

Educating girls lifts their earning potential and their nations' economic growth. It also reduces child mortality, fertility rates, and the spread of AIDS. It increases the duration of girls' own lives and the human potential of the children they will bear. And it has important environmental benefits. Ultimately, getting more girls into school is critical for reducing poverty.

The World Bank's education lending increasingly supports governments' efforts to target girls. Despite these efforts, girls' education still lags behind that of boys in many developing countries. The causes are a complex mix of cultural, economic, and school-level factors.

As part of the World Bank's efforts to enhance women's participation in economic development, the Economic Development Institute (EDI) is working to demonstrate to policymakers the advantages of educating girls, to help planners and educators design effective approaches, and to educate the broader public about the social and economic benefits of educating girls. As part of its work, over the last several years, EDI has held seminars for government leaders, developed

handbooks, videos, and training manuals for officials, and created targeted handouts for journalists. Building on this ongoing work, as a contribution to the Fourth UN Conference on Women, EDI prepared this profile of three countries that are taking innovative and courageous steps to level the playing field in education for the benefit of girls.

In describing the activities of the three governments and their partnerships with bilateral and multilateral organizations and with NGOs, the booklet draws lessons that will be of value to policymakers in other countries. It strives to let the people who are working on girls' education in these countries, the parents of the girls who are benefiting, and the girls themselves tell their own stories about how these changes are affecting their lives. We hope that the lessons from these countries will guide government officials and NGOs in other countries as they increase their efforts to let education unlock the full human potential of girls.

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