

discrimination, it is very difficult to overcome this problem because the society is shaped in this way and that it will take many decades to reformulate people minds”.

When asked if those attitudes hindered girls’ potential in the classroom as well as in the community, most teachers agreed that while gender discrimination had an impact in undermining girls’ access, retention and success, negative behaviour takes years to change. “The good thing is that at the end of the day girls/women aren’t lost within their family cycle...they will end up being the people who always will take care of their family, which at least is a good thing that will make them proud...while boys will have to work hard to sustain their families” “Societies don’t expect much from girls... the major responsibilities in society and the family rely mostly on men, thus there is more need to prepare boys to face the challenge that lies ahead in life”. These all illustrate the way in which teachers as members of society, regardless of their socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, are socialized.

### *6.2.3 School Facilities and School Management*

School facilities play an important role in retaining students and to helping them to achieve at the end of the year. A good school with nice furniture is attractive for both children and parents. For instance, sitting in a classroom for three or four hours is not boring at all if children and teachers are well accommodated.

In the middle-class area, school facilities are in better condition. The classrooms are well furnished and the rainfall season does not pose any problems in the course of the academic period. In the upper-class area, schools are very much better and the school facilities are not only very nice, but are located on the bus route, allowing the free movement of students. During the rainfall season, children are not required to work as cleaners, and the time is spent on the learning/teaching process.

In poor areas of Luanda, because of the bad socio-economic conditions, the schools’ neighbours invade the schools to steal its furniture, roofs, doors, windows and anything that they may be able to use. In those areas, a growing number of schools are being

vandalised by people who have their own children studying there. Consequently, many parents are reluctant to send their children to those vandalized schools. "There is no point in sending children to an ugly and unfurnished school" and for that reason, they argue that their children are better off at home than in those kinds of schools.

In those schools, the toilets are in an *unhygienic condition* and in most cases boys and girls are obliged to use the same facilities. Since most girls are sent to primary school at the age of 10 or even older, they begin puberty while they are still in grade two or three, and sharing the toilets with boys becomes extremely embarrassing. This is another reason why many girls drop out of school before they complete their primary education. For example, in Cazenga most of schools have only one toilet facility that both boys and girls have to make use of. A student in Cazenga recounts that:

"When I want to use the toilet, I have to have a friend at the door to control the entrance of boys. Once, I went to the toilet to change my hygienic pad. Suddenly a boy got in and saw it. He started teasing me and I felt embarrassed."

A lack of furniture is another reason for many children, including girls, to abandon schools. Some girls complained that they would feel very tired after being seated for three to four hours on an empty container or on stones. Besides, some parents comment that due to the shortage of proper conditions, many unethical things happen that can lead to immoral behaviour. For example, the father of a thirteen years-old girl said, "When my girl told me that boys in her class are acting immorally towards girls, I simply decided to take my girl from that school before she gets pregnant."

Other educational factors include the lack of educational facilities within reasonable distances, dilapidated schools and classrooms ('Since schools should look better than the home'; 'If the school is ugly and not fit for humans, why should our daughters go to school?'), and the lack of latrines (which was repeatedly given as a reason for girls having stopped going to school). It is noteworthy that although all educational factors mentioned above have the same impact on boys as it has on girls, the former are still

encouraged to attend school despite those conditions, while girls are discouraged instead.

Factors pertaining to the 'supply' facet of education for girls range from pedagogic aspects of the education system in place, as well as school management at both national and local levels, and the infrastructure component as well as the human element of the people who parents trust to educate their children, the school authorities. For instance, parents also reported that the lack of follow-up by responsible officials was one of the causes contributing to the dropout rate. In the majority of cases, neither the teachers nor the principals attempted to identify the reasons for their students' absence, even when the latter had received high grades and exhibited no particular learning or behavioural disorders.

Parents who had originally been reluctant to send their daughters to school stated that 'If the teacher or the principal does not care, why should I? I need her labour; she helps her mother at home. If the school officials do not care about her education, I don't care either'. It seems that parents expect teachers to be 'serious about their work'; and young girls stated that they would have 'gone back to school or convinced their parents to allow them to return to school if the teachers had cared about them'.

The above statements have serious implications for the educational officers. They symbolise the fact that education is not limited to the classroom and textbooks; they also involve the human element of teaching. Besides, inappropriate behaviour by teachers remains a bitter reality in government schools, especially in poor areas.

Corporal punishment, psychological degradation, the imposition of too many restrictions, excessive discipline and creating an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, especially by younger, inexperienced teachers are serious problems for both boys and girls. Parents from poor areas reported that their daughters 'Started to hate their school and their teacher' immediately upon encountering any of the above.

Although there were some, few children from higher-class areas reported physical punishment, and then they said that there was good reason for it. For example, a girl from Elizangela College said: "My teacher punished me because I was too naughty in the classroom". The management of the college tries to keep parents updated with everything that happens with children while they are at school. Parents reported that during the week they receive letters reporting on successes/failures, as well as on good or bad behaviour. This indicates that school management in upper-class schools is more organised and conscientious than that in poor areas. In the middle-class school, while management does not send weekly mail to parents, the principal and teachers hold a parent-teacher meeting every trimester so that parents get reports and other information regarding each quarter. All these are incentives for parents to keep their children in those schools.

This indicates that although there are factors that could be better conceptualised that are stopping girls from going to school, the above section illustrates that there are factors which could be better conceptualised that contribute to the dropout of girls in primary education. In other words, some factors do not directly prevent girls from gaining access; rather, they prevent children, including girls, from being retained at school. Those factors also prevent girls from achieving in schools.

### **6.3 Insecurity and Poverty-related Factors**

Insecurity-related factors in this study refer to crime, violence and insecurity on the roads due to disorganized traffic. Many parents showed serious concern in sending their children to school because they could not find people to help their children cross the roads. Also, the number of rapes and kidnappings is growing everywhere in Luanda.

For some parents is easy to leave the children at school, but it is very difficult for them to be waiting for their children in front of the school at knock-off time. Most of the private schools have school buses that pick the children up from home in the morning and at the end of the day, drop them off safely at their homes. However, very few parents can afford to pay for private school and/or private transport. Besides, in middle-

and upper-class areas, there are enough schools in the community and the use of transport is unnecessary for children who live close to the schools.

Sexual harassment involving schoolboys or male teachers and schoolgirls is increasingly being reported by girls and parents. When a father of fourteen- and twelve-year-old girls in Escola Grande do Cazenga heard that a thirteen-year-old had been impregnated by her teacher, he decided that his girls would only return to school if they had a female teacher.

In all countries, particularly those in the developing world, children of poor families are less apt enrol and more likely to drop out than children from better-off families (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991: 123). Household resources have a huge impact on the formal access (enrolment) as well as on the epistemic access (continuous attendance) of children, particularly of girls.

As was discussed in chapter 4, in poor families, children's labour is often critical to the income or survival of the household, especially in rural areas. This affects children's performance and weakens their resolve to continue to attend classes. Consequently, the number of dropouts increases, as well as the number of repeaters.

Although in urban areas of Luanda children are not forced to work as children do in rural areas, poor parents usually demand that children co-operate in housework activities and the selling of sweets and other small things, which leaves little or no time for them to do their homework or even to attend classes. In poor areas of Luanda such as Cazenga, more girls than boys are required by their parents to stay at home to mind other children or to sell things from roadside stalls.

Girls from poor households are also expected to walk around in the streets to sell fruit and vegetables. I have noticed that if those children attend school, they have little time to study, which consequently weakens their academic performance. However, those who sell on the streets have even less time to go to school.

I have also noticed that poor children tend to be malnourished, which lowers their achievement levels even further. In some cases, lack of resources prevents the parents from supplying the daily basic meals for their children. As such, 'If there is no breakfast, children will starve at school and end up not learning anything'. For example, I have visited some households where, due to poverty, parents could not afford to buy bread to give to their children. Thus, poverty and malnourishment play an important role in the demand for education for their children (boys and girls).

Another constraint related to poverty is the lack of ability to pay the direct and indirect costs of schooling. Since 1998, pupils in public primary schools in Luanda are requested to pay a very small school fee. For poor households, even this 'insignificant' amount is unaffordable. There are complaints from schools in poor areas of Luanda that parents are refusing to pay children's school fees. To 'force' parents to pay their liabilities, children are suspended from schools. School uniforms and stationery pose serious constraints to poor households. In public schools, boys and girls from grade 1 to grade 12 have to wear the school uniform, which is the same nationwide: a white coat. Parents complain that due to the lack of money to buy water and soap to wash the school uniform, it is very difficult to keep the coats clean.

Some out-of-school girls reported that they were not at school because there was no money for uniforms and exercise books. Some dropout girls reported that they were expelled from school because parents could not afford to pay school fees. Anita told me that the coat that she was wearing in grade 3 was very old and that her shoes were very old as well, and that her classmates continually teased her. When she told her parents about it, neither parent did anything about it, possibly by informing the school of the situation. Instead, the father told her to stay at home and wait until they could get money to buy new shoes and a new coat. This happened in 2001, when she was ten years old. She is now thirteen and is still not back at school.

“I could not stand in a classroom where everyone teased my shoes, including the teacher... people did not understand that my parents could not afford to give me new clothes and new shoes, that is why I left school. I’m still waiting for the time when my father gets a new job to buy me new clothes and new shoes...”

When I asked whether she was willing to go back to school, she said that she would prefer to attend evening classes, because students do not have to wear a uniform. She said that her parents will not discuss this possibility with her, but now that she is selling biscuits at a roadside stall, she is saving money to pay for an evening class in the year 2005.

By contrast, children from the middle- and upper-class, although also vulnerable to crime, experience fewer fears and worries than those from poor areas. Safety in middle- and upper-class areas is reinforced by the frequent presence of policemen in the area, which is not the case in poor areas. This is a consolation for parents who want to send their children, including girls, to school.

#### **6.4 Family/Parental Background: Social, Cultural and Human Capital Affecting Girls’ Access.**

When it comes to the analysis of family background determining the access, retention and success of girls in primary education in Luanda, it is of great importance to look at the cultural, human and social capital of parents and how those resources are transmitted from parents to children; how they receive those resources varies from girls to boys. Social capital is defined as “networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups”(Dunkoff 1992: 32). The notion of social capital is related to resources available within social groups such as families, communities, firms, and social clubs, as well as networks of mutual

support, reciprocity, trust and obligation. Research suggests that there is a correlation between high levels of social capital and more positive outcomes in health education and community development among others.

Bourdieu (1992:37) defined cultural capital as instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially and worthy of being sought and possessed. Cultural capital is inculcated in childhood and is recognised by others who possess the same cultural capital. In other words, while social capital is transmitted from parents to children within the family cycle, cultural capital is a pattern that identifies a community. Because a community is composed of a certain number of families, normally what is valued by the majority of families in that community is what the community values. Thus cultural capital becomes the blueprint of each community. For instance, if a number of families in a community have a higher level of cultural capital, the community tends to have a high resources culture, which will in turn determine the lifestyles and even the infrastructural developments that surround it.

Human capital is arguably the most valuable asset held in society. According to Hogan (1998:34), it is the collective sum of the attributes, skills, life experience, knowledge, inventiveness, energy, and enthusiasm that people choose to invest in family as well as in community development. It represents the greatest asset and at the same time it represents the greatest liability that a family and a society may have. While it can be an asset for those who possess it, on the other hand, it can be a liability when it is too poor or when people, for various reasons, lack it. This is also transferred from parents to children. Scholars in sociology of education tend to use the notion of human capital to explain how children in many cases follow in their parents' footsteps steps in terms of profession. Dunkoff (1992:49) argues that in many societies, children become what parents are or were. For example, it is very common to see the children of medical doctors or other health practitioners studying medicine or other health-related careers. During a research, Dunkoff (1992:53) discovered that most students from the University of Massachusetts had chosen the careers and specialisations of one of their parents.



This illustrates that human capital, just like social and cultural capital, is transferred from parents to children. Parents' resources are used to determine the networks, skills and dispositions of children. Thus, family is the most important source of resources that children acquire in the process of socialisation. As the main source of economic and social welfare for its members, the family is the first building block in the generation of social capital for the larger society (Bubolz 1998, Hogan 1998). In addition to influencing the human capital development of children, the family's internal and external relationships model behaviours that are transmitted via those children to future relationships.

Relations within the family foster the development of trust, essential for the formation of all outside relationships, including in the community and at school. The family's ability to meet children's physical and emotional needs strongly influences their perceptions of the trustworthiness of others outside the family. While the family is itself a source of social capital, it is also a "system in a network of mutually interdependent systems" (Bubolz 1998:18). Through its interactions with political, economic, cultural, religious and legal systems, the family not only increases the resources available to its members, it also contributes to the social capital available to promote public amenities such as basic education. Social capital generated through interactions between families and other members of the community increases resources for families and networks (Hogan 1998).

Family dynamics also encourage reciprocity and exchange, two more important factors in the generation of social capital. Material and emotional support shared freely between family members generates an implicit willingness to return such support. This is to say that families or parents have a key role in determining the demand for education of children. Whether boys and girls have gained access and succeeded at school depends to a great extent on how social, human and cultural capitals are transferred to them.

In Luanda for example, the discrepancies in terms of family or parental background are based on socio-economic factors. This explains why girls from higher- and middle-class

groups attain higher levels of achievement than girls from lower-class groups. In other words, it is evident that parents from middle- and upper-class groups have a higher composition of social capital (formal networking and influential relationships), higher human capital (skills and accumulation of knowledge) and higher values and attitudes (cultural capital), which are transmitted to their children on a daily basis through communication and lived experiences. For example, during the field research I visited a household in Maculusso, Luanda, which considered to be an upper-class area, in which both parents are highly educated, with the equivalent of honours degrees, and hold down good jobs that allow the family to spend their holidays every year in Europe.

I noticed that both the girls and the boys dreamed of becoming doctors and engineers in future, and their dreams were supported by parents, who kept saying "As long as we live, we will help you to achieve that". During the homework periods, the children turned to parents to help them with their work. Since the level of the parents' education is significantly high, the children were justifiably confident that both parents could help them. According to the parents, none of their four children had ever failed, and the girls were as 'brilliant' at maths and science as the boys. This illustrates that the higher the social, human and cultural capital, the higher the probability of children achieving success in school. If the family is endowed with an abundance of those resources, the boys and girls in that household will receive them in the very same manner. There will be no gender discrimination and education for girls will receive the same priority as education for boys.

Again, in regard to social, cultural and human capital, with the help of the life history approach I talked to 15 parents and during our conversations they identified themselves with different social occupations. The majority of respondents in the lower-class areas (Cazenga and Vila da Mata) were women who trade at flea market of 'Asa Branca'. Concerning their life history, about 62% said that they had never been to school at all; 22% said that they had attended school, but could not finish their primary education for various reasons, and 16% were able to finish their basic education.

However, everyone in that group of respondents agreed that education for girls was very important and that they would send their girls to school, 'at least the primary school'. Their perception towards girls' education was not based on the socio-economic impact that education can exert over development. Rather, they believed that basic education could 'promote respect'; "Girls should at least know how to write their names so that they can gain people's respect". I have noticed that those opinions to some extent shaped the girls' opinions and expectations regarding education.

During the interviews, girls rarely dreamed of becoming a lawyer, an engineer, a psychologist or something uncommon in the community. They chose or mentioned careers that mostly motherhood or/and womanhood (becoming a teacher in a crèche, a chef in a restaurant, a fashion designer, and/or a nurse). That happens when parents have poor social and human capital to share with their children. Their level and composition of social human capital, which they receive from their parents does not allow them to consider ambitious careers.

Yet, for those parents, the most important education is the one that girls get from their mothers: "As mothers we have the obligation to prepare our daughters to be as good as we are: good mothers and good wives", because, "Men are not worried about marrying a doctor, but rather, they want women who can cook and iron for them, and these things are not taught in schools." While it is important, and a form of cultural and social capital, it reflects the very limited cultural and social capital those parent possess, which plays an important role in preventing girls from gaining access and achievements in primary education.

The situation is different as one moves to upper-class groups. When I spoke to parents in the middle- and upper-class areas, obviously more educated people, they had a different view of education. To these parents, education was important for development of community and society as whole. The pattern identified in everyone interviewed in those groups is that the more educated women are, the better they can look after their families. "Educated women are better at understanding various aspects that could

contribute to family health”; educated women are able to understand the need for family planning and apply it to their own lives and thus, make strong decisions about controlling fertility”. Some respondents commented that,

“Ignorant women have no power within the societies”; “...they are financially and economically dependent on their husbands. Consequently, they easily become victims of domestic violence and women slavery”.

These are some of the comments from people who believe that education for girls is valuable, not just because it is a means of gaining people’s respect, but also of lifting society’ socio-economic development.

This led me to conclude that the perceptions parents hold regarding girls’ education or gender and education, have a direct relationship to level of education, which determines the level of resources such as social, human and cultural capital that can be shared and transmitted to children. In other words, the more educated parents are, the greater the value they confer on the education of children, without discriminating against or undermining girls.

During the research field I was able conclude that parents with higher level of education have a higher probability of sending their children to school, regardless of their gender. In contrast, the lower the parents’ education level, the less the probability of sending girls to school, since they tend to ignore relevant aspects of the importance of education both within the family and in society as a whole. Additionally, the research indicates that there is a correlation between cultural and social capitals and school success, and that cultural capital mediates the relationship between family background and school outcomes (Wall 1998:33).

## **6.5 Gender, Family and Community**

### *6.5.1 Gender, Family, Community and the Transfer of Resources*

Gender is socially constructed and it places a cultural significance on sexual identity. As the main source of economic and social welfare for its members, the family is the first building block in the generation of social capital for the larger society (Bubolz 1998) and Hogan (1998). Since women are typically the primary care-givers, they serve a critical role in the early development of social capital in a society. The individual's capacity to trust has roots in the mother-child relationship (Picciotto 1998). Thus, gender discrimination squanders trust, hinders family relations, restricts social networks, and depletes social capital, the valuable capacity of societies to work toward common goals." (Picciotto 1998:42).

It means that, while gender discrimination limits women's integration in the community and society and limits women from exerting power within the family, it determines the way the transfer of resources (social, human and cultural) is distributed among boys and girls. What is critical is what children bring to school. Because of gendered distribution of social capital in schools, boys tend to be 'macho' and girls tend to be shy. In other words, while it undermines girls' potential, it overvalues boys. This happens in the household and in the community, as well as in society as a whole. To illustrate this,

"In the political network, only 11% of parliamentary positions are held by women. In general then, no country has ended gender discrimination...If you have a system in which women are confined to their homes, you can not expect much community-level social capital to be built...The better a society treats its women, the greater the social harmony and the higher the economic productivity." (Picciotto 1998:48)

In Angola, particularly in Luanda, community and family impose gender disparity and different roles upon girls and boys. Gender inequality is deeply rooted in African culture and in particular in Angolan culture, whereby boys and girls are raised and socialized differently within the family and community. The main focus of girls' and

women's lives was the family, which is basically housework, childbearing and rearing, and family maintenance. Again, because women are restricted from social, human and cultural resources within the family and community, mothers do not have a better legacy to transfer to their daughters than that of motherhood and womanhood, and aiming at preparing them to become better wives and good mothers.

During my field research, the practice supported the above statement. For example, in the field, I noticed that mothers were very concerned about preparing their girls to be as good mothers and wives as they themselves are. They all agreed in sending girls to schools, but apparently they were not concerned about girls' performances. That wasn't because mothers did not care about girls' education; the reality is that those mothers, due to poor resources, had no incentives and did not have adequate resources to transfer to their daughters. In poor urban communities, women do not play important roles, and at national levels a woman is rarely seen on television presiding over a meeting or taking leadership of an influential organisation. All these factors discourage girls from achieving an acceptable level of education and as they lose the incentive, they mostly continue failing. Once they reach puberty, they are likely to become adolescent mothers, dashing their possibility of completing primary education.

The opposite is seen in middle- and higher-class groups. Within those communities, women enjoy a higher degree of expression, compared to those from poor settlements. Women from middle-class groups are more likely to have attained at least the equivalent of grade 12 or a degree. The same happens with women from upper-class groups. The difference is that women from the latter group have greater economic and financial freedom. This enhances their levels and proportions of social, cultural and human capital. Also, it improves the fairness in the distribution of those resources among boys and girls.

In middle- and high-income households, parents could afford to hire a domestic worker to perform domestic tasks, but about 90% of parents agreed that although girls should be educated, they should at the same time be prepared to be good wives and good

mothers. Even if those parents believe that boys should co-operate in domestic activities, more emphasis was placed on girls' 'obligations'. But still, more emphasis is given to education in schools. In other words, although girls should learn the chorus, when it comes to education, parents with more resources agree that boys and girls deserve the same treatment and thus, the transfer of resources becomes equitable.

Cultural practices and beliefs are part of cultural capital that shapes parents' point of view on the distribution of domestic tasks between boys and girls. In poor households, cultural practices are more evident. Girls are not just expected to co-operate, rather, they are 'forced' or obliged to perform housework. A respondent said:

"I recall the times when I was just eight years old. At that time my elder brother was twenty years old, but my parents used to say that he should not learn girls' work because he was a man. I was just eight years old and I could feel the burden of washing the dishes of an extended family, as the one where I grew up in... because of trying to fulfil both school tasks and domestic tasks, I could not perform well at school. And although I completed my primary education, I could not go further because I already was a 'woman' and I had to look after my siblings." Josefa, a domestic worker in Cazenga.

This respondent was fortunate, because even though she could not further her education, she was at least able to complete her primary education. Most respondents who have similar experiences were not able to complete their primary education. Isabel, who could not complete her primary education, reports that at the time her parents used to say that boys who do housework were at risk of becoming gay and not being able to get married. Although it does not make any sense, boys who were raised with these kinds of ideas are likely to view women as inferior beings, while girls who experienced it, tend in the future to be more repressive towards their girls, forcing them to follow in their footsteps.

A father confessed that,

"Girls are temporary members of the family, whereas boys are permanent. Girls leave the family once they marry, so it is always better to have sons who permanently live in the family and contribute to it. Besides, it is much more worthy to spend on boys' education..."

"The son is raised to support his family and take care of his parents when they are old, while the girl is raised to serve her future husband's family. The daughter is thus a temporary member of her own family, and once she comes of age the parents are eager to have her married," another man said.

Another man from a poor suburb said, "Girls come after boys; first boys, second girls. If any money is to be spent on education, it should be invested in boys".

These attitudes towards girls and boys weaken the possibility for girls to complete their primary education. At the same time it promotes gender disparity in access to schools, which may as result in non-enrolment or dropping out after formal access. In other words, when girls are forced to do housework, they have little time to do their homework; they sometimes get to school very late and are then requested to leave the premises.

Thus, since boys are not 'forced' or 'obliged' to do housework, they are more regular in attending classes, which in turn increases their probability of being promoted to the next level and consequently, complete their schooling. This explains why there are more literate boys than girls, especially in poor urban areas. In most cases, this is influenced by parents' backgrounds.

In summary, although there are many factors or barriers preventing girls from accessing primary education, as well as contributing to the dropout rate, it seems that gender is a common thread in all these factors. In other words, whether they are related



to cultural beliefs and socio-economic conditions or related to the supply or demand aspect of education, they are all directly related to gender relations. My research has shown that all of them play an important role in determining the access (formal and/or epistemic) of children, particularly girls, not only to primary education, but also to education in general.

According to the research conducted, in poor areas such as Cazenga, cultural poverty, value-laden as the term may be, refers to illiteracy or low levels of literacy among parents and other members of the community; parents' lack of attention to the education of their daughters and their limited understanding of the role and importance of the education of girls were expressed in statements such as: 'The goodness of girls is measured by their capacity in dealing with housework and not with literacy'; 'Educated women like to challenge the husbands' and so on.

Again, these gendered cultural beliefs and practices shape parents' attitudes towards education for children, and instead of valuing education of boys and girls equally, these parents tend to overcome obstacles to boys' access to education (especially safety, insecurity and the supply side of education); conversely, they are stricter if these obstacles are imposed on girls' access. In other words, while parents complain about problems in the supply side of education being the reason for the low access, repetition and dropout rates in girls in primary education, under the same circumstances, boys are allowed to study.

Thus, boys tend to continue their attendance and in most cases, they complete their primary education and if possible, they may further their education. This may be because parents see boys as very strong and capable of withstanding any kind of difficulty, whereas girls are seen as weak, unprotected and inferior to boys. This is part of cultural beliefs is reinforced by gender relations both within the families and within communities and society as a whole.

Besides, as the research indicates and as has already been discussed in this study, prioritising the education of boys over girls has its roots in the preference for male children in general, which ultimately comes back to gender relations. Poverty endorses and encourages these cultural beliefs. Most of the parents interviewed declared that given their level of poverty and deprivation, they would rather 'spend money on their boys who will one day bring the benefits of education back to their own family'. In other words, the poorer the parents, the more they identify with gendered cultural beliefs and practices, which can strongly affect their attitude towards sending girls to school.

As was noted, in poor households there are issues concerning the social and economic function of the male-female division of roles within the community. Within poor families in Luanda, and I believe within rural families as well, the purpose of education is not the same for girls as for boys.

This also illustrates how economic hardship places constraints on the demand of education for children, especially for girls. Obviously, parental background or parents' experiences affect the access and success of boys and girls. These backgrounds may be social, human and cultural resources. Again these may be an asset or a liability when it comes to girls' access and success, particularly in primary education, not only in Luanda but in general.

For example, as it was noted, families or households from middle and upper social classes do not restrain their daughters from attending school. Rather, since they have a better understanding of the importance of education for girls, those parents even encourage their children, including girls, to further their studies. As was discussed in this chapter, parents' background plays an important role in their attitude towards children, including girls' education. In contrast, poor social, human and cultural capital is behind the low access rate of girls to primary education. Besides, though limited, those resources are differently distributed among boys and girls.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations**

Education has long been viewed as an instrument of social change and sustainable development. However, it is impossible to achieve development if girls and women are not included in the process. To that end, girls and women have to receive the same education as boys and men as a means to empower them to participate fully in the development of nations. More specifically, education for females has been regarded as a means of bringing about gender equality and empowerment (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991:25). In postcolonial Africa, the education of girls is considered an effective tool in empowering female citizens, who are capable of serving the traditional needs of the family as well as the modern demands of the continent.

In Angola, the commitment to educating girls received more attention after its political independence in November 1975. This fact is illustrated by the increase in the number of women participating at all levels of education, from literacy classes (primary education) to universities. However, the highest rate of female participation in formal education has been at the primary school level.

The civil war, the socio-economic conditions (including the inadequate infrastructures for education), the lack of understanding of the need for educating girls within communities and families, as well as cultural barriers and poverty among others, had a huge impact in preventing girls from attending school. Each of these factors has its own impact on the low access, retention and subsequent success of children, especially girls, in primary education.

This means that although the civil conflict had played an important role in precluding children, including girls, from primary education, there are others barriers preventing girls and boys from gaining access to primary education, as have been discussed in this study.

In Angola the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) indicates that only 88% of girls compared to 95% of boys are enrolled at schools. In Luanda particularly, only 44% of girls of school age are enrolled in primary schools. Compounding this, within the number of enrolled girls, there is an increasing rate of dropouts. In this study, dropouts refer to failure, repetition and/or weak school performance in general.

Dropout in primary education is a common feature of schools in poor areas of Angola, including in poor schools of Luanda. This is because poor social conditions tend to hinder the retention and the success of children, not only in primary education but in almost all levels of education. In most cases, dropouts are associated with poor economic conditions as well as cultural factors, as was discussed in chapter 5 of this study.

For example, in poor areas of Luanda, due to the lack of potable water from domestic taps, coupled with other poor social and economic conditions, girls from the age of six are made to fetch water from very distant wells or fountains. In most cases, these wells are located up to two kilometres away.

As one can see, poverty at both family and community levels plays an important part in hampering girls from accessing schools, including primary schools and has a significant impact on the demand for education. Due to the direct cost of schooling in Luanda, children from poor households are less likely to enrol at school and more likely to drop out. Concomitant to poverty, parents' background also has important role in determining whether girls access primary or further schooling.

As this study has shown, in cases where parents have lower levels of education or if there are not educated at all, they do not perceive any need or significance to send their daughters to school. This is also linked to cultural beliefs and practices, to which most poor parents in Luanda are attached, perhaps as a way to justify their attitude towards girls' education. Domestic activities are imposed more on girls than on boys. Safety

problems in Luanda also contribute to the low access of girls to primary schools in the poor areas of Luanda.

I am aware that gender is neither the only nor the most important factor mediating the access of girls to primary education in Luanda. There is a range of factors and barriers determining access and success of girls in primary schools in Luanda. However, there is an interplay between gender, culture and all other factors enabling and/or preventing girls' access to primary education in that province. Although poverty impacts on the education of children, according to research done in the field, priority tends to be given to boys rather than to their female counterparts. Thus, because the focus of this study is on gender and the access of girls to primary education, I found it worse to give more emphasis to that, even though I always associate all other barriers preventing girls from accessing primary education with the main issue of this study, which is gender.

Due to insecurity, parents feel safer sending boys to school far from home, through isolated places or busy roads than they do in sending girls, fearing sexual harassment, accidents, abduction and rape. While in schools, boys have more playing space than girls, and within the classroom boys tend to receive more of their teachers' attention, specially those teachers who believe that boys are better than girls at 'tough' subjects such as mathematics and science.

Other educational factors include the lack of educational facilities within a short distances from home; dilapidated schools and classrooms 'since schools should look better than the home; 'if the school is ugly and not fit for humans, the why should our daughters go to school?', and the lack of latrines which was repeatedly given as a reason for girls dropping out from school.

It is noteworthy that although all educational factors mentioned above have the same impact on the education of boys as it has on girls, the former are still encouraged to attend school despite of those conditions, while girls are discouraged instead. Finally, while parents' background plays an important role on how they perceive education for

boys and girls, boys experience obstacles that constrain their access to education in different ways from girls.

All of this leads one to conclude that gender plays a significant role in mediating the access of girls to primary education and at the same time, all other barriers preventing girls from accessing to primary education are directly or indirectly related to gender. This justifies the focus of this study: gender and the access of girls to primary education.

The study looks at what the government and civil society are doing to promote girls' access to education in general, particularly to elementary education in Luanda and the rest of the country. For instance, the government, through its Ministry of Family and Women's Promotion as well as the Department of Gender within the Ministry of Education are launching a campaign to promote the access of girls to education, including primary education.

These campaigns aim at gradually changing people's mindset towards education for girls. For example, through workshops these government institutions, in partnership with civil society, are training trainers, who are going to train other people, including teachers, on gender equity by emphasising the new roles that women can play in this post-conflict period.

There is also lot of effort to change the school curriculum to include the issue of gender equity. To this end, the Angolan Ministry of Education is revising textbooks that concentrate on boys and men in general, while they were portraying girls and women as inferior beings. However, all these will only succeed if schools responsibly take into consideration the aspects surrounding gender, such as family cultural background and community attitudes towards education for girls.

Finally, the study discussed the concepts of social capital, cultural capital and human capital. These are resources that are transmitted from adults to children in the household

as well as in the community. These resources are important in the process of *socialisation*, yet those resources are unevenly distributed among boys and girls. Besides, boys and girls receive those resources differently. As was discussed in this study, while girls spend most of their time at home with their mothers, they are more likely to receive from their mothers the social, human and cultural capitals related to *motherhood*. In contrast, since boys are more likely to be close to their fathers, the kind of cultural resources that they receive from their fathers, although related to fatherhood, within the African context they may be richer than those from mothers. As such, boys' behaviour towards girls in their schools or families tends to be shaped by their parents' *attitude to gender*.

This in turn plays an important role in shaping girls' expectations differently from boys'. Girls may develop a sense of uselessness or worthlessness *within society and within family*, while boys may develop a sense of superiority over girls in the same class or from the same household. As was said earlier in this study, this shapes both boys' and girls' attitudes and expectations towards education. In other words, it constrains girls' access and success in schools.

## **7.1 Recommendations**

Since there is a range of factors mediating the access of girls to primary education, one should formulate a set of *recommendations* that could be applied to promote equity in the access of girls and boys from different socio-economic backgrounds. These may include reforms in policies, which stimulate the demand and supply of education

### *7.1.1 Increasing Supply*

There is a close relationship between the supply side of education and formal and epistemic access. As was discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the level of *supply at all stages of education* is important because it may determine whether or not parents send their children to school. In other words, supply of education may determine the demand for education. According to Lockheed and Verspoor (1991:54), the push to expand access

to schooling by increasing the supply of school places has dominated the agenda for education development since 1960.

Enrolment has increased impressively since then, but access to education is still limited, and certain groups of children are completely excluded, especially in low-income countries such as Angola. However, efforts to increase supply must continue and should seek creative approaches for extending access to disadvantaged children, both boys and girls.

Extending access implies policies and strategies such as upgrading existing schools and building more new schools in all districts, especially in overpopulated areas so that all children can attend schools. These measures do not only increase places for children in schools, but also lessens the distances that children have to travel between home and school. Since schools cannot operate without teachers, government should recruit and train more teachers, as well as promoting existing teachers to become capable of teaching more than one grade and to be able to work in a multiple shifting programme. Increasing the supply of female teachers is also regarded as an important step in attracting girls to primary schools. Female teachers are an important strategy for increasing the access of girls to primary education. Reduction or elimination of school fees in primary education, provision of free stationery and provision of basic meals in public primary schools would stimulate the demand for education, not only for boys but also for girls from poor households.

#### *7.1.2 Increasing Demand*

Strategies to increase the demand for education are as important as strategies to increase the supply of school places for all levels of education, including primary education. The social, economic and cultural factors discussed in chapters 4 and 5 have a powerfully adverse effect on the demand for schooling in all levels of education. Thus there is a need to address those constraints. However, any efforts to increase the demand for



schooling implies the reduction of both direct and indirect costs and mobilise community support.

### *7.1.3 Equalizing the Learning Process*

Redressing discriminatory treatment requires a genuine commitment to understanding the origins of unequal treatment and taking corrective measures. In some cases, discrimination is easy to identify and remedy. For example, when boys' schools receive more and/or better educational resources than girls' schools, the solution or the remedy is to reallocate resources.

Likewise, within classrooms boys tend receive more of their teachers' attention than their female counterparts, so teachers have to find a way to redistribute their attention equally or in same proportions for boys and girls. Asking questions and allowing boys and girls to talk in equal time are an important step towards the end of gender discrimination in primary schools. In playgrounds teacher may address discriminatory treatment if he/she mixes girls and boys in the same kinds of games so that girls feel accommodated and therefore as wanted and as loved as boys.

For that matter, teachers have to be prepared and trained so that they start changing their own mindsets towards girls' education. However, it is important that those teachers and other school authorities take into consideration the various aspects surrounding issues of gender and access to schools. This may involve the children's background, including parents' cultural beliefs and so on.

At the family level, the demand of education for girls may increase if parents are relieved of paying the costs of education. In other words, since parents complain about the direct and indirect costs of education, especially for girls, the reduction or elimination of fees would be advantageous. However, some parents would need girls to perform domestic activities or sell on the side of the roads, which could take up their time for school. In most cases, this happens because parents do not encourage boys to share those activities with girls, leaving no room for girls to attend classes or do their

homework. On the other hand, parents would help in the improvement in the access, retention and success of girls by distributing domestic and other activities more evenly between boys and girls so that all children have more space and time to go to school and to do their homework. Besides, it would contribute to gender equity at the family level.

At the community level, gender equity in access to primary education could be achieved if the community continues to implement strategies that promote gender equity. These strategies could include workshops and public discussions with parents and teachers about fair sharing and distribution of domestic tasks between boys and girls at schools, at home and in the community. Those discussions should emphasize the equal access of girls and women access to education.

Communities could also encourage gender equity by promoting women and young women to play key roles within the community. Provision of micro-credit to women and who have completed at least their primary education would be a good motivation for parents to send their daughters to primary school. Micro-credit, when well managed, gives a sense of economic autonomy, and women who receive micro finance acquire a more respected status within the family, community and society as a whole. Thus, with this measure, family and community attitudes could be reshaped towards the role of women, which at the same time could encourage parents to send girls to school on an equal footing with boys.

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