn't have books; my parents did not have money to buy them. I had some notebooks; the teacher gave them to me. I used the front pages of the notebook for one subject, the middle pages for other subject. The teacher loaned me a pen. I study in the morning, my older sister studies in the afternoon, and we both share this one pen."

Paradoxically, short-term success in overcoming this particular economic and financial barrier can increase economic pressures in the long term. Parents who have access to capital in the form of loans, for example, sometimes use the

opportunity to obtain school supplies for their children at the beginning of the school year. This can cause greater financial hardship later, however, as advance wages are often only half as much as earned wages. A mother in Nhi Truong commune observed, "I took the advance in order to send the children to school. The wage was very low, normally it would be 50,000 dong per unit, but the advance wage was only 20,000 dong."

Girls reported being troubled by their family's poverty even if parents asked them to go to school. They preferred to stay home and to help harvest or work for food. "My mother told me to go to school," a Bahnar girl said. "But I wanted to stay home to help her." J'rai girls also reported taking the initiative to stay home and help their families. Girls sometimes felt they should contribute to the immediate welfare of their family rather than burdening their families with more expenses.

Even when the family has enough food, paying school expenses can place an unacceptable burden on families who cannot afford extra expenses in addition to food. As a result, girls choose to stay home or respond to pressures from parents, community, and teachers. This pressure can be direct or indirect, and may result in girls' feeling embarrassed, wanting to protect their families' reputation, or other complicated emotions. Girls' families reported being aware of the financial pressure their daughters sometimes faced at school.

"I can only make her stomach full. I cannot afford to buy clothes and pay school fees," said a father in Ia Ka, where less than 70 percent of girls and a little more than 80 percent of boys are enrolled in Grade 1. "She is afraid of the teacher scolding her for not having money to pay for the school."

Social Demands and Expectations

Although not a barrier in terms of absolute poverty, social pressure to conform can be a form of relative poverty and is another important barrier for ethnic minority girls. H'mong and J'rai girls reported that lack of clean and suitable clothes, especially at the secondary level, kept them out of school.

Many H'mong girls, for example, have only one or two sets of clothes. Since they work at home taking care of domestic chores, animals, and other labour-intensive tasks, they often do not have clean and appropriate clothes for school, which is perceived as essential This is especially important as girls move into adolescence and become more aware of their self-image. For the H'mong, clothes are also an important symbol of cultural identity, and not having appropriate clothes may make girls more aware of being poor, and of how they are regarded by others in the community.

One H'mong father commented, "Girls do not want to go to school with ugly clothes. Not having nice clothes makes them feel embarrassed and they do not want to go to school."

J'rai girls face similar pressures from social demands and expectations. As in the case of H'mong girls, lack of clean, nice clothes was embarrassing for J'rai girls, who often described nice clothes as a "need." J'rai girls, who tend to enter school at an older age, often start puberty in sixth grade and have a heightened awareness of their self-image. They are anxious about their appearance, and are afraid of being condemned by teachers and embarrassed in front of their friends. A provincial officer noted that "lack of food and clothes led to an inferiority complex" among J'rai girls and their families. A J'rai mother from Ia Ka in the village of Kep referred to the need for all children to have nice clothes, not just girls. She said, "I can wear worn-out clothes at home, but the children need to have nice clothes to go to school."

Even when new clothes are provided, it appears they must be socially acceptable to girls and their families. This demonstrates that poverty in the form of lack of clothes is not always literal, but socially constructed in terms of the norms of the commune and school. As a teacher of J'rai students in Ia Mo Nong stated, "One girl did not have sandals. I bought some for her, but she was embarrassed and did not wear them."

Girls in the Banhar and Khmer ethnic groups do not appear to experience this form of poverty as acutely as the H'mong and J'rai girls, although the lack of school uniforms was mentioned by the Khmer.

Poor Study Conditions at Home

The absence of good study conditions at home was another form of poverty that affected J'rai girls. Because they had to work during the day and could only study at night when there were no lights, their homework suffered. The girls then became embarrassed at school and dropped out of school. One teacher reported, "In visiting the village at night, there is no light in the houses, even kerosene lamps. After school, the children can only go to bed." Girls in the fourth and fifth grades in Ia Ka also mentioned a lack of furniture. "There is no desk in the house, so we have to study on the beds," said one girl.

2. Child Labour

This was the second most important barrier ranked by stakeholders across ethnic groups, just after economic and financial barriers. The need to work is a broad category that is closely related to economic and financial barriers. It includes work in many guises, as well as the cumulative effects of having to shoulder responsibilities at a young age. Together, this leads to poor performance in school, since girls are more likely to arrive at school tired and to be more distracted than boys. At the other end of the spectrum are girls who leave school to work, either due to their own assessment of need or to parental pressure. Work in this case

includes domestic chores, the need to provide unpaid labour for the family, and formal participation in wage labour.

Girls can be at the greatest disadvantage in terms of the economic value assigned to their labour within community and family hierarchies (Nieuwenhuys, 1996). The interplay of factors under this barrier can be complex, and differ in type and importance by ethnic group.

Bahnar girls must often perform domestic chores while attending school.Here, a Bahnar female student takes care of her younger sibling during classhours. Photo taken at De Ar primary school, Mang Yang district, Gia Lai province

Photo: RCEME

Household and Field Work

Girls from all ethnic groups reported being expected to contribute to household and field work. The nature of this work can be extensive and varied, and includes tending cows, cutting grass (for the cows to eat), cooking for mother, sweeping the floor, washing clothes, collecting wood, watering plants for other people, and cutting rice for mother. Due to different agricultural environments and cultural norms, however, girls from different ethnic groups experience this barrier differently.

For J'rai girls in the Ia Ka and Ia Mo Nong communes, for example, field work is not a primary form of work because farmland tends to be located deep in the forest, far from their homes. But because parents spend extended time away from home at distant fields, J'rai girls are responsible for a large share of domestic chores and housework. Often parents stay at the fields for a month and only return home for a few days to fetch food and supplies.

A female student working in the field. The decision to dropout of school for ethnic girls can often be the result of progressively increasing work responsibilities, or a weighing of opportunity costs. Photo taken at Thai Giang Pho commune, Bac Ha, Lao Cai

Photo: RCEME

One girl in Ia Ka recalled, "My father stayed in the field. Mother stayed on the field also. Four of us sisters stayed home. The field is located 15 km away, we grow rice and cassava. Every month, our parents only come home for two to three days and then they leave again."

During harvest season, however, when fruits or *uoi* from the forest can be sold at high prices, entire families are needed to work. This includes J'rai girls, who miss school for extended periods of time.

A teacher from Ia Mo Nong noted, "When fruits from the forests (*uoi*) are sold at a high price, we don't see any students or parents. In that season, there is no one in the village, only old people who cannot go to the forest any more."

For Bahnar, cultural norms dictate that girls are expected to work at home whether parents are present or not. Working at home is considered the role of girls as young as eight years old. By the age of 14, Bahnar girls are often responsible for preparing for all community festivities and traditions, including funerals, festival and ceremonies. Large-scale cooking often takes several days, and girls miss school as a result. This internalized role, compounded by family poverty, often leads Bahnar girls to ultimately drop out of school despite the fact gender parity at the primary level is relatively balanced. In Dear commune, while girls' enrolment rate is slightly higher than boys' in Grades 1 and 4, it gradually decreases from Grade 5 until it reaches less than 10 percent at Grade 7.

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One Bahnar girl said, "I sympathized with my parents, and I dropped out of school to stay home and help them." Another Bahnar girl stated, "My dad asked me to go to school, but I didn't want to because there is no one to work in the house, and my mother died early."

The decision to drop out of school can be the result of progressively increasing work responsibilities for Bahnar girls, rather than a weighing of opportunity costs. Bahnar girls often combine domestic chores such as fetching water and caring for younger siblings while attending school. An observation of a multi-grade Grade 3-4 class in Dear commune, where 77.9 percent of the 539 households are poor, revealed that girls regularly carried their siblings to class every day, while boys were never observed carrying siblings. The cumulative affect of such on-going domestic chores can lead Bahnar girls to be tired, participate less actively in class, and have a higher absentee rate - all leading to a higher likelihood of eventually dropping out. Girls who lived far from the school found it particularly hard to both do their morning work and get to school on time. Missing lessons intermittently did not allow them to learn the content well.

Like J'rai girls, domestic chores often fall to Khmer girls whose parents must leave for extended periods of time to work far from home. And like Bahnar girls, Khmer girls are expected to care for younger siblings, although this could be more due to the reality of their situation than it is a cultural norm.

A sixth grade Khmer girl from Truong Tho, where the enrolment rate for girls is less than 50 percent, described her situation.

> My parents work far away. After two or three months away they come home for only two to three days, and then they leave again. I have to take care of all the work in the house and look after my younger siblings. Three of us are attending school. One brother is in second grade and one is in fourth grade. Since we do not have enough money to buy food everyday, I have to study half a day and look for food or go fishing for half a day. My brother in second grade is very active and mischievous. He always goes swimming in the river and I have to look after him so I have no time to study at home. My parents are very worried about my younger brother; they don't want me to go to school (so I could) look after him. Mother said I have studied enough; I should stay home to look after the brothers.

As is often true with girls from other ethnic groups, Khmer girls perceive the economic needs of their families and frequently offer to drop out of school before being asked. One Khmer girl said, "My family does not have anyone to work, and I have a younger brother who studies in fourth grade but does not have money. I saw him crying because he did not have money to pay for school. So I stopped going to school to let him go. My mother struggled, so I stayed home to help her."

Khmer girls also spoke of leaving school out of concern for aging and ill parents. One Khmer girl explained, "I stayed home because my mother was old, but she still

had to work hard to take care of us. So I dropped out of school to help her." A Khmer father in Nhi Truong, where less than 40 percent of girls are enrolled at Grade 5, said that his daughter "completed fifth grade, and then stopped. I encouraged her to go back to school but she said she would help her parents who are working hard at an old age, so she stayed home and helped us by fishing and looking for food."

Providing Labour or Income for Families

The need to work to provide labour or income for families is an issue predominantly for Khmer girls, since the Khmer have relatively greater access to the formal economy and wage labour opportunities due to their geographic location. Khmer parents sometimes ask their daughters to work with them to earn income, usually as girls reach secondary school age. Families who are poor cannot afford the daily needs and education costs for their children, so dropping out of school both saves family expenses and eliminates the opportunity cost of going to school, and girls tend to be affected more than boys. Khmer families appear to view such decisions as unfortunate but necessary.

A Khmer mother in Truong Tho, where rice farming yields are low, talked about her daughter compassionately: "It is difficult for the family. Her two younger siblings are very small, and she also has to go look after babies for other people." A teacher of Khmer students noted, "At lower secondary school level, parents think that the children are grown up enough to work and support the family, so the girls have to stop going to school and follow the parents to work."

Sometimes dropping out of school to earn income happens gradually, as girls miss school to help with seasonal work in the fields. But seasonal work can last all year, and families with severe economic needs may end up pulling girls out of school throughout the year. A teacher of Khmer students at Truong Tho reported, "In harvesting season, many students stayed home to collect rice dropped in the field. In the planting season, they stay home to transplant rice. In the grass season, they pull grass for others. There is work all year round. Adults earn 20,000 dong a day, children earn 15,000 dong. Some families have four or five people going to work." A teacher from Nhi Truong added, "During the rainy season here, the majority of students frequently go to school one day and stay home one day to help their parents to seed rice and pull grass. When the children are in lower secondary, parents take their children to work with them, in the city."

Older girl siblings sometimes set an example of wage earning work for younger siblings, initiating a family pattern of girls dropping out of school to help support their families. Some Khmer girls stated they expected to follow in the footsteps of older sisters and find work in the city. Adolescent girls often leave school at the end of the primary cycle. Wages from girls can be important to families' economic survival. A Khmer girl in Grade 7 dropped out of school to sell lottery tickets. Her

mother reported the girl had requested to be allowed to drop out of school, because she saw her family working so hard.

Work in the City

The Khmer population in Tra Vinh lives close to both the provincial town of Tra Vinh town and to Ho Chi Minh City. Therefore, the option of working in the city is more readily available to girls of the Khmer ethnic group than for girls from other ethnic groups. The girls often talk about working in the city, to escape poverty, to follow the example of an older sibling, and to show respect for aging parents.

A teacher in Nhi Truong, where Kinh and Khmer both live, recalled, "When I went to encourage the children to go to school, the parents said the family was very poor, and pulling grass for others would earn them only 10,000 dong. Their older daughter worked in Binh Duong and earned lot of money, so the parents told the younger sister to follow the older one to work." A Truong Tho teacher observed a similar phenomenon: "When they (Khmer students) have financial difficulty, parents ask the children to drop out of school early to work and earn money for the family. After completing fifth grade, some students stay home and sell lottery tickets in the city or town. Families are poor, so when the children can work, parents have them stay home to follow friends to work and earn money for the family."

Khmer girls confirm that working for wages, either with other family members or on their own, was something they expect to do as an economically contributing member of their family. Therefore, they do not anticipate going on to lower secondary school.

A Khmer girl from Truong Tho commune stated, "My family is so poor I have to work with my parents. My eldest sister already works in the city." When a fifth grade girl was asked if she would continue to sixth grade, she replied, "My parents said that after fifth grade, they will send me to the city to look after other people's houses." Her older sister, who also was a maid in the city working in a house for other people, told her, "After completing fifth grade, you come with me."

A girl from Nhi Truong also recalled, "My family is poor, and I didn't have a bicycle to go to school. I have many younger siblings; Mother could not send us all to school. I felt bad for my parents, so I stayed home to work to earn money. I went to the city to work, washing and folding clothes, earning 250,000 dong a month. I returned home only when there was no more work."

3. Poor Quality Teaching and Learning in Schools

Poor quality of teaching and learning is an important barrier for girls from all ethnic groups, but particularly for Bahnar girls. The components of poor quality of

teaching and learning that stakeholders described and researchers observed include a range of factors: the language of instruction unfamiliar to students, non-participatory and didactic teaching methods, a lack of gender responsive and ethnically sensitive materials, poor teacher-student relationships, as well as poor student-student relationships.

Box 1. Child-Friendly Schools

Many of the components that negatively impact girls are addressed in the holistic concept of a "Child-friendly School" developed by UNICEF.

A Child-friendly School...

- … Is respectful of and promotes children's rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- … Seeks to include all children;
- … Offers instruction that is child-centered, promotes active learning, and is effective;
- … Provides an environment that is healthy, safe, and protective of children;
- … Offers a relevant, gender-sensitive curriculum and gender-responsive teaching- learning processes; and
- … Promotes interactive participation at all levels - for children, parents, and communities to be involved in education.

This vision of holistic educational quality in schools is in various stages of application by ministries of education worldwide, including Vietnam.

Language of Instruction

All ethnic groups in this study consistently cited the inability to learn effectively in the mother tongue and in Vietnamese as a barrier to girls' learning. International research has shown that students who do not learn their mother tongue proficiently have greater difficulty learning another language well (Dutcher, 2004). And, oftentimes, girls are more disadvantaged than boys in learning a language other than their mother tongue, due to lack of social interactions and access to materials (Kane, 2004).

Under the Vietnamese constitution and education law, ethnic minority children have the right to learn in their own language in primary school, as well as to

have instruction in Vietnamese, their second language; however, the model of bilingual education in which both the mother tongue and Vietnamese are the languages of instruction is not implemented in practice (Kosonen, 2004). Rather, teachers primarily instruct in Vietnamese and a small percentage of instruction time is set aside for instruction in the mother tongue. And for the three ethnic groups, the effects of the language barrier in schools are experienced in varying ways.

Based on classroom observations, H'mong students generally speak very basic Vietnamese, the language of instruction in the primary and secondary schools. H'mong girls tend to know less Vietnamese than H'mong boys because of gender patterns within families. H'mong fathers participate more in social and communal activities where they are exposed to Vietnamese, while mothers take care of housework, breed pigs and chickens, cook, and work in the field. Girls spend more time with their mothers, and thus have less opportunity to acquire Vietnamese at home. H'mong girls also tend to be more shy and timid than H'mong boys, resulting in fewer attempts to communicate in Vietnamese. While some teachers speak H'mong, they do not speak it proficiently enough to assist girls who do not understand what is taught in the classroom. Classroom observations at primary and lower secondary schools showed that students use' and comprehension of Vietnamese is limited. They do not understand the meaning of words and sentences, they read very slowly, and they cannot understand teachers' questions.

Bahnar girls also understood less Vietnamese than Bahnar boys, putting them at a disadvantage in school. However, some teachers at branch primary schools were able to speak the Bahnar language at a basic level, though they did not have Bahnar language learning materials. Still, at the lower secondary level, teachers' basic Bahnar language skills were inadequate to teach more advanced subjects, and girls were unable to learn either their mother tongue or Vietnamese proficiently.

In interviews with OOS Bahnar and H'mong girls, a local interpreter was used because the girls could not understand or speak Vietnamese, while a majority of OOS boys could communicate in Vietnamese and very few boys needed interpreters. In-school girls also suggested that understanding and using Vietnamese was difficult. A Bahnar girl said, "I like reading but it's difficult. I cannot read fast, I have to read slowly, and even then I do not understand the meaning."

J'rai girls did not report knowing less Vietnamese than J'rai boys, but their acquisition of Vietnamese in primary school was generally insufficient to allow them to enter lower secondary school. J'rai girls who had completed fifth grade could write only their first name in Vietnamese, not their last name or the name of their village. A J'rai girl from Ia Ka noted a pattern, saying, "My younger sibling studies in Grade 3 but still cannot speak Vietnamese."

Lack of Vietnamese language skills is also a barrier for Khmer girls. According to interviews and site visits, many Khmer girls entering or in the first grade do not know Vietnamese, and most interviews with OOS girls required translators. Limited ability in Vietnamese leads Khmer girls to feel dejected or embarrassed, and it also affects their performance in other subjects, including mathematics, literature, and English.

Poor Teaching Methods

Compared to boys, adolescent girls from all ethnic groups appear to be more sensitive to the lack of a child-friendly learning and teaching environment. Teachers tended to use a didactic, lecture-centered approach that often requires students to respond in public when called upon, which may be uncomfortable for some girls. Site visits showed that teachers tended to pay more attention to boys, calling upon them for questions more frequently than girls who often seemed to have difficulty following the lessons in Vietnamese.

As one Khmer commune leader observed, "Teachers did not criticize students strongly, but students were timid and shy. At home when parents asked, students said they did not understand the lessons, but in the class, the students did not dare to ask the teacher." "At present the learning approach does not create an atmosphere [of active participation]."

J'rai girls are also disadvantaged by lack of active learning teaching methods and rigid approaches, particularly at the lower secondary level. Class observations revealed that J'rai girls' and boys' participation in the class was not equal or consistent. Teachers primarily called on good students and on those students who were quick and confident. Students who were slower in understanding, timid, or quiet often tended to be girls, and they received almost no attention. When these students were called upon but did not have the answer, teachers quickly passed over them. During one class observation, a few students at the front received most of the attention, while two-thirds of the class was not called on at all.

The classroom setting was different for Bahnar students, with seating segregated by sex, but as with other ethnic groups, boys received more attention and more assistance from teachers. Again, this fact, compounded by the negative effects of didactic teaching methods, meant that students on whom the teacher did not call usually did not have an opportunity to express their lack of comprehension in order to receive the extra support they needed.

Even within seating arrangements segregated by sex, boys receive more attention and more assistance from teachers. Photo taken at Lo Pang primary school, Mang Yang district, Gia Lai province

Photo: RCEME

Box 2: Class Observation - Bahnar

Lo Pang Lower Secondary school

Class activities and interaction primarily were between teachers and students; there were almost no activities between students and students. The students were not able to work in groups or to discuss things during the lesson (Grade 4).

Even in a speaking exercise session, most of the students were not able to speak during the lesson. There were two girls in the class but they were not called on to speak or answer. Only one boy was called on once. The teacher called on students 26 times, but the four group leaders were always called on to answer, and they were all boys (Grade 7).

Dear Lower Secondary school

The teacher's assistance to the students was limited; she did not suggest or encourage students' thinking, rather she only asked yes or no questions, or she asked students to complete a sentence she already had started (Grade 7).

Unfriendly Teacher-Student Relationships

Lack of friendly relationships between teachers and students were identified as a problem for girls from all ethnic groups. This problem is apparent in the physical distance between teachers and students, and in lack of teachers' praise and encouragement, particularly toward children in the lower secondary level.

In interviews, H'mong girls exhibited particular sensitivity to criticism. They indicated they keenly felt the lack of teachers' encouragement. One H'mong girl said, "I came to class late and I cannot read well and I was criticized by the teacher. I don't like going to school." Another young H'mong girl explained, "When the teacher scolds, I feel sad, and I don't want to go to school." Classroom observations also provided evidence that teachers used criticism more often than praise.

Communication and discipline are culturally influenced, and the H'mong have culturally specific ways of communicating and disciplining children. Teachers may not have cultural sensitivity to such subtle but important cultural differences. Furthermore, opportunities to gain cultural insights into H'mong discipline norms may be constrained by the fact that only a very small number of teachers in the H'mong study sites were H'mong, and thus opportunities for collegial sharing and learning are limited. At the lower secondary school in Thai Giang Pho commune, for example, only one of 13 teachers was non-Kinh, and none were H'mong. Likewise, at primary schools in Lau Thi Ngai commune, none of the 23 teachers were H'mong, and only two were from an ethnic group (Tay).

At least some teachers appear to be aware of this problem. One teacher observed, "Teachers only speak a bit louder than usual and the students think that we are scolding them. Thus, we have to be very careful." A H'mong girl in Grade 6 in Lau Thi Ngai lower secondary school, where none of the 12 teachers are H'mong, confirmed that when a teacher raises voice, it can be psychologically devastating enough to cause her to drop out of school. She said, "Sometimes the teacher asked loudly, 'Why don't you write?' [I] went outside and cried. I thought I would stop going to school so teacher would not scold me any more."

Teacher-student relationships can also become antagonistic. During site visits to schools with Bahnar students, researchers observed and heard about an environment characterized by punishment and abusive behavior in addition to lack of friendly student-teacher relationships. Teachers punished students harshly, and hitting and teasing occurred between teachers and students and students and students. OOS girls frequently said that punishment was a reason for dropping out of school, and in 27 in-depth interviews and group discussions with the in-school girls and OOS girls and boys, 13 statements (48 percent of all statements)

addressed the issue of being scolded [1], punished, or hit[2] by the teachers, and of being teased or beaten[3] by friends.

Box 3: **In- and Out-of-School Girls Describe Relationships with Teachers and with Peers**

From teachers	From peers
• Teacher used the ruler to hit my shoulders; it hurt but I did not cry	• Boys teased me, and I c ould not study
• Teacher scolded me and used a ruler to hit me on the palm	• Because I didn't know the lesson, the teacher asked another friend to hit me
• I was punished to sweep the floor, clean the classroom and collect rubbish	• Boys often write nonsense on the back of my shirt, and even hit me
• I was punish ed to run two times around the school yard	• Boys hit me in the class
• I was punished to kneel in front of the class for one to two minutes	• The boys from Set village teased and beat me, pulling hair
• When I did not know the lessons, teacher used a ruler to hit my bottom.	• I was beaten by friends at school
• Boys were hit; girls were hit less	• Boys hit me on my back, it hurt and I cried

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The most-often cited reason punishment for both boys and girls was inadequate learning, or making mistakes. The punishment was more severe if a student continued not to learn. A Grade 6 girl at Lo Pang Lower Secondary School, where all of the 30 teachers were Kinh, said, "The teacher hit me and said that I have to study more at home. If [I do] not, he will hit more the next time."

Many girl students felt that the environment, both in relation to teachers and to students, felt unsafe, and it affected their ability to learn and to feel confident. Further, few curricular or extra-curricular activities existed to promote positive interactions between boys and girls, or to promote self-esteem

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[1] "Scolding": implied strict language for warning and for showing the disagreement of teacher.

[2] "Hitting" was used to indicate the action of teachers of using a small ruler to hit lightly on hands or bottom of students to warn and discipline.

[3] "Beating" implied actions of the boys such as using hands to hit on the shoulders, pulling hair, or teasing the girls to make them unhappy.

and confidence. While the students participated in Child Star[1] activities once a month and Pioneer members organized activities two times per month, observations suggested that primarily the boys participated enthusiastically, while the girls were hesitant and quiet. No separate activities existed specifically for the girls.

The absence of a child-friendly learning environment also affected J'rai girls, contributing to their decisions to drop out of school or to not complete lower secondary education. In group discussions and interviews, girls and parents raised the issue of unfriendly relationships between teachers and students at different levels. An OOS girl recalled, "The teacher hit me for doing the exercise wrong - hit me once, but hard." A mother in Ia Ka commune even complained, "The teacher scolded students for wearing ugly clothes." Many girls in Ia Ka village live in villages that are very far from the commune center (7 to 10 kilometers). Since they do not have bicycles, they have to walk to school. The dirt on the road easily soils children's clothing. Thus, some children not only must deal with soiled clothes, but they also have to endure a teacher's reminder or scolding for wearing dirty clothes. This embarrasses some girls and they drop out of school.

Community leaders in Ia Ka village also expressed their concern at teacher attitudes toward students. They noted that several Kinh female teachers, who, despite knowing J'rai girls have limited Vietnamese language skills, still scolded the students. The teachers were reported to have said about the J'rai girls, "They are stupid and learn so badly that it would be better if they would stay home and get married." Only 12 of the 38 teachers in Ia Ka primary schools are from ethnic minority groups, and none are at the lower secondary level. The school leaders are all Kinh.

Khmer girls also reported being sensitive to teacher attitudes. Teachers may not understand or sympathize with the mental challenges faced by Khmer girls, particularly their feelings of inferiority about their clothes (i.e., lack of clean or appropriate clothes) and paying school fees. School regulations stipulate that students should wear uniforms to class, but many parents could not afford to buy uniforms for their children. One father in Truong Tho noted, "The school asks them to wear uniforms… and if they did not wear the uniform, the teacher criticized them… The teacher did not allow them to stay home, but talked about the uniform issue so many times that they were embarrassed and stopped going to school."

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[1] Child Star is a group of students (in rotational basis) that monitors the implementation of school rules.

> **Box 4. Khmer OOS Girls Speak of Punishment in School**
>
> Nhi Truong OOS girls spoke of teachers who often scolded and punished students:
>
> > I was very scared when teachers applied punishments or scolding when students made mistakes or could not fulfill the demands of teachers".
> >
> > I was hit by the teacher, hit on my hand; it hurt but I did not cry.
> >
> > The teacher pinched the ears of those students who did not remember the lesson.
> >
> > In English and Literature I could not do the exercises, so the teacher scolded and yelled. Sometimes I cried.

Poor Student-Student Relationships

All ethnic groups reported that poor relationships among students, often imbedded with gender socialization issues, also contributed to girls dropping out of school. Bullying and discrimination are factors that affect school attendance and have also been cited in studies on youth in other countries (Vietnam Youth Association, Vietnam Women's Union, UNICEF and World Bank, 2006).

J'rai girls, for example, report being embarrassed and afraid of going to school because boys tease them. J'rai girls often enter first grade late at seven or eight years old, therefore they develop physically faster than other girls, and thus feel embarrassed and shy in lower secondary school. While girls did not explain the nature of the teasing, it seemed to be often related to girls' maturation and dating which caused some girls to drop out of school.

An OOS girl said: "I didn't like playing with the boys because they always insulted and hit me. They said they wanted to beat me."

In relationships with peers, J'rai girls were often teased and beaten by boys. Conversations with the girls reflected a reality that boys often beat the girls "outside and inside the classrooms." "I was often beaten; today I was beaten, and tomorrow I will also be beaten", said an OOS J'rai girl in Dear commune. The teasing affected their ability to concentrate and learn as well as their self-esteem, as they were teased not only about learning but also about how they looked and dressed. "They teased me and said I'm very ugly", said one J'rai girl.

Poor relationships with other students also contributed to Khmer girls' decisions to drop out of school. One Nhi Truong OOS girl described her unhappiness. She said that her friends "criticized that I only wore one set of clothes." She did not dare to tell teacher, because she was afraid that "they would get angry and stop

playing with me", or, worse, that they would beat her on the way home. At home, she talked to her father, hoping to find comfort or an appropriate solution, but the father scolded her. Discouraged, she then dropped out of school.

Bullying also occurred on the road to and from school. "I walked to class, but other friends who rode bicycles pushed me to the edge of the road. When it rained, they rode bicycles, splashed dirty water on my clothes. I told Mother, and Mother said, "Don't you care about them. They are rich; they despise us poor."

The girls' statements indicate that not only are peer relationships important, but mothers' and fathers' responses also can encourage or discourage girls from persisting in school.

Girls' Low Self-esteem and Confidence

H'mong girls appear to face particular problems at school due to a poor match between their psychological make-up and the demands of the school environment. Provincial and district officers as well as teachers all noted that embarrassment, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence in communicating is one reason H'mong girls discontinue their education. A provincial officer felt that "older H'mong girls are shy and timid; they do not want to go to school. The girls develop very early and are very shy and embarrassed and, thus, they stop going to school."

Shy and timid behavior may be related in part to girls entering school at a late age. Late age enrolment occurs since H'mong parents often delay their children's birth registration, sometimes waiting until teachers go to houses to enroll older girls in school. Parents do not remember the exact birth dates of their children and estimate according to seasons. This leads to a phenomenon where girls in Grades 3 to 5 "suddenly" grow much older than the boys. One teacher noted, "The girls in fifth grade are shy because they are often one or two years older than the others. So they felt embarrassed and eventually dropped out of school."

Teachers report that H'mong girls are shy and silent when being called to the board to answer questions, and they do not interact with the boys. They dare not to hold boys' hands during group games or activities. A teacher recalled, "I placed a girl and a boy next to each other, and the next day, the girl quit going to school."

In addition to being uncomfortable in relating to boys, girls who do not speak or learn well are particularly vulnerable to low self-esteem. The teachers organized extra classes to help weak students with reading and writing skills, but teachers said the girls played truant because they were embarrassed. The girls did not actively participate in learning and play activities in the class or school, which, in turn, had a negative effect on their learning outcomes. These poor results made them shy, embarrassed, and bored by sitting in class and not understanding.

Weak Curriculum and Limited Extra-curricular Activities

The need for textbooks that include images and representations of girls and boys (and women and men) from different ethnic groups without stereotyping is a curriculum issue that affects girls and boys from all ethnic groups.

With regard to particular areas of the curriculum, girls do not receive necessary information on sex education, which is important not only for learning but also for girls' attendance in school. Some of the girls would not go to school for the whole week during menses because they were ashamed and afraid that other friends would find out. According to provincial and district officers, children dare not ask their parents for this information, and parents are also uncomfortable teaching their children about such matters. Thus, girls grow up and develop naturally without any instruction or assistance from adults.

In extra-curricular activities, girls also tend to be less involved, and activities that engage girls' interests during the school day are rare. Observations at four schools revealed that extra activities that were offered tended to be monotonous. During break, both male and female students crowded around the snack stores outside the school gate and littered. Those students who did not have money to buy snacks stayed in the classrooms.

4. Distance to School and Inadequate School Infrastructure

This barrier is particularly important for girls in lower secondary school, although it is the least important of the top five barriers. Physical challenges in getting to school, and safety on the way to and in school were the specific issues that arose under this barrier.

Accessibility to School

Accessibility to school is a challenge for Khmer, H'mong, and J'rai girls, although their specific contexts differ. Accessibility can be related to living or working far from main centers. It also is equated with not being able to afford transportation, such as bicycles. At the lower secondary level, accessibility includes not being able to afford the direct costs of boarding, or simply, a lack of boarding facilities. This is problem for many girls, since secondary schools tend to serve larger geographic areas.

H'mong: Long Distances and Treacherous Roads

For H'mong girls, distance from school combined with inadequate boarding facilities discourages girls from attending school. The geographical conditions

many H'mong children face are very different from the other three groups and are probably the most difficult. Many H'mong live in areas with dangerous conditions due to poor, unleveled dirt paths through mountains, hills, rivers, and streams. One H'mong girl said that girls dropped out because the main school [the lower secondary school in the commune center] is located too far away. "The school offers instruction for sixth grade, but it is very far away (23 km), so I cannot go to school"; she reported.

In one commune, lower secondary school is only available in the commune center. If girls want to attend school, they have to endure poor boarding conditions. Distance is particularly a concern for girls as the conditions of the roads are poor and unsafe. In a few cases, there are no roads between the villages and the commune center, only stream paths. These paths are only passable by foot or by motorbike, which most families do not have. Community members stated, "During rainy and flood seasons, it is very difficult and sometimes impossible for the children to get to the school. Flood waters can sweep children away." Parents' concern for their children's safety often results in discouraging them from going to school at these times.

View of a badly damaged inaccessible road leading to school. Girls are made particularly vulnerable by physical challenges in getting to school. Photo taken at Thai Giang Pho commune, Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province

Photo: RCEME

By contrast, Bahnar girls do not face overtly dangerous travel conditions. But distance to school is also an issue for Bahnar girls, particularly at early adolescence when concern for safety and security is high. This makes the

transition to Grade 5 difficult. Girls and parents frequently said that girls did not want to go to school, given the long distance from school combined with poor boarding facilities. The village heads reflected this concern, stating, "In fifth grade, they have to go the main school that is located too far from home, therefore the girls could not continue going to school."

Khmer: Distance and Danger

Distance was also an issue for the Khmer. A high-ranking monk from Can Non temple in Truong Tho commune reported, "In my hamlet, there are 215 households, but the school only has up to third grade. If the children want to continue to fifth grade, they need to travel very far and it is difficult. Some children are at the age of fifth grade but they do not have bicycles to ride, therefore they cannot go so far away to study."

A Khmer girl said, "The primary school was close to my house, but when I got to the third and fourth grade, the class was a bit far from home. But when I got to the sixth grade, the school was even farther from home. Therefore I stopped going to school."

Traveling long distance to schools was especially difficult on days with heavy rain, heat, and floods, which, on top of enduring the effects of an often insufficient diet, pose physical dangers for children. Khmer students from Can Nom and Dong Tra, for example, had to travel across three monkey bridges (i.e., bamboo bridges). In the rainy season, the roads were exceedingly slippery and not traversable. A teacher from Nhi Truong commune observed, "The children walk along the river banks to get to school. During the rainy season it is very dangerous. Parents need to take the children to school; children cannot go on their own." Another teacher said, "When it rained, they could not wear sandals. It was easier for boys - the girls were really in trouble."

In the dry season, distance is still an issue for Khmer adolescent girls. Community leaders in Nhi Truong noted, "The poor families do not have bicycles. The children from the next village had to walk to the commune center, thus they often arrived late to class, or if they got a lift [in a vehicle], sometimes it was not at the right time for them to get to school on time. This made them stop going to school."

J'rai: Transportation and Distance

Distance from school may prevent J'rai girls from regular school attendance, particularly during harvest times. Since families in Ia Ka and Ia Mo Nong communes tend to farm deep in the forest due to lack of affordable fields near their homes, J'rai girls missed school during harvest seasons. Ia Mo Nong teachers noted, "When fruits from the forest (*uoi*) are sold at a high price, we don't see students or parents. In that season, there is no one in the village - only old people who cannot go to the forest anymore."

In addition, unlike other ethnic groups, J'rai adolescent girls also noted social pressure to arrive at school on a bicycle as important, sometimes regardless of distance. Not all girls who were said to have dropped out due to a lack of bicycles lived far away from the school. A Ia Mo Nong mother noted, "It is a trend here that the children go to school by bicycle, no matter if they live close or far away."

J'rai parents were well aware of their daughters' attitudes. A Ia Ka father noted, "Because of our extreme poverty, the children feel inferior to their friends." The parents told the girl to go to school, but she said she did not have bicycle and was too embarrassed to go to school. Another Ia Ka father said of his daughter, "Since she did not have a bicycle - even though the house is close by - she got embarrassed and did not go to school. Because she saw her friends all have bicycles and she did not, she did not go to school."

Safety and Sanitation

Safety is an important concern for many ethnic girls, particularly for those at boarding schools where they are separated from their families and in close contact with boys. Safety is closely linked with lack of adequate facilities. Thus, boarding facilities that are poor also seemed to represent unsafe and insecure places for adolescent girls, whose parents were concerned about girls being harassed by boys.

Among the H'mong, for example, semi-boarding schools are necessary in many communes at the lower secondary level, because many villages are a long distance from the commune centers. These boarding facilities are often makeshift and incomplete, with no kitchen to cook food, no clean running water, and no mattresses or blankets for sleeping. H'mong mothers were very concerned that "in the boarding school, boys and girls sleep in the same room." The lack of separate bedrooms caused mothers to worry about the safety and possible sexual abuse of their daughters. One H'mong mother stated, "I only want to let my sons go to school. If girls go to school and get pregnant, I'd be very ashamed." This view was reinforced by teachers.

Even where there were separate rooms for girls in the boarding facilities, there were holes in the walls between the rooms. As a result, girls lacked privacy and felt uncomfortable. Girls reported getting up in the dark to dress just to have privacy. Girls have no running water or bath to clean themselves, and this is particularly a hindrance to their school attendance during menstruation. Boys found it easier to bathe naked in the river; but this is not an option for adolescent girls. In these circumstances, H'mong girls are discouraged from going to school, and they drop out.

One of the lower secondary schools where the Khmer children attended in Tra Vinh did not have protective fence, and it did not ensure a safe learning environment for the students. A teacher reported,

> The school does not have a fence or a gate. Some youth from outside always hang around the school to steal (a few bicycles were stolen). They came to the school to fight and disturb the students. Bicycles of students and teachers were stolen by those young men. The authorities were concerned and organized a search for the stolen vehicles. Last month, several of them were sent to the commune. The authorities there have managed and calmed down the problem for one or two weeks, but now it has started again. [The boys] were mischievous. They pinched the tires to let out the air. Some female students cried. [The boys] even disturbed the teachers, and broke motorcycle mirrors… The teachers were helpless and scolded them, but [the boys] were not afraid. The school did not have budget for a guard. The teachers had to draw from their salaries to hire a guard. We did not have a fence, so it is very difficult to go in and go out normally.

Unsanitary bathrooms are also a barrier for Bahnar girls, particularly at lower secondary level. While toilets existed for both boys and girls at the lower secondary school in LoPang commune, they were unclean and had no water and students and teachers did not use them.

No separate bathroom existed for girls to change, and the bathroom that boys used had no door. There was enough well water for drinking and cooking in the rainy season, but in the dry season they lacked sufficient clean water.

Safety is an important concern for many ethnic girls, and is closely linked with a lack of adequate facilities. Poorly resourced boarding schools and unsanitary bathrooms contribute to a lack of privacy and increase the sense of discomfort felt by female students. Photo taken at Thai Giang Pho primary school, Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province

Photo: RCEME

J'rai girls also often deal with lack of toilets, with no toilets in Truong Tho primary school and the branch school in Ia Ka. Ia Mo Nong lower secondary school only had one toilet for the teachers but none for the students. J'rai girl often enter school late, and thus, by the time they reached lower secondary school, studying at

school without toilets was a great barrier that made them feel uncomfortable and contributed to their drop out.

Infrastructure Limitations

In addition to issues of safety and security, in some areas the physical environment throughout the school is inadequate. J'rai students had to study in schools that they described as "not pretty." In the rainy season the classrooms became loud, since many of the classrooms had corrugated iron roofs, and the pounding rain made it difficult to hear the teacher. Tables and chair tables were old and worn-out. Classrooms in four primary and lower secondary schools were dirty with bare walls, with only two or three slogans and the picture of Uncle Ho Chi Minh. Specialized classrooms, laboratory, functional rooms for activities of the Teen and Youth Associations were deficient or non-existent. The school library was used as storage.

Classroom infrastructure is often worn or deficient as seen in this classroom's undecorated and stained walls. Photo taken at Lo Pang primary school, Mang Yang district, Gia Lai province

Photo: RCEME

Although Khmer girls faced fewer problems with school infrastructure, conditions at school were still considered inadequate, particularly for girls. One primary school, for example, had a very small area, with a barbed wire fence in front and no fence in the back to separate the school from the residential area. The schoolyard was low and often flooded during the rainy season. The school was under construction, so there was lot of dirt and trash in the yard. The classrooms had few windows and were very dark, and walls were stained and dirty. The heat

was intense but there were no fans because there was no electricity. The toilet was out of service, so students had to go behind the school wall or to people's houses.

One of the lower secondary schools had two floors but no campus (i.e., no yard, fence or gate), so children did not have a place to exercise, salute the flag, or participate in extracurricular activities. The practical sessions of Physics and Chemistry were not held at that school due to the lack of laboratory and experimental instruments. The new curriculum required students to learn through videotapes, but the school did not have a video player or electricity. The electricity for the staff room was borrowed from lines that extended to nearby houses.

5. Cultural Traditions, Customs, and Perceptions of the Value of Educating Girls

This barrier is relatively low in importance compared to the others, although it is still among the top five. The extent to which education is valued is rooted in cultural practices and traditions, costs of schooling, and expectations for employment, which may or may not be realistic, depending on labour market conditions. Families living in poverty tend to value education when it provides their own children and children in their community with relevant, employable skills that lead to "good" jobs (i.e., work that enables them to move out of poverty). When girls from these ethnic groups living in conditions of poverty are not able to obtain paid employment, families may not see education as valuable for their immediate survival or for future economic returns. In addition, girls are expected to marry, at which point they no longer provide economic returns to the family.

Recent research on parental aspirations for children's schooling in developing countries suggests an economic rationale, in which parents make educational choices based on economic returns to the family (Buchmann and Hannum, 2001). These economic choices are often made in combination with cultural norms, in which the economic returns may be lower for girls from some ethnic groups when the cultural norm is that girls marry out of the family. Cultural attitudes of both parents regarding equality and expectations for return on investment affect girls' school attendance and persistence in school (Zhang, Kao, and Hannum, 2007).

Lack of Skills and Economic Value for Parents' and Communes' Needs

H'mong parents generally do not perceive lower secondary education as valuable for girls, since availability of jobs for girls are considered limited. They also think even if girls to to school, they will eventually marry and will not be able to provide financial support for their natal family. One teacher recalled, "Some parents said that teachers force my children to study but [the parents say] we cannot bring the knowledge to the market to sell, we can only sell maize and vegetables."

Even in matriarchal societies, where girls do not join their husband's family in terms of providing labour, education is not perceived as commercially or economically valuable. Village heads and parents within the Bahnar and J'rai ethnic groups, both matriarchal societies, expressed the view that girls' education was not regarded as important as that of boys. This was mainly because girls were not expected to be employed outside of the family household, as one Bahnar father asked, "Why study if they can get no job?"

J'rai parents expressed a similar view that education's primary function is to assist in securing a future job, and lack of job prospects for girls meant education has no purpose. A J'rai father in Ia Ka said, "People told my first daughter that no matter how much she studied, she would not find a job."

This view may be supported by current economic realities, or by examples of girls who stayed in school but who did not gain immediate rewards after school in terms of acquiring a job. These stories are spread by word of mouth, even among teachers, further discouraging girls and their parents. A teacher in Ia Ka recalled, "An ethnic minority student who completed ninth grade could not find any job in the commune with her certification. She got discouraged, and then dropped out of school. To be farmers, they already know what they need to know by the fifth or ninth grade. Even with education, eventually the children would end up working on the field."

For the Khmer, in contrast to the Bahnar and J'rai, the economic value of education was more specifically related to the opportunity it provides to earn wage labour. This may be because so many Khmer live in poverty, do not have land to farm - even distant land, as the highland ethnic groups do - and because of their proximity to a large, sprawling urban area. For the Khmer in Tra Vinh province, for example, survival (e.g., having enough food and enough money to buy necessities for everyone in the family) and getting out of poverty are the chief concerns in life. Even if children complete school, many Khmer believe it affects their chances for a "better" job (i.e., they would still have to work for other people to earn money). Thus, basic literacy is considered to be sufficient for Khmer girls.

A Nhi Truong community leader reported, "We came to the families with OOS children to recruit them to enrol in school, but the parents said that the children only need to know how to read and write, and that they have to work to earn money - even some rich families said this. They said that they were not educated but still had gotten rich." A Truong Tho A teacher observed, "When there is spare time, they (Khmer parents) send the children to school, but work is still the priority. Only older children stay at home; younger children are taken with parents to work."

Khmer parents also spoke about the importance of wage labour. A mother in the Nhi Truong focus group discussion said, "Some people think that the more education one gets, the poorer they will be. All four of the children in one family stayed home to work and earn money; they saw no need for studying. I think they were right." Another mother in the group agreed.

A district officer also noted: "Khmer parents saw that there is no job after graduation and the students [who graduate] cannot help the family. The number of unemployed graduates is very high; even university graduates are unemployed. After graduation, they could not find a job." A community leader added, "Ms. X - just graduated from the junior pedagogic college, but still she could not find a job." Even a village head in Truong Tho commune stated, "After graduation, they can only get a job if the family has money, status, or connections. But poor families like us probably only can stay home, so we can only send the children to school up to fifth grade to be literate."

Early Marriage in a Patriarchal System

Marriage for H'mong girls often occurs at a very young age, and as previously mentioned, because they join their husband's families after marriage, economic value during and after adolescence is considered primary benefit to their husband's families. Therefore, educating a H'mong girl is not regarded as a cost-effective strategy for H'mong families.

Community members described this low valuing of girls' education as "male chauvinism." This chauvinism is embedded in historical patterns and beliefs about gender relations between girls and boys, and thus is not only an attitude that parents hold, but is part of the social customs and institutions that place higher value on boys' education than that of girls. A Thai Giang Pho commune leader said, "The people living in highlands still have male chauvinistic customs. They think that women are only worried about getting married, and after marriage, they will only take care of their husbands' families, not their natural parents' family any more. Therefore they are not allowed to go to school." The custom of marriage and patriarchy regards "girls [as] daughters of other people, only boys should be allowed to go to school. Girls do not need to study much, since they are others' daughters, why should we invest much in them? Girls will get married and after that, will work and stay in the husbands' families."

Additionally, dropping out of school and getting married is complicated by the fact that young H'mong girls are subject to the custom of "seizing a wife", which often happens after the new year *Tet* holiday. Poor families are particularly affected by this custom. If a boy likes a girl, he may "seize" her and take her home whether she likes him or not. The boy's family presents gifts to the girl's family, and if the parents accept gifts from the boy's family, the young girl has to marry that boy without refusal or opposition. A H'mong girl who had dropped out of school for one year confided, "I did not want to married, but my family is too poor and accepted their gifts." The village head explained that the boy's family had arranged for an early marriage mainly "to have more labour."

Despite long-held customs and beliefs, the underlying causes of early marriage among the H'mong are in part that girls are needed for labour by boys' families,

and girls' families need money. In addition, the girls' labour supports the married boy to continue in school. A fifth grade H'mong girl said that her older sister "got married while in sixth grade and her parents-in-law did not allow her to go to school any more, so she dropped out. Yet, my brother-in-law (the OOS girl's husband) studied far away for three more years."

Early Marriage in a Matriarchal System

In contrast to the H'mong, in the matriarchal Bahnar and J'rai ethnic groups, the cultural norm is that boys need education to enhance their value as husbands. Girls, who are heads of household, do not need education. Instead, girls "seize husbands." The age for "seizing husbands" for these two groups was also about the same age as for H'mong girls. In order to seize a husband, a girl had to pile a large amount of wood on the floor to show her personal diligence, and when she had "seized" her husband, she had to stay home to undertake her responsibility of being the head of the family. This involved taking care of all the minor and major family matters, as regulated by the matriarchal system.

Due to this custom or "right" of seizing husbands, it was perceived that girls did not need to go to school, but only needed to work hard in the fields. Because women were heads of the families, they needed to stay home working and taking care of the family. Boys who wanted to be married into the wealthier families needed to be literate and have a high level of education.

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure that downplays the value of education is also a factor for H'mong and Bahnar groups, as girls who would otherwise study tend to be less inclined to come to school once their close friends begin to drop out. Some girls said, "I followed my friends and dropped out of school. I dropped out because other friends dropped out. I didn't want to go alone to the commune to study."

Gendered Beliefs about Educating Girls

Poverty often affects girls disproportionately and in case of limited resources, girls are usually the first to drop out of school due to beliefs related to gender relations and roles. This is true for all ethnic groups, although the decision to drop out of school may vary in terms of girls' "ownership" of the decision.

If H'mong girls stay home, they can earn income by making textile bags for their fathers to sell for income. This income is needed to meet the needs of large families. H'mong families in the Thai Giang Pho commune, for example, have an average of five to six children. Parents prioritize spending on boys, who are considered a better long-term investment. Girls are regarded as "the daughters of others," since after marriage they will work for their husband's families. One

H'mong parent explained, "I have one son going to Grade 9 in the school here, so the other three daughters all stopped going…. If all daughters and the son go to school, we will not have enough money."

Although women in the matriarchal structures of the J'rai have a say in whom they will marry, "J'rai men are the key decision-makers in affairs beyond the family," said a provincial officer. Thus, men have an important influence on whether girls should go to school. A teacher in Ia Mo Nong lower secondary school recalled, "In the village, there was a family with one son and daughter. When I asked why the girl was not sent to school, the father said the girl studied to fifth grade and that is enough - she should stay home to get married."

J'rai women appeared to support men's authority in making these decisions. In a group discussion among OOS girls and their mothers in Kep village in Ia Mo Nong commune, participants were asked about why their daughters had dropped out of school. The women answered, "We are women, we don't know what to say - men know." J'rai girls and their parents mentioned this barrier very quietly. A teacher in Ia Mo Nong explained, "A general opinion of young men is that they prefer having wives who are less educated, if the women study too much, they talk more."

Box 4 below illustrates the range of ways in which J'rai stakeholders discuss the value of educating girls - or not.

Box 5. J'rai and the Value of Education

Community, Parents, and OOS Girls Discuss the Value of Education

- Nowadays, due to low socio-economic level, the main career option is still farming; the children are not aware of the new employment demands. So they do not see the need for studying and then they drop out of school. (District Managers).

- Parents consider that it is the same: with or without education, they still have to work in the field and stay home to work and earn 20 thousand dong a day (District Leaders).

Ia Ka commune

- After being married girls cannot contribute anything to the society. But it is different with boys. (Community Leaders, Ia Ka commune).

- Some students have dropped out of school after completing 10th grade because there is no employment. Besides, they study to a high level but there is no job. (Village Head in Ia Ka).

Ia Mo Nong commune

- If I am given money, I would send the children to school to enjoy themselves and be happy. (Mother).

- I went to the family to mobilise the children to go to school. The father said there was no need for education - the younger brother stayed at home and now he can harvest many fields, the older brother went to school but he does not have any field to harvest. (Principal and Student Group, Lower Secondary School).

- I don't know if my feeling is right, but since the older siblings complete 12th grade and still cannot do anything else, so the younger ones think that higher education is for nothing. (Principal and Teachers, Lower Secondary School).

For the Khmer, the belief that girls do not need to pursue education beyond basic literacy and that boys need more education than girls was embedded deeply in the attitudes of the community, parents, and the girls themselves. A Khmer father in Truong Tho said, "Because we have many children (seven), I cannot fulfill all the demands of the children financially, so I had to keep some at home. Both my daughters have dropped out of school." The sons stayed in school.

An OOS Truong Tho girl said that her family was poor and she did not have clothes or a bicycle to go to school. Her family gave priority to the brothers to go to school, and the sisters had to stay home and work to support the family so that the fourth older brother and the seventh younger brother could go to school.

Box 6. A Khmer Girl Talks about Roles in the Family

Why did your fourth brother complete 12th grade but you did not complete 6th grade?

- Because I am a girl, I can help mother. My brother is a boy, lazy, and cannot help mother.

At home your mother does not ask your brother to help with housework?

- Brother only does work for males.

What is it?

- Like carrying rice, that's all.

Your brother works for money, and you also work for money, but he studied to 12th grade. Why could you complete only 6th grade?

- Because the girls can help parents with many things, they can follow the mother wherever to work.

Khmer girls are often expected to take on qualities such as being obedient, hardworking, compassionate with parents, and having good listening skills. These qualities are among the reasons that parents ask girls for help with housework or stay home to work and earn money for the family.

In a group discussion with the mothers of OOS Truong Tho, four out of six mothers gave the following reasons why girls were needed at home to work:

> Because boys can not help with housework. Girls can work more.

> Girls can take care of housework, boys only like to play.

> Girls help with housework, boys are all the same - very mischievous. We cannot ask them for help.

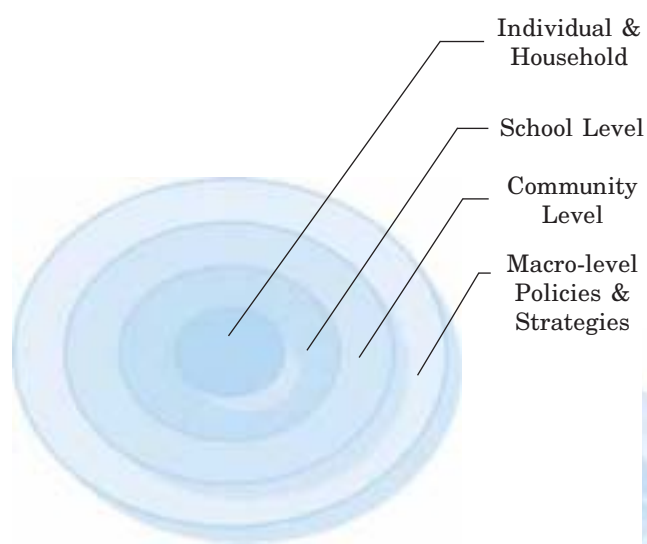> Girls can help parents and stay at home to work for money. Let the boys go to school.

Khmer also have a custom of sending boys ages 11 to 15 to enter the Buddhist temple for three years, where they learn to read and write, which also gives them more opportunity than girls to continue going to school. This is not an option for girls, who continue to stay home to work.

Part 2

COMMON SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders recommended that creating favorable conditions for girls to study in lower secondary school is an effective way to address the challenges of barriers to education for girls at both the primary and secondary level. This is because girls face many of the same challenges at the primary and secondary level, although challenges are more numerous, and in some cases, more complicated at the secondary level.

In focus group discussions and interviews, stakeholders identified a broad range of solutions. However, these solutions were not viewed with complete unanimity even within ethnic groups, and the solutions received differing levels of support within and between communities. In the following section, solutions are presented in a framework that identifies them according to scale or level, beginning with the girls themselves and moving outward to the household, the school, community, and policy and programme level (see Diagram 1) Since this study is written from the perspective of local communities, macro-level is defined as national, provincial, and district polices.

Individual & Household

School Level

Community Level

Macro-level Policies & Strategies

Diagram 1. **Levels of Solutions and Support**

In most cases, solutions are not limited to one level but frequently cross boundaries. For example, policies at the national level may affect the economy of families and the education of individual girls. Likewise, bilingual education programmes or professional development opportunities for teachers at the district level may improve the quality of education in a particular classroom and motivate

individual girls to transition into lower secondary school. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, this static framework is used.

1. Individual and Household Solutions

Although they may be constrained by family responsibilities, sense of duty, parental authority, and other things, some adolescent girls demonstrate that they have agency - they can take part in making decisions about the outcome of their education (Miske Witt and Associates, 2007). The barriers that constrain them are enormous, but they are not insurmountable. It is the responsibility of the girls as well as of the system at various levels to take responsibility for ensuring girls' (and boys') right to education as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Girls from all the four ethnic groups and communities offered solutions that dealt primarily with direct costs. They said they would go to school if they had learning materials, food, and clothes.

Girls from all four groups also called for a change in teaching and learning in the classroom, and for safe, friendly learning environments that would be characterized by dancing, singing, and other fun activities. Bahnar girls said they would encourage friendly teacher behavior toward girls. J'rai Grade 4 and 5 girls suggested that one important way to develop a safe, friendly learning environment was by "helping and caring" for students.

Other suggestions from the girls themselves included requests for bicycles (Khmer) and stipends or the provision of school supplies (J'rai, Khmer, Banhar). Girls from three groups (H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar) asked for vocational or livelihood skills training, such as dressmaking, weaving, and traditional handicrafts. Others called for advocacy and community enablement to address girls' self-esteem.

At the household level, stakeholders suggested solutions in two areas: (1) priority should be given to households with girls who are transitioning to lower secondary, and within these households, priority should be given to the girls, with regard to support of stipends, food, or materials; and (2) changes should be made within households to support girls' schooling (e.g., through sharing of work with boys or other family members). Both solutions require the commune leaders and school staff to work together with parents and girls in households. And both solutions support a shift away from gendered cultural beliefs about what is "girls' work" and what is "boys' work" in order to support all children's right to education.

2. School Level Solutions

The solutions proposed at the school level consist of: (1) improvement in teaching and learning through teacher development and enhanced curriculum and materials;

(2) improvement of school facilities, including boarding facilities; and (3) creating safe, child-friendly learning environments.

Improving Pedagogy

Improving teaching and learning was an important issue in all four ethnic groups. This is especially true for Bahnar in Mang Yang district, where stakeholders ranked poor teaching and learning as the number one barrier for girls continuing on to lower secondary school.

Province and district officers, commune leaders, teachers, parents and students all suggested that teachers' pedagogy must address the learning needs of students from the different ethnic groups and regions. They said, "Teachers must change their teaching methods with more focus on visual teaching, using methods that are more appropriate to students from each area, so they can understand the lesson." Professional development for teachers needs to address various aspects of pedagogy, including: (1) multi-age/grade teaching; (2) student-centered learning; (3) bilingual education; and (4) gender sensitivity. In addition, teacher relations and teaching methods need to address learning issues for girls and boys in Grades 6 and 7, and need to help students transition to different styles of learning as they move into lower secondary school, where they take different courses with different teachers. This transition can be especially difficult for children to whom Vietnamese is a second language, as well as to those who are not accustomed to different styles of learning and to relating to multiple teachers.

Stakeholders suggested that teacher professional development should be specific and practice-based rather than theoretical.

Adapting Curriculum and Materials

Other stakeholder suggestions for improving learning included adapting the curriculum and teaching materials to address girls' learning needs. For example, a teacher in Truong Tho, Tra Vinh, observed, "Mathematics is difficult; it should be arranged for ethnic minority students to learn over longer time period (e.g., three periods per day), to help them understand more." With limited knowledge of Vietnamese, it is hard for Khmer or any non-Kinh students to follow the same textbook content as the Kinh students. Supplementing textbooks with other teaching and reference materials that are relevant to the ethnic group and language are needed. Appropriate pedagogy and materials are discussed further in the next section on bilingual education.

Bilingual Education and Teaching with Cultural Sensitivity

Most stakeholders suggested that teacher professional development in pedagogy should be combined with an understanding of teaching techniques and cultural

awareness as it relates to each ethnic group. Specifically, they suggested teacher professional development in teaching in the mother tongue and in teaching Vietnamese for speakers of ethnic group languages.

H'mong, Banhar, and Khmer families stated that learning in the mother tongue was important. The H'mong felt that learning in their local language was important and necessary for girls to understand and to learn effectively. Commune and village leaders suggested that H'mong should be taught until Grade 3. In addition, they suggested that H'mong people be trained as teachers so that the students, girls in particular, are taught by H'mong people. The J'rai communes also suggested teaching in the local language and supporting local people to be trained as teachers. Using local people as teachers is important to ensure the understanding and education of all stakeholders about local cultural traditions. The Banhar commune leaders also suggested that female Bahnar teachers are important, particularly at the pre-school and first grade levels, so that female teachers can serve as role models for girls in the community. For the Banhar, teaching in Banhar language as well as teaching of Vietnamese needs to be comprehensive so that the transition from primary to secondary allows for students to be fluent in both languages. The Khmer families also suggested that having teachers who teach in Khmer and having ethnic Khmer teachers is important for girls' education.

Another pedagogical strategy suggested by district/commune staff is to strengthen teaching of Vietnamese as a second language. Pedagogy that is culturally appropriate would include visuals, singing, and games that teach content and language, and that reinforce the language and concepts in active, creative ways.

Gender Training

Another important area for professional development is gender awareness and skills. Teachers in the H'mong communes in Bac Ha district recognised that they should be equipped with "good knowledge of gender, sex education, and reproductive education to educate adolescent students as they transition into lower secondary education." Bac Ha District staff suggested that priority should be given to semi-boarding girls by increasing the teaching time on gender and sex education, guiding them in activities about hygiene and sanitation, and, as a practical step, by providing them with sanitary napkins.

The Bahnar commune members suggested that sex education should address the interactions and relations between boys and girls; that training and classroom pedagogy should address the needs of both boys and girls, as well as the importance of preventing boys from teasing girls and causing disunity. In particular, girls from the Mang Yang District frequently reported being harrassed by boys and disciplined harshly by teachers, suggesting that ways of dealing with harassment as well as appropriate relations between boys and girls need to be

addressed in school curriculum and classroom management. Bahnar commune teachers called for gender education for girls at lower secondary level to "teach life and communication skills, to help girls understand gender equity and know how to protect their rights."

Improve School Facilities

In addition to improving the education quality in schools, stakeholders also stressed interventions to improve school facilities, boarding conditions and the organisation of school activities to attract students. Building more lower secondary schools closer to the villages and communes, for example, was regarded as an important solution to some ethnic groups. In the mountains of Bac Ha, H'mong families felt that lower secondary schools were too far away from their homes, sometimes requiring girls to travel more than 20 kilometers. For the Khmer in Cau Ngang, secondary schools did not exist in all communes (e.g., Truong Tho), and thus girls were required to travel long distances or to compete for the limited spaces in a boarding school outside the commune.

Boarding facilities, at a minimum, need to include latrines, clean drinking water, and a place to bathe. H'mong mothers stated that it is very important that "there are separate boarding rooms for girls and boys." Having a safe and sanitary environment for girls would also prevent girls from being teased by boys or being taken home by boys to be "wifed." Bahnar community members suggested that adequate boarding facilities should include "communication facilities, TV, books and newspaper, and sport equipment." Equipments for extracurricular activities, such as music and sports, were also considered to be important.

Safe, Friendly Learning Environment

Creating a safe and friendly learning environment was suggested by parents, community members, and children, as a strategy for promoting girls' retention in secondary schools. Parents and children all suggested that the positive memories OOS children had of school were often related to interactive activities, playing with other children, and positive interactions with the teacher. Parents, children and community members suggested the following active learning strategies: dancing and singing, drama, forums, and making learning aids. J'rai girls suggested that one important way to develop a safe, friendly learning environment was by "helping and caring" for students. Teachers and community members suggested that extra activities have been very useful in helping girls to become more open and confident in communication. Teachers in J'rai communes, for example, noted that they have developed pilot classrooms that aim to develop positive atmosphere and extra activities for girls. One said, "Girls not only learn in classrooms, but also learn from participation in extra activities. We found them effective ways to improve girls' confidence."

The Bahnar community members, patriarchs, parents, and students emphasized that teachers should "encourage the pupils to do well, to not threaten, shout, or punish them." Punishment often resulted in girls' low self-esteem and adversely affected their motivation to learn the lesson. Patience as well as individualized attention and help are suggested as essential to helping girls to learn difficult lessons, especially at the lower secondary level when learning content is more difficult than at the primary level.

3. Community Level Solutions

Several solutions were suggested at the community level across the four ethnic groups. Advocacy for girls' education and community enablement to address issues affecting girls was an important strategy. This included capacity building for commune and village leaders, as well as other methods like parent and children's clubs. Community enablement is more than participation and advocacy. While advocacy brings awareness, it may not result in community members' identifying, acting upon and creating change to address their own problems. Participation can occur in many forms, and not always for the benefit of community members. Enablement, based in participatory action research (Argyris and Schưn, 1991), creates community members' ownership of their problems, develops their capacity to understand their problems, and helps them to identify and understand solutions they can implement to solve their problems.

Advocacy and Community Enablement

Advocacy includes parents, children, and community leaders working together to promote and ensure that girls' are able to realize their right to education. In addition, community enablement allows for community members, including parents and children, to identify and create their needs for education. While teachers also play a role in advocacy and mobilization, they recognized their limitations to effect change, as many of them were not from the local communities. Rather, they suggested that when community members mobilise themselves well, they have a greater impact on girls' education.

Teachers and community members suggested that advocacy needs to include encouragement for girls, to provide them with emotional and psychological support to pursue schooling. In some communes, such as in the Khmer communes, parents and teachers observed that girls often drop out due to their self-image and self-esteem (e.g., not having nice clothes). Therefore, advocacy and community enablement would aim to help girls identify self-esteem problems that become more prevalent in adolescence and throughout the transition into lower secondary school, and to identify ways to address these problems appropriately and effectively within the community.

Provincial leaders suggested that advocacy needs to address the purposes of schooling; for example, schooling is not only to educate to become government officials, but also to learn to calculate and to have knowledge of science and technology. Advocacy, or awareness of the benefits of education, is one approach. Additionally, community enablement would allow parents, children and educators together to identify the kinds of knowledge that are useful to their lives and context, and then to work with schools to provide that knowledge.

District and commune leaders suggested that effective methods for advocacy are through working with teams, such as members of the Women's Union, the Community Learning Centers, teachers, and the Youth Union to talk with parents, girls and boys. District officials also suggested the need to train local people who speak the local language, and to use bilingual posters and brochures, in effective advocacy techniques. Teachers suggested that especially village heads (H'mong villages) and patriarchs in the J'rai and Bahnar villages must thoroughly understand the importance of education and be trained in advocacy to encourage families and to mobilise their girls to go to school. Speakers and respected elders in some communities may be the most effective channels for advocacy and mobilization, given high rates of illiteracy in communities. At the same time, some communities (J'rai villages). Suggested that newspapers in the local language would be useful to broaden children's knowledge.

Khmer provincial leaders suggested that the "Ministry of Education and Training should have videotapes of gender education for students, which can be broadcast for 10-15 minutes per day." The poor households of Khmer people normally do not have a radio, and the speaker system of the commune is limited at commune centre, not reaching to the village level. Many parents do not know Vietnamese and "they do not have a chance to access cultural programmes or news to improve their awareness" (provincial staff) so the communication through the speaker system in Khmer language could be very effective. The voice of the head monk of the pagoda was also suggested as an effective approach, as they are highly regarded in the communities (District Staff). Khmer girls' parents have a decisive role in whether they attend school or stay at home. The leaders of Truong Tho said, "There is a need to explain to parents to understand, then they will happily help their daughters to save time to attend school."

Advocacy involving parents, commune leaders and children must be done in conjunction with a sense of care, commitment, and encouragement on behalf of local authorities and school teachers to support girls in coming and staying in school. Ia Ka community members said, "It's important for local authorities to give girls encouragement… encouraging and creating good conditions for the children's schooling." Change within the school environment needs to accompany advocacy and community enablement.

District staff suggested that advocacy for parents should address how families arrange time for housework and farming in a way that will not occupy too much

learning time for girls. "There should be reasonable work sharing within the family, avoiding too much work for girls." Advocacy about girls' work could be combined with the implementation and training in the use of time-saving devices, and is related to the vocational training and community development strategies suggested above. In many communes, having electricity would allow families to be more efficient in their work, and would provide light for children to do their homework at home. For the H'mong, who are mostly farmers, time-saving devices would include better agricultural techniques, including efficient use of land, and seed, the use of which would require vocational training for families.

Similarly, advocacy related to discouraging early marriage for girls was suggested in the H'mong, Bahnar, and J'rai communities. H'mong village leaders emphasized the role of the Women's Union and Youth Union to actively engage the community and girls to discuss girls' early marriage. Advocacy included disseminating the marriage law (which establishes 18 years as the age at which a girl may legally marry); community mobilization and enablement would involve parents and girls to work together to support girls in their schooling and to marry later. Mothers and Girls' Clubs (discussed below) were suggested as one method for mobilization and enablement about issues facing adolescent girls.

Community enablement requires capacity building, another strategy suggested by stakeholders in each of the ethnic groups.

Capacity Building of Commune and Village Leaders

Commune staff observed that for the community to properly implement their role in advocacy, mobilisation and enablement, "it is necessary to improve the capacity of local staff so that they can mobilise the participation of the community. If the local community is not involved, then it is impossible to fulfil the mentioned tasks." Many stakeholders recognized the importance of the community as an internal force for change regarding girls' education and that external support was only a beginning for creating internal capacity. Provincial staff suggested that the community leaders needed to play a strong role in improving education, the quality and the facilities, and in mobilizing families and girls.

In some areas, such as in the J'rai communes, community members have weak leadership skills and management ability. Some community leaders suggested that mobilization was the responsiblity of the schools, and that community leaders had not taken a strong initative in promoting girls' education beyond important school days. In addition, advocacy by community leaders is needed not only to encourage girls to attend school, but also to seek out those who drop out, as this is often not addressed in the J'rai communes.

The Khmer community members were most aware of teaching pedagogy and student-teacher relationships. However, they did not discuss or seem aware of the many issues students - girls, in particular - face that are caused by poor facilities.

The schools in the two communes lacked latrines and electricity, and they had poor construction and materials. The commune staff, village heads and parents apparently did not realise how the lack of such facilties would have an impact on the learning quality of their children, especially girls; nor were they aware of their role as stakeholders to improve the school. They considered these tasks the responsibility of schools and not the community.

Some community members suggested that capacity building for community leaders, teachers and parents could include knowledge about children's educational rights, gender equality, and reasons for completing lower secondary school in order to improve living conditions for themselves and their families. Also desirable was capacity building to develop skills to recognize the reasons why girls drop out from school, mobilise them to return to school, and address causes within the school or community that lead to dropout. In addition, community members cited the importance of skills of cooperation and action in constructing good facilities for schools, planning the school calendar, providing input into the quality of teaching and learning, participating in classroom activities, making learning equipment for the children, organizing extra-activities about the local cultures for classes, and improving the role of Youth Union and its influence in the community.

Parents' (Mothers') and Girls Clubs

Advocacy, mobilization and enablement can occur through many different venues in these communes. Establishing Mothers' clubs and girls' clubs was one method suggested in each ethnic group to raise awareness, create learning, and mobilise for change. The patriarch and village leaders of Ia M'nong can set up clubs as a place for parents to "talk to each other about community issues, to share information and experiences about farming, to discuss their children's learning, and to exchange ways to overcome the difficulties for their children." The clubs might also integrate vocational training aimed at improving household income and life skills.

Commune staff stated that to reach the most mothers and girls, the clubs "should be established at the village level... and should have monthly operational costs." To attract the parents and the girls, the clubs should have various activities that are culturally appropriate for the ethnic group and village, such as singing or making local handicrafts, combined with teaching gender awareness, life skills and vocational skills. Other suggested activities for mothers' clubs included family planning, child care, health care and family organisation. Activities could include advocacy about these issues from provincial, district or commune members; these activities could also serve as a way for women and girls to enable themselves to address family and community problems, and to create change.

The J'rai communes suppported these clubs, as the club members participate in many public and cultural activities in their villages. They regarded the clubs as an

extension of current community and social activities. Using the format of village public activities directed at specific issues for women and girls and at schooling and education issues could be an effective tool for building awareness and for encouraging change in these communes. Establishing these clubs would need to involve the village patriarch, as he has an important role in convening all village members.

Stakeholders also suggested that clubs should exist both in school and after school, as a way to encourage girls' participation in school and to extend their learning. School-based clubs would include a variety of activities and address girls' issues. Parents of Khmer children were particularly interested in having their daughters involved in clubs. For commune leaders and fathers in Nhi Truong commune, these clubs were regarded as the best and most feasible solution to the barriers affecting girls' education. Fathers of Nhi Truong noted that clubs allow girls "to meet to exchange their learning; the good students can teach the weak ones,... and they can encourage each other to go to school to reach higher level." The clubs can organise theme-based activities, including bringing outside or local people to talk about gender, the psychology of girls, health protection, and behaviour inside and outside families. The Khmer suggested that successful Khmer people should talk to the girls about their experiences, and as a way to mentor girls in schools. In addition, vocational training and skills could be taught to complement the other school subjects.

4. Macro-level Solutions

Macro (national, provincial and district level) policies and inter-sectoral strategies that stakeholders suggested could provide the needed conditions for girls from these four ethnic groups to continue on to lower secondary school included: (1) developing community infrastructure and economies; (2) developing micro-finance projects; (3) supporting vocational learning; and (4) providing scholarships or financial support for girl students.

Community Infrastructure and Economic Development

> To be successful, developing the education sector itself is not enough. We need intersectoral strategies, for example, building a new school, arranging accommodation for boarding pupils, building roads, health stations, . .this is beyond the education (sector's) ability.
>
> - A district official

Stakeholders across all four ethnic groups suggested intersectoral strategies that aim to develop the local community infrastructure and economies. The study results indicate a need for state policies to strengthen the economic development at district and commune levels to reduce economic difficulties that households and communities face. These strategies included an extension, and more effective

implementation, of current national policies to improve the lives of extremely poor families in these communes.

Stakeholders from all four ethnic groups, described poverty and financial difficulties that household members face, which were major barriers that have an impact on adolescent girls to continue on to lower secondary school. The four districts in this study are classified as poor under the Programme 135[1]. In these districts, modes of employment and production are limited, as are markets, and a high rate of poor households have been identified under the Hunger Elimination and Poverty Reduction Programme (HEPR). These districts have economic potential and living condition issues that have not been explored and exploited.

Policies and strategies to improve infrastructure and economic development need to be implemented in harmony with specific local and ethnic group issues.

For the Khmer in the two communes of Tra Vinh, household poverty is exacerbated by a lack of land ownership and the inability to farm to raise their own food. Most poor families must travel far from their communes to find temporary employment. Community leaders and parents suggested strategies that provide for land ownership or economic development in the communes are needed. This would reduce the indirect costs of Khmer girls attending school, since they would be less likely to have to take over household responsibilities in parents' absence, or work too far from home to attend school. In addition, the identification of poor households must be improved so that families who are not registered in the communes may have access to the provisions under the HEPR programme, such as school fee reductions. (Lee, 2006). Community staff stated that "The Government and the Provincial Department of Education and Training have policies to exempt school fees for students. Some households are not classified as poor households, but in fact they are very poor, so they need support or fees should be exempted so that they have money to buy notebooks and pens for their children" (community staff of Nhi Truong, Cau Ngang, Tra Vinh). This policy would reduce one of the direct costs keeping Khmer girls out of school, since not being able to afford school supplies is a problem.

For the H'mong in the communes of Bac Ha district, Lao Cai, community members and parents recognized the need for intersectoral strategies to build better roads, provide electricity and health care, and restructure agricultural production. Poor roads reduce access to schools and markets for many who live in these villages. Access to electricity potentially would allow families to use labour-saving devices and reduce the amount of work for young girls. Again, this would reduce indirect costs.

For the J'rai communities in the Chu Pah district of Gia Lai, community development could involve investment in local economic production, including "building a factory to process cassava or coffee" or "developing handicrafts, such as cloth weaving, and dressmaking for markets. This would create more work and

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[1] Programme 135 is Government supported programme that assists poor communes.

income", noted the Ia M'nong teachers. As one teacher stated, "The intersectoral strategies for developing the community's social economy are the most important factors as they influence many aspects. If the families are wealthy, girls will not have to pick coffee beans, or labour for food, an indirect cost of schooling. They will not have to shoulder as much hardship as the society advances."

For the Bahnar families in the Mang Yang district of Gia Lai, poverty, while an important barrier, was ranked *after* the barriers related to poor teaching and learning in schools. Therefore, strategies at the school level (described below) should be addressed first. One of these strategies, bilingual education, requires national, provincial and district level support. Infrastructure and community economic development related to schooling that also are needed to address poverty include road construction and the provision of electricity, clean water, and health services.

Micro-finance Schemes Supporting Families and Girls

Micro-finance schemes to support family and community businesses and economic opportunities are another strategy to address household poverty.

District staff emphasised that the loan schemes and projects should prioritise families who had school-age girls and those facing difficult circumstances. Some micro-finance schemes could be targeted to reduce the workload of families and of girls in particular by investing in work-saving devices. Creating and investing in these projects needs to be done in conjunction with raising community awareness about the purpose of such investments and the use of funds so that projects are used to support costs for girls' education, rather than creating more work for girls, or providing an alternative to schooling. Community leaders from Chu Pah district, Gia Lai suggested, "the government should have priority policies to invest in respective regions to teach the villagers how to earn their living."

For the J'rai in Chu Pah district, Gia Lai, stakeholders suggested that micro-finance loans could be used "to buy seed and fertilizer, to grow paddy or industrial crops such as pepper, coffee, rubber trees... or to raise livestock such as cow, pigs, chickens." This type of farming could provide immediate as well as future income, creating stability in the family economy. A schoolteacher suggested that these loans should be used not only to finance farming products, but also technology and vocational skills so the resulting farming products are used effectively, efficiently, and successfully. Investments need to be made in communities to study local land and climate conditions, to develop new breeds of seed and methods to grow crops, and to identify methods of raising livestock for higher productivity. Teachers and parents recalled that loans have existed in the community, but they identified three main problems for their inefficient use: (1) a lack of knowledge or skill in how to effectively use the loan; (2) high loan rate that inhibited the poorest families from taking out loans; and (3) use of the loans to pay for immediate needs, such as a bicycle, rather than long term investment projects.

Another problem to be addressed in developing micro-finance schemes is the identification and creation of markets for products. Families and communities suggested they need access to the market. In Bac Ha, Lao Cai, the H'mong mothers wanted to obtain "small loans with low interest to procure horses for transporting goods to the markets." Families from these communes have farm products and handicrafts they produce or could produce, but they need assistance in getting them to market, given the poor road conditions, distance and lack of transportation.

Having micro-finance options to support animal husbandry, aquaculture and fish processing, weaving, or other local business is important for the Khmer in Cau Ngang, Tra Vinh. In addition, the lack of land requires entrepreneurial projects that support other local forms of production.

For the Bahnar, micro-finance schemes were suggested for small family businesses to raise cattle, or to develop handicrafts for market. Similar to the J'rai communities, these schemes need to be implemented with vocational education to improve knowledge and skills in agriculture and weaving.

With all these initiatives, livelihood training for both adults and secondary school-age children is important to provide the knowledge and skills to sustain the new initiatives or enterprises.

Vocational Education and Livelihood Training

Vocational training for girls was suggested in conjunction with developing local entrepreneurial projects, since in many of these communes, employment options are limited and must be linked to the skills and production suitable for the regions. Community members and parents recognize that simply providing micro-finance for local development without vocational training is not an effective strategy.

Incorporating vocational or livelihood training into primary and secondary schools was suggested as a strategy that would encourage girls to stay in school, since they would learn what the community regards as "useful" skills. In Cau Ngang, Tra Vinh, community members noted that supplemental classes have been offered, but vocational education has not been incorporated into the school curriculum. In some communities (i.e., in Bac Ha), vocational education is part of the schooling for children in boarding schools, but it is not integrated into all primary and secondary schools. In some communities, vocational training is being implemented and communities members suggest these skills are benefiting girls. Commune staff in Mang Yang said that vocational education helped to reduce economic problems and attracted more girls: "In the education programme, there are sessions for sewing and cloth weaving. The children help one another. They understand that it is good to have vocational education and they are happy to go to school."

Livelihood skills training as part of non-formal education was also suggested as an alternative for girls who had dropped out of school and could not return to the regular classroom. Educating these girls in livelihood skills may have secondary

effects on younger girls, if vocational training is also offered in the formal system in primary and secondary schools. Alternative educational models are important because many girls felt they would not return to school to learn with younger students, but they said they would attend evening classes and they wanted to learn skills to enable them to work in the communities.

Girls, community members and parents in the H'mong, J'rai and Bahnar communities suggested that dressmaking, weaving, and traditional handicrafts are skills the girls should learn. Not only does learning these skills carry on the traditions of these ethnic groups, but also these products can be sold for income for the families. Agricultural husbandry was also seen as another important vocational skill for girls in these communities. In addition, Bahnar community members suggested that forestry, fishery, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) subjects should be taught in higher levels.

For Khmer communities, vocational education and learning skills were regarded as the most important and feasible by all stakeholders. The Khmer regarded creating jobs and developing skills for the local economy as very important so they can remain in their communes and not have to leave to work for others in the city. The community staff of Truong Tho said that "supplementary and vocational classes are very useful, as they provide children with knowledge and skills to find jobs (e.g., veterinary work, aquaculture, and repairing motorbikes)."

Financial Support for Girls and Families

As noted above, girls from all communities suggested they would go to school if they had learning materials, food, and clothes. Stipends for girls from poor families are one effective strategy for addressing the shortage of food and money for fees and school supplies. Additionally, stakeholders suggested materials, food and stipends should be supplied to girls in boarding schools.

For the J'rai, Khmer, and Banhar, stipends for or provision of notebooks, books, fees and transport were regarded as the most important. Khmer community leaders noted that the school construction fees for poorest households also should be waived. Khmer girls and families also noted that a provision of a bicycle would assist in getting girls to school.

The Banhar community proposed that scholarships for high achieving girls to continue in eighth and ninth grade were suggested as a strategy; girls who completed these grades would be prepared for employment and would serve as models for other girls in the community.

Regulation of current policies to support boarding schools is needed. While boarding exists in some commune schools, for example, in Bac Ha district, the facilities are in such poor condition that girls do not feel safe to stay or cannot care for themselves adequately. Girls said they need "to have blankets, sleeping mats, cooking pots, rice, firewood, textbooks and notebooks for schooling."

For the Khmer in Cau Ngang, there are few boarding schools or places in boarding schools for girls. Community staff of Truong Tho observed, "Each commune has thousands of students, but few who are good or excellent can be selected for boarding school. I propose that more boarding schools should be opened..., at present, the quota is only four students per commune which is very low82" Boarding schools were regarded as a solution to address the problem of many children being pulled out of school when their parents had to travel far from the commune to work. In addition, if these girls are given scholarships while in boarding school, they would not have to work to earn money and the families could reduce expenditures when they do not have to pay for their daughters' education.

5. Summary of Solutions

Several strategies (the importance of new pedagogical practices, the use of advocacy, and the availability of micro-finance schemes) were common to all stakeholder groups. Other strategies were suggested by only one, two, or three stakeholder groups; however, a few overall patterns were identifiable within all the responses. First, the more removed stakeholders were from local contexts, the more structural and broadly targeted were their proposed strategies. Almost all district and provincial officials, for example, suggested strategies that applied to all ethnic groups. Stakeholders at more local levels (i.e., community members, parents, and students) proposed solutions that tended to be more specific to their ethnic group, and more grounded in specific contexts (i.e., Khmer parents suggestion to waive the school construction fee).

Second, all stakeholder groups suggested strategies to implement within *other* stakeholder groups. For example, teachers of Bahnar girls thought Bahnar girls could benefit from life skills and communication training. At the same time, community members, parents, and students suggested that teachers of Bahnar girls could learn how to behave in a friendlier manner toward Bahnar girls. These statements indicate that cross-stakeholder dialogue could be valuable.

Additionally, some stakeholder groups identified strategies for change within their own group. Teachers suggested changes in pedagogy; community members suggested improving community leadership skills; and parents suggested parent clubs and girls' clubs. Province and district officials, as well as girls themselves, did not suggest strategies directed at themselves. This suggests that in many cases, though stakeholders desired certain interventions, they did not yet have the skills, knowledge, or resources to create, or implement them. It also suggests that community members, teachers, parents, and girls and boys together are all key actors in improving and transforming girls' schooling.

See Annex 4 for a summary of the solutions identified by stakeholders and ethnic groups.

Recommendations

The barriers and solutions identified by the stakeholders shed light on the realities and concerns faced by the direct beneficiaries and providers of education for the four ethnic groups. To respond to the issues affecting girls' access to lower secondary education, interventions must be implemented at various levels: at local, provincial and national levels. Some interventions involve little or no cost and can be implemented immediately to great effect. At the same time, others require more deliberate processes to create an enabling policy environment. Consultations among policymakers across various sectors are also needed. This would allow critical assessments of opportunities and constraints to ensure the development of policy measures that are effective and holistic.

This section describes some of the short term as well as the medium and long term strategies that can be adopted, either by immediate action or through further policy analysis and consultations.

Short Term Strategies

Some short term strategies can be easily implemented with low costs, as long as strong commitment exists from all stakeholders, including community leaders, school leaders, parents and teachers.

Advocacy and Community Level Capacity Building

Advocacy has been used effectively in many countries to bring about awareness and change perceptions about the need for educating girls (Kane, 2004). The types of advocacy suggested by stakeholders are supported by research on community participation and management. Involving local communities is particularly effective with groups who are underrepresented in education, and can promote education equity. Advocacy campaigns about positive attitudes and behaviours, and women's, girl's, and boy's clubs have been shown to impact girls' attendance and dropout rates, and even to change patterns of early marriage and pregnancy (UNICEF 2004; Rugh and Bossert, 1998).

Capacity building at the community level moves beyond awareness to local action, and involves "real community participation" which can be an important process that allows for change in the cultural norms that adversely affect girls. Community participation in management of schools, girls' clubs and parents' clubs are other forms of community enablement that helps create ownership and raise accountability.

While much community advocacy and capacity building can be implemented immediately at the local level, experience from Vietnam's National Gender Strategy and Plan of Action suggests advocacy and community mobilization initiatives are most effective and inclusive when they are systematically implemented and intersectoral in nature. They also should include capacity development, the encouragement of partnerships and cooperation, and effective management of financial resources (Asian Development Bank, 2002).

Stipends or Elimination of Direct Costs

Elimination of direct costs and creative uses of stipends to continue supporting girls' access are also possible measures. Direct costs can be eliminated at the commune level (e.g., construction costs), or at the district or provincial level (e.g., school feeding programs for boarding children). With regard to financial support, targeting households with girls of lower secondary age needs to be a national and/or provincial policy, and effectively implemented and monitored at the commune level. This will further require the support of community leaders and village heads in identifying and supporting these families. Criteria must also be used to identify the neediest families or girls so that stipends are used for those in extreme poverty, those out-of-school, and those who are likely to discontinue schooling.

Boarding and Sanitation Facilities

Another important strategy is the provision of adequate and separate boarding and sanitation facilities for boys and girls. Safe boarding and sanitation facilities are known to be particularly important for retaining girls in secondary school, given their transition into puberty (FAWE, 2004; UNICEF, 2004b). Experience suggests that involving girls in identifying types of latrines and locations for them and for related supplies can be critical in determining whether the latrines will be used (UNICEF, 2004). In other countries, girls' attendance at school improved when they had access to sanitary facilities and products (FAWE, 2004).

Building Additional Secondary Schools

Building additional secondary schools entails a higher cost and commitment, but it can be done at local commune or district levels, with community support. While much effort has been placed on building secondary schools and branch schools in every commune through Programme 135, some communes still do not have a secondary school (e.g., Truong Tho in Tra Vinh). The Government's short term strategy is to effectively identify those communes in need of secondary schools, then raise community support to help build them.

Medium and Long Term Strategies

Medium and long term strategies often require more coordination, planning, and commitment and may often include higher costs than short-term strategies. They are also more likely to require further analysis through multi-sectoral assessments and consultations at policy level. Though potentially time-consuming and costly, research on girls' education shows intersectoral strategies that address the combination of factors affecting girls are the most effective (Kane, 2004), and therefore, critically important.

School Leaders and Teachers' Professional Development

School capacity is an important variable affecting instructional quality and corresponding student achievement (Newmann, King, and Youngs, 2000). Additionally, school leadership and professional development of teachers are essential elements in improving school capacity, as well as the knowledge and skills of teachers (Fullan, 2002). Professional development, therefore, would take into consideration the needs of school leaders, as well as teacher development. A growing body of literature related to the education of ethnically and linguistically diverse students also points to the importance of both cognitive and social learning (Schoenfeld, 1999), and the need for teachers to increase their cultural competence (Williams, 2003). Teachers are likely to teach more effectively as they develop greater awareness of ethnic minority group cultures and how student perceive the school environment and relationships therein.

Effective professional development is ongoing, reflective, relevant and applied to school contexts (Hassell, 1999). Therefore, professional development that aims to change attitudes and behaviors about girls and ethnic groups is a long term commitment that cannot be fulfilled through single training sessions. Providing mentoring or opportunities for educators to meet in learning communities are additional methods of supporting ongoing professional learning.

Child-centered and Culturally Appropriate Pedagogy

Various stakeholders in the study identified child-centered teaching as an important area needed for improvement. A large body of research suggests that student-centered pedagogical teaching methods, such as active learning, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning, in general do improve student performance (Prince, 2004). Many of the elements within these practices should be adapted to improve the school experience and engagement of ethnic minority girls.

Safe Learning Environment

In addition to a safe physical environment, the psychological, spiritual, and

cultural well-being of adolescent girls from these ethnic groups is important for their retention in school. One strategy for creating a safe, child-friendly learning environment is to develop awareness and training for teachers and school administrators about creating schools that are free of discrimination, prejudice, and psychological and physical danger. Discrimination and bullying were reported by Vietnamese youth of non-majority ethnic groups in research conducted by the Vietnamese Youth Association et al. (2006).

Pedagogical training, based on the concept of Child-friendly schools, should be made available to teachers in these ethnic communities. Teachers need to be supported in creating friendly relations between themselves and learners, and between and among the learners. This is a means of encouraging children to actively participate in the classroom and the school activities (UNESCO, 2004). Friendly relations and active participation are also supportive of girl children who do not have Vietnamese language skills, as they allow girls to acquire the language in a natural way - through play and activity with other children.

Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education

Continued implementation and additional policy support for Decree 38 is a medium and long term strategy. This decree makes special provisions for: (1) ethnic minority language teaching in schools and ethnic minority language teaching for staff working within the areas of ethnic groups; (2) school readiness programmes for pre-school ethnic minority students before entering Grade 1; (3) Vietnamese language strengthening through subjects for ethnic minority students; and (4) support to teachers who teach ethnic minority languages. Policies to effectively implement this decree for teaching ethnic minority languages require flexibility to be suitable to the local needs. Supporting this decree includes providing learning aids and reference materials for ethnic groups in their mother tongue to support oral and written learning. Implementing this decree also calls for policies regarding teacher training and on-the-job training in the methods of teaching Vietnamese to second language learners.

Research suggests that effective bilingual education policies aim for full acquisition of mother tongue languages in the early years of schooling. Additionally, it is extremely beneficial for children if materials in local languages - such as those that were observed in some of the schools - continue to be developed. The use of civil society organizations to do this is important (Kosonen, 2004).

Gender Awareness-Raising

Gender training for school leaders and teachers, as well as community members and parents is an important strategy to address gender inequalities (Kane, 2004), and policies that support community development as well as teacher professional development should aim at mainstreaming gender components. For gender

trainings in education, they should, at a minimum, include awareness of gender bias in curriculum, teaching and learning materials, and pedagogy; gender dynamics in student-student and teacher-student relationships; and understanding the gender dynamics in families and society and the implications for education.

Research on education in Vietnam suggests that many teachers are deeply influenced by Confucian values, which may contribute to attitudinal differences toward boys and girls - namely, that education is less relevant for girls (Liu, 2001). Since many teachers are not from ethnic groups, gender training should also incorporate understanding of the relevant cultural contexts of teachers as well as students.

Teacher Recruitment from Ethnic Groups

Another strategy to develop educators' cultural competence related to ethnic groups and their ability to teach in the ethnic language is to recruit teachers, particularly female teachers, from the local ethnic group. This strategy is long term as it requires supporting students through their secondary education and into teacher training. Findings also point to the importance of effective deployment and incentive schemes, so that teachers can be effectively supported to return. Research has found that recruiting students from rural areas and then training them in urban areas, without effective deployment systems or incentives to return to their communities, can result in these teachers remaining in urban areas or leaving the teaching profession altogether. At the same time, teachers who are not of the ethnic group but are deployed in these rural communities often have high attrition rates because they face challenges of poor living conditions, and lack of language skills. Single women, in particular, may not feel safe (Macdonald, 1999).

Vocational Education and Training

When Community Learning Centers (CLCs) are available to implement vocational training an option, previous research suggests that basic education and literacy as well as livelihood skills oriented toward local economic opportunities (UNICEF, 2002) can also be taught.

Vocational training may be targeted to support girls to continue in school, and at the same time, livelihood skills training could be offered to train OOS girls who have younger sisters so they can contribute to supporting younger girl siblings in their education pursuits. Implementation of supplementary training, however, is essential so as not to make livelihood training more attractive to girls than the continuation of their formal schooling.

Poverty Reduction Strategies

Intersectoral strategies and programmes such as Programme 135 or HEPR can be effective in mitigating the economic constraints to girls' access to education, if

relevant sectors and levels coordinate efforts for economic development of communes. Ministries and sectors can collaborate more effectively to ensure that communities and households in all mountainous and ethnic minority areas develop their economic conditions. To this end, they must; have access to electricity, convenient roads, and water supply; learn improved farming techniques, and receive quality education and healthcare services. Further, one evaluation of basic education for ethnic minorities (Chantrill, 2002) found that greater autonomy at the provincial and district levels could better suit local conditions and allow communities and schools greater flexibility, thus enhancing the implementation of policies.

Micro-finance schemes are another possible poverty reduction strategy to be considered by policymakers, as research has shown successes of various micro-finance initiatives in increasing girls' access to education. Micro-finance used for investment projects potentially increases the family income and provides food; both of these kinds of support are needed by girls from these four ethnic groups to attend school. Some micro-finance schemes could also be implemented specifically to address gender inequalities. For instance, micro-finance schemes provided in conjunction with vocational training for women and girls could provide direct benefit to girls' participation in education. Schemes that particularly support mothers' development of entrepreneurial projects have also been shown to promote girls' school attendance in Vietnam (Hinnen, 2004).

Policies that create alternative economic opportunities, through micro-finance schemes, are also needed where few economic alternatives exist, such as in the communes visited in Tra Vinh province. Opportunities for Khmer families to earn money in their local communes will, in part, address the problem of families migrating for temporary work, which adversely affects their children's opportunity for schooling.

Conclusion

In the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents face enormous challenges to learn, to form relationships, to shape their identities and to acquire the social and practical skills they need to become active and productive adults. This transition from childhood to adulthood also corresponds with the transition from primary school to secondary school, a point at which many girls and boys around the world drop out of school. While adolescence is a vulnerable time for all young people, this is particularly true for girls. The education of girls from non-majority ethnic groups and from rural areas is a concern in most regions of the world where they are underrepresented in the completion rates of primary school, as well as in enrolment rates for formal secondary school.

This study has provided an important and unprecedented opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders from four of Vietnam's ethnic groups - Bahnar, H'mong, J'rai, and Khmer - as well as Kinh and non-Kinh district and government officials to identify the barriers that prevent girls from completing primary and continuing on to post-primary education. It also gives them an opportunity to voice creative solutions. The study has illuminated ways in which the barriers are shaped by the geographic, economic, and socio-cultural contexts of ethnic groups; it has also highlighted ways in which some of the most effective solutions, as suggested by the stakeholders themselves, can be implemented and inform policymaking to transform the futures of girls and boys in the ethnic minority contexts. Some of these solutions are within the reach of specific stakeholder groups, others will require close collaboration in further exploration towards effective policy measures.

It is anticipated that the contributions of this study's findings will be an important companion to the policies and documents of the Ministry of Education and Training and the Government of Viet Nam as it seeks to address the challenge of securing the right to education for all of Vietnam's children and youth.

Annex

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN: BARRIERS TO TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC MINORITY GIRLS

System/Policy Barriers

- Lack of effective implementation of government policy supporting ethnic groups- language, culture, identity
- Lack of socio-economic development in rural areas, lack of job opportunities for girls, wage inequity
- Lack of capacity at local level for implementation

Education Policy
- Lack of integration of gender and ethnic group perspective into curriculum, texts, instruction
- Lack of second chance options, particularly for pregnant, married girls

Community Barriers

- Improper perception of the value of educating girls
- Attitudes towards girls who work to earn a living vs. girls who study in school
- Early marriage in a patriarchal system
- Early marriage in a matriarchal system

School Level Barriers

- Poor teaching methods
- Teaching/learning materials; extra-curricular activities, and a lack of gender sensitivity
- Ineffective use of language of instruction
- Unfriendly teacher-student relationships
- Poor student-student relationships

Household/Individual Barriers

- Opportunity costs (work/labour)
- Low anticipated rate of return for girls' education
- Attitudes about girls' future and their roles (marriage)
- Poverty
- HIV/AIDS
- Trafficking

Annex 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN: SOLUTIONS TO INCREASE TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC MINORITY GIRLS

System/Macro-level Policy Interventions

- Effective implementation of policies supporting girls and ethnic minority education, esp. bilingual or mother tongue instruction
- Labour force equity policies, and regulations on child labour
- Intersectoral strategies to support community economic and social development
- Capacity building and local participation

Education Policy
- ICT for broadcasting courses/classrooms
- Second Chance Schooling
- Continuous assessment

Community Intervention

- Microfinance and entrepreneurial projects to support families & girls
- Community advocacy regarding girls' rights to education
- Social mobilization to address social problem, such as early pregnancy, health
- Community input into school management, teaching materials
- Mothers' clubs

School Interventions

- Mother tongue or bilingual instruction
- Gender and ethnic sensitive curriculum/materials and teaching processes
- Flexible schedules
- Female and ethnic minority teachers
- Boarding schools with adequate facilities and materials
- Enrolment quotas or advising to girls of ethnic groups to enroll in non-traditional courses
- 2nd chance schools with livelihood/skills focus
- Girls' clubs
- Life and livelihood skills

Household Interventions

- Scholarships for girls' education
- Time saving devices for household/farm labour

Annex 3

Table A: Barriers Identified by Stakeholders (by Importance across Ethnic Groups)

Barrier	Mean ranking	Rank by ethnic group
Economic and financial	1.2	H'mong 1 J'rai 1 Khmer 1 Bahnar 2
Need to work	2.2	H'mong 2 J'rai 2 Bahnar 3 Khmer 2
Poor quality of teaching and learning in schools	2.5	H'mong 4 J'rai 3 Khmer 3 Bahnar 1
Education lacks value for parents and girls	4.2	H'mong 3 J'rai 5 Khmer 5 Bahnar 4
Inadequate school infrastructure	4.2	H'mong 5 J'rai 4 Khmer 4 Bahnar 5

This tables show barriers ranked in importance by stakeholders. Mean rankings are used, with "1" the highest ranking. Economic and financial considerations received the highest ranking.

Table B: Comparison of "Deeper" Meanings of Barriers (by Ethnic Group)

Barriers	H'mong	J'rai	Bahnar	Khmer
Economic and financial	Poor agricultural resources to produce income; Lack of rice and clothes; Large families for which to provide	Lack of farmland near home; hunger; lack of employment; low income; poor women's health ; poor study conditions at home; inadequate school supplies (bicycles)	Hunger; inadequate school supplies (bicycles) and clothes	Lack of farmland and need to work far from home; lack of school materials (textbooks); lack of transportation (secondary
Need to work	Work in fields; Household work	Need to work at family responsibilities such as hosting festivities; domestic and agricultural labour	Role of girls within matriarchal system to work	Housework; providing extra paid labour to the family
Poor quality teaching and learning in schools	Few H'mong speaking teachers; lack of active learning; lack gender sensitive materials, lack of encouragement; Girls' low self-esteem	Lack of mother tongue instruction in primary and secondary; lack of child-friendly environment; poor student-student relationships	Few Bahnar language speakers at secondary level; lack of gender sensitive teaching methods; lack of child-friendly learning environment	Lack of mother tongue instruction in primary and secondary: lack of active teaching; lack of child-friendly relationships

Education lacks value for parents and girls	Patriarchal practices; valuing girls' household and field work over school; Lack of relevant skills and employment	Lack of job-school perceived connection; matriarchal social system - work, time-consuming customs, early marriage; gender discrimination - preference for less educated girls	Employment outside household not valued; peer-pressure phenomenon; Expectation girls marry at early puberty	Competing family priorities regarding work
Inadequate school infrastructure	Poor boarding and sanitation facilities; long distances	Poor sanitation facilities; unattractive buildings	n/a	Poor sanitation; unpleasant environments

This table shows sub-meanings stakeholders attribute to barriers. These meanings differ by ethnic group.

Annex 4

Table C: Solutions Identified by Stakeholders and Ethnic Groups

Stakeholders	Solutions
Province and district officers	Change in pedagogy (all ethnic groups)
	Advocacy on broad benefits of education (all ethnic groups)
	Advocacy on value of girls' education through videotapes and religious leaders (Khmer)
	Advocacy on use of time-saving devices (all ethnic groups)
	Training of community leaders (all ethnic groups)
	Intersectoral strategies (all ethnic groups)
	Micro-finance schemes (all ethnic groups)
Commune leaders/ Community	Change in pedagogy (all ethnic groups)
	Integrating Vietnamese language into pre-schools (all ethnic groups)
	Learning in local language until Grade 3 (H'mong, J'rai)
	Hire local people as teachers (J'rai)
	Hire female Bahnar teachers at pre- and first grade (Bahnar)
	Comprehensive teaching of Vietnamese (Bahnar)
	Hire ethnic, bilingual Khmer teachers (Khmer)
	Sex education for students and teachers (Bahnar)
	Encourage friendly teacher behavior toward girls (Bahnar)
	Advocacy about early marriage (H'mong, Bahnar, J'rai)
	Improve community leadership skills (J'ra i)
	Mothers' and girls' clubs (all ethnic groups)
	Vocational training for girls - job training (Khmer)
	Vocational training for girls - dressmaking, weaving, and traditional handicrafts (H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar)
	Vocational training for girls - forestry, fisher y, etc. at Grades 5 and 6 (Bahnar)

	Waiving of school construction fee (Khmer)
	Scholarships for girls in lower secondary (Bahnar)
	Building more boarding schools (Khmer)
Teachers	Change in pedagogy (all ethnic groups)
	Training in gender awareness and skills (H'mong)
	Gender education for lower secondary girls - communication skills (Bahnar)
	Extra-currricular activities outside class for girls (all ethnic groups)
	Advocacy targeted to village heads on value of education (H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar)
	Micro-finance schemes - farmer products and vocational training (J'rai)
Parents	Change in pedagogy (all ethnic groups)
	Leaning in local language (H'mong)
	Build more secondary schools (H'mong, Khmer)
	Separate boarding rooms by gender (H'mong)
	Extra-curricular activities and resources (Bahnar, J'rai)
	Safe, friendly learning environments through dancing, singing, etc (all ethnic groups)
	Encourage friendly teacher behavior toward girls (Bahnar)
	Advocacy and community enablement to address girls' self-esteem (Khmer)
	Mothers' and girls' clubs (Khmer)
	Micro-finance small loans for farm products, business, animal husbandary, handicrafts, etc (all ethnic groups)
	Vocational training for girls - dressmaking, weaving, and traditional handicrafts (H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar)
Students	Change in pedagogy (all ethnic groups)
	Safe, friendly learning environments through dancing, singing, etc. (all ethnic groups)
	Encourage friendly teacher behavior toward girls (Bahnar)
	Advocacy and community enablement to address girls' self-esteem (Khmer)
	Vocational training for girls - dressmaking, weaving, and traditional handicrafts (H'mong, J'rai, Bahnar)
	Stipends/provision of school supplies (J'rai, Khmer, Banhar)
	Provision of bicycles (Khmer)

Table D: Solutions Identified by Stakeholders (by Level)

Scale	Solutions
Individual/ Household	Prioritize assistance *to* households with girls transitioning to secondary Prioritize assistance *within* households to girls Shift household sharing of work from girls to boys or other family members
School Level	Change in pedagogy Teacher professional development multi -age/grade teaching, student-centered learning, bilingual education, gender sensitivity Adapting curriculum and materials to ethnic groups Improvement of school facilities building more secondary school s Creating safe, friendly learning environments
Community Level	Community advocacy, mobilization, and enablement for individual/household strategies capacity building - advocacy capacity building - enablement Implement and monitor financial support to hou seholds with girls transitions to secondary - commune level On-going creative thinking by Girls and Women's Clubs to support household level change
Marco-level Policies (national, provincial, district)	Develop community infrastructure and economies Develop micro-finance projects Support vocational learning Provide scholarships/financial support for girls

Annex 5

RESEARCH TOOLS

1. Interview Protocol
Non-Attending Girl Student
(Lower secondary age)

Purpose of the Interview

To gather in-depth information about the reasons for girls not continuing their studies in lower secondary school and to explore possible interventions that promote girls' lower secondary school attendance and participation.

Background Information

Village/Commune_____ District/Province _____

Name of School in/linked to Village_____ Branch_____ Main_____

Ethnic Group_____

Sex   Female_____ Male_____ Age _____

Current Status in School: Attending_____ Not-attending _____

Last Grade Completed: _____

How many siblings in family?   Sisters_____ Brothers_____

How many are currently in school?   Sisters_____ Brothers _____

Questions

1. Please tell me about your experience studying in school.

   Probe:

   What were some difficulties encountered?

   What were some happy/positive experiences?

   Tell me what you liked or didn't like about your classes?

   Tell me about a good or bad experience with your friends? (girls and boys) with teachers?

(If has a brother) How has studying in school been different from your brother's experience?

Could you tell me about any other good or bad experiences in school?

2. What are your reasons for not continuing your studies in lower secondary school?

Probe:

Could you explain further about what you mean?

You said... How has that caused you to stop studying in school?

(If has a brother that has dropped out) Are these the same reasons that caused your brother to drop out? If no, what caused him to drop out?

Are there any other reasons?

3. What would have made your school experience better?

Probe:

How would that (the reasons given) have made your experience better?

What else could improve your experience?

4. What would be helpful to you or your family that would enable you to return to lower secondary school?

Probe: In what ways (why) would that be helpful?

Are there any other things that would help you and your family so you could go to school?

5. How would you complete this sentence.

I would return to lower secondary school, if _____

6. What are your wishes or dreams for your future?

Probe:

What would you like your life to be like five years from now?

What might you be doing?

7. How would going to school help you achieve those dreams?

Probe: Is there anything else that would help you achieve your dreams?

2. Interview Protocol
Non-Attending Boy Student
(Lower secondary age)

Purpose of the Interview

To gather in-depth information about the reasons for girls not continuing their studies in lower secondary school and to explore possible interventions that promote girls' lower secondary school attendance and participation.

Background Information

Village/Commune_____ District/Province_____

Name of School in/linked to Village_____ Branch_____ Main_____

Ethnic Group_____

Sex   Female_____ Male_____ Age _____

Current Status in School: Attending_____ Not-attending _____

Last Grade Completed: _____

How many siblings in family?   Sisters_____ Brothers_____

How many are currently in school?   Sisters_____ Brothers _____

Questions

1. Tell me about your experience studying in school.

> Probe:
>
> What were some difficulties encountered?
>
> What were some happy/positive experiences?
>
> Tell me what you liked or didn't like about your classes?
>
> Tell me about a good or bad experience with your friends? (girls and boys) with teachers?
>
> (If has a sister) How has studying in school been different from your sister's experience?
>
> Are there any other good or bad experiences in school you could tell me?

2. What are your reasons for not continuing your studies in lower secondary school?

> Probe:
>
> Could you explain further about what you mean?
>
> You said... ., how has that caused you to stop studying in school?

(If has a sister that has dropped out) Are these the same reasons that caused your sister to drop out? If no, what caused her to drop out?

Are there any other reasons?

3. What would have made your school experience better?

Probe:

How would that (the reasons given) have made your experience better?

What else could improve your experience?

4. What would be helpful to you or your family that would enable you to return to lower secondary school?

Probe: In what ways (why) would that be helpful?

Are there any other things that would help you and your family so you could go to school?

5. How would you complete this sentence.

I would return to lower secondary school, if _____

6. What are your wishes or dreams for your future?

Probe:

What would you like your life to be like five years from now?

What might you be doing?

7. How would going to school help you achieve those dreams?

Probe: Is there anything else that would help you achieve your dreams?

3. Focus Group Protocol
Attending Girl Student
(Primary grade 3/5)

Purpose of the Interview

To gather in-depth information about the reasons why some girls from non-majority ethnic groups continue studying in lower secondary school, and to determine interventions that promote girls' lower secondary school attendance and participation.

Background Information

Village/Commune_____ District/Province_____

Name of School in/linked to Village_____ Branch_____ Main_____

Ethnic Group_____

Sex   Female_____ Male_____ Age _____

Current Status in School: Attending_____ Not-attending _____

Grade in School:_____

Questions

1. Tell me about your experience studying in school.

> Probe:

> What have been some difficulties?

> What were some happy/positive experiences?

> Tell me what you like or don't like about your classes?

> Tell me about a good or bad experience with your friends? (girls and boys) with teachers?

> Are there any other good or bad experiences in school you could tell me?

2. What would make studying in school more enjoyable?

> Probe:

> How would that (the reasons given) make your experience better?

> What else could improve your experience?

3. Are you planning to continue studying in lower secondary school next year?

> If yes, why?

> If not, why?

> Are there other reasons why you will continue/not continue?
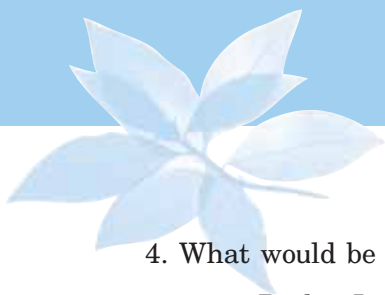
4. What would be helpful to you or your family to continue your education?

> Probe: In what ways would that be helpful?

> Are there any other things that could be helpful for you to continue your education?

5. What are your wishes or dreams for your future?

> Probe:

> What would you like your life to be like five years from now?

> What might you be doing?

6. How would going to school help you achieve those dreams?

> Probe: Is there anything else that would help you achieve your dreams?

4. Focus Group Protocol
Attending Girl Student
(Lower secondary grade 6)

Purpose of the Interview

To gather in-depth information about the reasons for some girls from non-majority ethnic groups to continue studying in lower secondary school, and to determine interventions that promote girls' lower secondary school attendance and participation.

Background Information

Village/Commune_____ District/Province_____

Name of School in/linked to Village_____ Branch_____ Main_____

Ethnic Group_____

Sex   Female_____ Male_____ Age _____

Current Status in School: Attending_____ Not-attending _____

Grade in School:_____

Questions

1. Tell me about your experience studying in school.

> Probe:

> What have been some difficulties?

> What were some happy/positive experiences?

> Tell me what you like or don't like about your classes?

> Tell me about a good or bad experience with your friends? (girls and boys) with teachers?

> Are there any other good or bad experiences in school you could tell me?

2. What are your reasons for continuing your studies in lower secondary school?

> Probes:

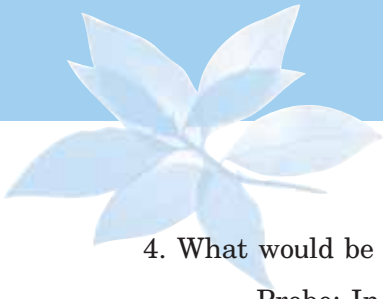> Could you explain further about what you mean?

> You said... How did that influence you to continue studying?

3. What would help you to enjoy more your studies in school?

> Probe:

> How would that (the reasons given) make your experience better?

> What else could improve your experience?

4. What would be helpful to you or your family to continue your education?

Probe: In what ways would that be helpful?

Are there any other things that could be helpful for you to continue your education?

5. How would you complete this sentence?

I will continue in school if _____

6. What are your wishes or dreams for your future?

Probe:

What would you like your life to be like five years from now?

What might you be doing?

7. How would going to school help you achieve those dreams?

Probe: Is there anything else that would help you achieve your dreams?

5. Focus Group Protocol
Parents of Non-Attending Girl Children
(divided by sex)

Purpose of the Focus Group

To gather in-depth information about the reasons for girls not continuing their study in secondary school and to explore possible interventions that promote girls' lower secondary school attendance and participation

Background Information

Village/Commune_____ District/Province _____

Name of School_____ Main_____ Branch _____

Ethnic Group_____

Number of Participants   Male_____ Female _____

Number and Current Status of Participants' Secondary School Age Children

      Boys Attending_____ Girls Attending _____

      Boys Not attending_____ Girls Not Attending _____

Questions

1. What are some reasons that girls from the ___ ethnic group do not continue their studies in lower secondary school?

2. What encourages girls to continue studying in lower secondary school?

Facilitator: After getting the participants' ideas about these reasons or factors, ask them to rank the statements on the cards in the card sort activity. At this point, they can write on the blank cards any additional reasons they have discussed.

We are going to further discuss the issues that you ranked in the card sort and how they have influenced your girls in dropping out from school.

    [Restate the first ranked factor]: Could you describe a specific example or tell a story of how this has caused your girl(s) to drop out of school?

    (Get an example, if possible, from each parent present)

Restate each of the top five ranked factors and repeat the above question.

Facilitator: Conduct the activity with the Problem/Solution Matrix (Appendix?) - listing each of the five factors in the left column, and then seeking the groups input as to what would be the best solutions, at the different levels (community, government, family), for addressing the problem.

- Provide the focus group with a list of possible interventions, as a way to help them identify solutions. Ask them to add any interventions they think are helpful.
- In identifying possible solutions to the problems, the group should work toward consensus. They need not identify an intervention for all levels, as one solution may be the most appropriate in their context, and from their perspective. The community group should be encouraged to identify interventions the community could do, and not only those at the school or governmental level.
- Ask the group to identify the most desirable and most feasible interventions for each solution.

After identifying possible solutions/interventions ask the group the following questions for further clarification/information.

3. [Repeat the most desirable solution for the first factor]

Why is this the best solution to [repeat the problem it addresses]

How will this intervention be the most helpful?

4. [Repeat the most feasible solution]

How might this solution be best implemented?

5. If the most desirable and most feasible solutions differ, ask...

How is this solution more feasible than the best solution you identified?

What would need to happen to be able to implement the most desirable solution?

Repeat questions 4, 5 and 6 for the most desirable and feasible interventions/solutions generated for each factor.

6. What do you wish for the future of your young girls?

Probe:

Is there anything else that you hope for the girls to do/achieve?

7. Describe how education and the school can help them to achieve this future?

Probe:

Is there anything else that could help girls to continue studying in school and achieving their dreams?

8. Is there anything more you would like to say about the education for your girls?

6. Focus Group Protocol
School Principal/Teacher/District Education Officers
Community Leaders

Purpose of the Interview

To gather in-depth information about the reasons for girls not continuing their study in lower secondary school and to explore possible interventions that promote girls' lower secondary school attendance and participation

Background Information

Village/Commune_____ District/Province_____

Name of School_____ Main_____ Branch _____

Ethnic Group_____

Number of Participants: Male_____ Female _____

Number of Participants: Community leaders_____ Principals_____

       Teachers_____ District Ed. Officers _____

Questions

1. What are some reasons that girls from the_____ ethnic group do not continue their studies in lower secondary school?

2. What encourages girls to continue studying in lower secondary school?

Facilitator: After getting the participants ideas about these reasons or factors, ask them to rank the statements on the cards in the card sort activity. At this point, they can write on the blank cards any additional reasons they have discussed.

3. We are going to further discuss the issues that you ranked in the card sort and how they affect girls from not continuing to study at lower secondary school.

    [Restate the first ranked factor]

    Could you describe a specific example or tell a story of how this has affected a family and their girl from continuing in school? (Get an example, if possible, from each community participant)

    Restate each of the top five ranked factors and repeat the above question.

Facilitator: Conduct the activity with the Problem/Solution Matrix - listing each of the five factors in the left column, and then seeking the groups input as to what would be the best solutions, at the different levels (community, government, family), for addressing the problem.

- Provide the focus group with a list of possible interventions to help them identify solutions. Ask them to add any interventions they think are helpful.
- In identifying possible solutions to the problems, the group should work toward consensus. They need not identify an intervention for all levels, as one solution may be the most appropriate in their context and from their perspective. The community group should be encouraged to identify interventions the community could do, and not only those at the school or governmental level.
- Ask the group to identify the most desirable and the most feasible interventions for each problem.

Following the identification of possible solutions/interventions, ask the group the following questions for further clarification/information.

4. [Repeat the most desirable solution for the first factor.]

   Why is this the best solution to [repeat the problem it addresses]?

   How will this intervention be the most helpful?

5. Repeat the most feasible solution. How might this solution be best implemented?

6. If the most desirable and most feasible solutions differ, ask...

   How is this solution more feasible than the best solution you identified?

   What would need to happen to be able to implement the most desirable solution?

Repeat questions 4, 5 and 6 for the most desirable and feasible interventions/solutions generated for each factor.

7. What do you as a community wish for the future of young girls?

   Probe:

   Is there anything else that you hope for the girls to do/achieve?

8. Describe how education and the school can help them to achieve this future?

   Probe:

   Is there anything else that could help girls to continue studying in school and achieving their dreams?

9. Is there anything more you would like to say about issues related to educating girls within your community/ethnic group?

7. Card Sort

Variables affecting Girls from non-majority ethnic groups

Sample:

The community groups for this activity should consist of a sample of six to eight parents per focus group drawn from the commune population, whose adolescent age girl children do not attend school. Another sample for the focus group would be community leaders and school administrators.

Instructions for Use:

Ask community groups to read each of the words on the cards. Then they should remove from the stack any of the cards that they believe are factors that are NOT related to their girl child dropping out of school, or not continuing in secondary school. They may also add as many "Other" factors as they think are relevant that are not on cards. Ask them to then rank order the top five-seven factors that are most related to why their girl children are not enrolled in school.

16 possible factors

- Difficulty in learning in Vietnamese Language
- Lack of relevancy of curriculum
- Lack of female teachers
- Lack of teachers from ethnic group
- Health issues prohibit attendance
- Work prohibits attendance
- School calendar or daily schedule prohibits attendance
- Lack of transportation to school
- Financial cost of schooling is too great
- Lack of adequate facilities at school
- Lack of quality education
- Lack of safety or security going to or in school
- Didn't complete primary education
- Didn't pass secondary exam
- Secondary education is not valuable
- Other_____

8. Problem/Solution Matrix

Barrier/Problem (Top 5 determined by group in card sort)	Solutions (specific intervention and level (gov't, NGO, community)				Most Desirable Solution	Most Feasible

9. School/Classroom Observations (Quantitative)

Village/Commune_____ / _____ District/Province_____ / _____

Ethnic Group(s) _____ / _____

Primary/Branch School_____ Number of Grades_____

Secondary School_____ Number of Grades _____

Obtain the data for the following three questions from the school principal or records.

1. Number of male_____ female_____ teachers in school

2. Principal and deputy principal male_____ female_____

Number of ethnic group girls and boys enrolled in each grade (Name each ethnic group, including Kinh)

Grade	Ethnic Group Girls	Ethnic Group Boys	Ethnic Group Girls	Ethnic Group Boys	Totals
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
Totals					

Categories for Classroom/School Observation

Grade Observed_____

Subject Observed_____

Time Observed_____

No. of girls_____ boys_____ attending class

No. of ethnic group students attending class (Kinh)___, other group (name_____) _____

10. School/Classroom Observations (Qualitative)

The following dimensions and statements within them serve only as a guide for observations by the qualitative researcher. There are other interactions you may observe and these should be noted. The researcher should write down in a field notebook the detailed descriptions of these dimensions, and other things seen, for later analysis. All of these statements should be considered with a gender and a cultural lens. For example, describing interactions between teachers, noting sex, ethnicity, gender statements, roles, cultural practices.

School Environment

Describe the quality of the facilities (school building, toilets, library).

Describe the interactions between teachers and administrators, among teachers, between teachers/principals and parents, and children.

Describe the resources and conditions of the resources in the school.

Describe school policies or practices that are visible in the school.

Classroom Environment

Describe the physical facilities/layout, and resources in the classroom (Draw a picture of layout)

Describe representations of girls, boys, and ethnic groups in the classroom - in decorations, materials, children's work

Describe rules and classroom norms within the classroom

Teaching Content

Describe the subject content observed and how it is taught

Describe how teachers involve students in the learning process

Describe teachers' use of language with students

Describe how teachers' assist students with learning/homework/class activities

Describe how teacher chooses students to participate in class activities

Pedagogy and Learning Process

Describe students' participation in the class lesson

Describe students' use of materials (text, learning materials, resources) for learning the lesson.

Classroom Management

Describe how teachers treat students - both praise and discipline

Describe how students interact in the classroom with each other

Describe students' involvement in classroom processes/decision making

School Activities outside the Classroom

Describe how students interact outside the classroom with each other

Describe which activities students are playing during free time/playground

Describe students' involvement in other school activities (e.g., monitor)

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