Concluding, this chapter discusses on Angolan policy for primary schooling, with focus on issues of access and success of girls to that level of education.

4.2 Constraints on Girls' Access in Primary Education in Angola

4.2.1 Social, economic and cultural background

Angola, a sub-Saharan country, is located in southern Africa. It was colonised by the Portuguese in the early 20th century and gained its political independence in November 11, 1975 (Minfamu 2002). Before independence, education among the black population, particularly for girls, was limited for political reasons, as well as by the paucity of school facilities in urban areas (rural areas were even worse). Between 1965 and 1970, only 29% of children between the ages of 6 and 11 gained access to primary school in both rural and urban areas (Ferreira 1999: 23).

Due to political and social pressures, the colonial authorities built more schools to accommodate more students, improving the access of black students to education. However, it was the urban settlements that benefited most.. From 1970 to 1975 the enrolment rate within a population of 6-11 year-olds grew from 29% to 52%, indicating a rise of 23.7% in the ten years between1965 and 1975 (Lockheed & Verspoors 1990: 195).

Short after its political independence, the country was plunged into a civil war that lasted for over three decades, devastating the country and causing extreme poverty, as well as destroying most of the existing infrastructures. In spite of this, during the period between 1975 and 1980, there was a 20.4% increase in students at primary schools countrywide. The same period saw an average annual growth of 9.7%. These figures illustrate that despite grinding poverty and a detrimental war, there was an increase in the demand for primary education (Lockheed & Verspoors 1990: 205)

As the war continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the access of children to primary education decreased considerably, with an annual average growth of 7.8% between 1985 and 2000. While in 1980 the enrolment rate was 86.3%, in 1985 it dropped to

42.7% for the 6-11 year-old population countrywide. Again, during the period between 1980 and 1985, there was an annual average growth of 10.4% (UNESCO 2001).

Gender distribution within the 6-11 year-old population that gained access to primary education during the period of 1970 - 1975 stood at 38%, while from the 1975 - 1980 the figure increased to 47%, and then decreased to 45% between 1980 and 1985. These figures indicate that the war was one of the reasons for the decline in access for both boys and for girls in the postcolonial period (UNESCO 2001).

It can be argued that children, particularly girls, were not sent to school during the colonial years because the authorities eschewed any opportunities for the black population, resulting in great numbers of children out of school. During that time preference was given to practical occupations that would equip men to work with machinery and automobile engines.. Studying in schools, according to colonialists, would make blacks wiser, allowing them to know their rights (Ferreira1999:43).

It would appear that the Portuguese colonists also had a gendered bias toward the education of girls and women. Throughout the colonial period, white women rarely occupied political, economic or social positions within the community or within the family. It was common to see women at home, attending to the house and children. During that period, most servants were black women (rarely black men), who took their own daughters to their 'madam's' house to learn sewing, cooking and domestic work, rather than sending them to school. . This illustrates the gender bias evident during the colonial period, which by that time had been embedded politically, economically, socially and culturally.

This legacy is still adhered to by postcolonial generations. Although political barriers preventing the access of children, including girls, to primary education were completely eliminated at the end of colonialism, the social, economic and cultural barriers remained. In an attempt to improve the situation, in the period between 1975 and 1980 the new government launched a campaign encouraging all parents in rural and urban

areas to send their children (boys *and* girls) to local schools, which successfully increased the number of children at school. This growth was reversed with advent of the ravaging civil war in the early 1980s (MINFAMU 2002).

The massive destruction of schools, particularly primary schools, was only part of the ruin of social infrastructures during Angolan civil conflict. According to a report from OCHA IRIN (2004:6), the war destroyed at least 4,000 classrooms in Angola. The capital city, Luanda, was not directly affected by war as badly as other provinces were affected, but nonetheless felt a large proportion of its socio-economic impact. Because it was a safer place to live than many other places in the interior of the country, great numbers of people converged on Luanda to survive.

This led to severe overpopulation of Luanda and had serious socio-economic consequences, to the point that local government was unable to sustain the needs of the majority of people. As conditions worsened, the capacity of the state to educate children declined, and corruption emerged, to the point of children being left out of school due to parents' financial inability to send them to school. In most cases the teacher/pupil ratio increased to 1:90.

The continuous increases in the inflation rate aggravated the plight of most public servants, and an increase in unemployment rates contributed in large scale to the incapability of parents to send their children to primary schools. This, added to other interrelated factors, effectively increased the number of children out of school.

Poverty also has serious repercussions on the demand for education. Children from poor households are less likely to enrol in school and more likely to drop out. Due to the direct cost of schooling, poverty reduces or even destroys parents' ability to invest in education. If there is an opportunity to enrol one out of certain number of children[1], boys take priority over girls. Although this attitude is linked to gender and cultural dimensions, poverty is often the cause of limited educational achievement; also, the low

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[1] Poor families in Angola have in average six to seven children (Angolan department of statistics 1995)

occupational status of the parents of poor families does not reinforce the value of education (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991:150).

A common feature in poor Angolan families, particularly in Luanda, is under-educated or uneducated parents keeping their children home to perform household duties or even sell at roadsides. These parents do not see any incentive to send their children to school, and as it has already been argued, this may be due to parents' own low level of education, which limits their social, cultural and human capital and added to by the constraints of poverty, which is aggravated by the direct cost of education (stationery, school uniforms and the cost of school fees).

In Luanda, approximately 46% of school age children were out of school in the period 2000 - 2001. About 58% of them were girls. This is due to the fact that within family and community, girls are more vulnerable to feeling the effects of constraints preventing children from going to school (Minfamu 2002a). Besides, there are preconceptions based on socio-cultural and economic conditions that shape the roles of girls and their human rights within family and community. This has an impact on girls' access to and control of resources. In other words, although it is not totally overt, there is an extreme discrimination against girls. The sad part is knowing that the roots of this discrimination lie in the home at family level.

Family and community combine to perpetuate girls' discrimination by believing, and acting according to their beliefs, that girls are less intelligent and less responsible than boys. Besides by giving priority to boys both in community and family, and by prioritising boys' education, parents are undermining girls and according them less significance than boys, and thus, there are no incentives to invest in girls' education. It is continuously and strongly evident that girls are under-represented at all levels of education, including primary education. In other words, these cultural beliefs and practices cause the low access, retention and success rates of girls in primary education. And the situation worsens as one escalates from one level to the next in education. This explains why there are even fewer girls attending higher levels of education in Luanda.

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explains why there are even fewer girls attending higher levels of education in Luanda. All this severely limits girls and women from accessing the same opportunities that boys enjoy at home and within communities.

To aggravate this situation, in most households, particularly poor ones, the girls are traditionally assigned chores such as cleaning and cooking, among other domestic activities, while boys enjoy other kinds of activities, which are culturally intended for boys and not girls. In Luanda, there is a misconception that boys who perform domestic tasks are homosexual or 'gay'. This discourages families from distributing domestic tasks fairly between boys and girls. At the same time, the burden of heavy domestic work constrains girls from doing their homework, leading to lower school marks than boys', and consequently, girls lose the incentive to go to school, affecting their retention and success.

In cases where girls have to repeat the same grade, they feel ashamed and are insulted by ex-class mates who have done better. The consequence is that repeating girls feel uncomfortable and if their relatives do not encourage them, they simply drop out. Research has shown that in most cases dropouts are related to grade repetition.

In addition, as girls repeat grades, they become older and enter puberty. This increases the risk of early pregnancy, while they are still teenagers. It also decreases the likelihood and incentive of caring for a baby and studying at the same time. This compromises not only the future of the teenage mother, but also that of the baby. Although family and community a have great influence on this, there are contributing in school factors too. .

4.2.2 In-school barriers

In Luanda, the existing infrastructures for primary schools are extremely old and outdated, and in most cases, especially in poor areas of Luanda, they are dilapidated and unfurnished, without basic sanitation, water, and electricity or even toilets. In poor areas of Luanda where the teacher/pupil ratio is too high, students are obliged to carry empty

fall season, when teachers and pupils have to wade through muddy water to reach the school. Within the school facilities, conditions that include leaking roofs and broken windows make the classrooms unfit for human use.

To improve the situation, students, particularly girls, are required to bring mops and brooms as in most cases, students are required to clean their own classrooms and other areas surrounding the schools. This situation continues throughout the season and takes weeks or months to improve. This leads to school absenteeism, either because students are not willing to participate in the cleaning of school facilities or because they contract malaria and become unable to attend classes. A student from one of these schools gave the following account:

> "When the rainfall season comes, the teachers organise campaigns on a daily basis, in which we have to clean the school. They always say that if we do not co-operate they will not teach us and at the end of the year we'll fail. Girls are most affected because teachers always say that as girls we are better than boys at cleaning work. Thus, most of the time we end up too tired to go back the following day. That is the reason why I asked my father to register my sister and me in the evening class."
> Jandira, a student at school in Cazenga.

School vandalism is another factor compromising safety and security, and plays an important role in discouraging parents from sending children, particularly girls, to school. The increasing crime rate in Luanda, including in town where expensive colleges are located, tends to increase people's level of uncertainty and fear. There are many reports of abduction of children in order to demand ransom from parents. Therefore, parents with better social conditions prefer to pay for private transport or to take their kids out of school.

> "We have two schools in our neighbourhood; the problem is that those schools are completely destroyed. The gangsters in our community,

because they don't need schools themselves, they simply destroy them and no one wants to teach in those schools. Thus, because I have to sell in order to sustain the family, I cannot afford to take my three kids to schools in another community and besides, I don't feel confident letting my kids go to school on their own"_ *Angelina, a mother of children in Cazenga.*

Those without the financial ability to pay for private transport, which is the case for the majority of people from both middle and lower social classes, are forced to send their children to school without anyone to protect them. These may be among the reasons why parents refuse to send their unprotected little girls to school.

Within the schools, there are other factors that tend to discourage parents from sending their children to school. These factors will be discussed in chapter 6 of this study. As has been stated before in this study, as the social conditions in Angola worsen, especially in Luanda, the levels of corruption increase.

As a result, gaining access through official routes, without paying bribes, is becoming more and more difficult. In other words, in order to guarantee a place for children at any level of education, including primary school, many parents are 'forced' to bribe someone in the school structure or children are forced to stay home without schooling.

"If you are a parent you have to be prepared to pay the costs of educating a child...I think paying to guarantee a place for your child in a school is normal, taking into consideration the socio-economic conditions that we are facing...every month I have to pay the school fees for my children and this is possible because I have a reasonable salary. However, there are lots of people out there who cannot afford to send their children to private schools. Thus, they have to pay for a space in the public schools"_ *Benedito, a middle-class father.*

"Buying access for your child in public school is not acceptable; however, the country is still living with enormous socio-economic problems...Luanda does not have enough school facilities to accommodate the number of school-age children. As such, if one wants to make sure that his/her child gets access to school, it is simply fair that she/he pays for that, even through bribing. We have to understand that teachers do not earn enough and that they have families to care about"_ *Silva, a middle-class father.*

The bribery process does not end when children get access to schools. Both at mid-year and year-end, parents have to pay bribes in order to prevent their children from failing and thus, repeating the same grade. It has become a routine whereby students are forced to pay to succeed, and in most cases, even if he or she is a brilliant student. Obviously, this affects the quality of education. Both teachers and students become less dedicated and motivated to engage in teaching and learning activities. When corruption is powerful enough, students' absenteeism does not lead to failure. Instead, bribery can promote students to higher level, so marks are not achievable but 'buyable'.

A parent confessed,

"Every year parents have to give a cold drink to teachers so they mark positively your child. Even if your child is intelligent, parents still have to pay...actually teachers don't care if parents are also poor...they always send us messages asking for something."

"Once a teacher called me to get the report of my child...I thought that perhaps that was all. Instead, he started telling me that he was suffering without money and that parents should help him out..." Lina, from Cazenga.

These and other comments illustrate how education quality in poor areas is declining due to corruption. At the same time, education quality is affected by teachers' absenteeism. In these cases, school programmes and year-planning are not

These and other comments illustrate how education quality in poor areas is declining due to corruption. At the same time, education quality is affected by teachers' absenteeism. In these cases, school programmes and year planning are not accomplished. To alleviate the situation, during the exams students are requested to write only what had been taught and not what had been programmed or planned. However, those who cannot afford bribes are not promoted, they simply fail and as consequence of repetition, many students dropout.

4.2.3 School distribution in Luanda

Adding to the barriers limiting girls' access to primary education, Luanda experiences a shortage of school facilities. As was discussed before in this study, the war destroyed many school facilities in the countryside. Although Luanda was not directly affected by war, during the period of civil conflict it had to accommodate children from areas under siege. The city and its suburban areas were not equipped to accommodate such numbers of students.

In the inner city of Luanda, there are about 18 public schools in which 10 of them serve primary education. These schools have reasonably good conditions, although some of them endure hygiene problems, and all of them are well furnished and equipped. On the periphery, which is a major area occupying a huge extension, school facilities do exist, but most of them suffer unhygienic conditions, lack water, lack furniture and in some cases, lack of a proper ceiling or roof, which during the rain–fall season affects the course of academic year.

Cazenga, which is the biggest municipality in Luanda, with over 1.5 million inhabitants, has fewer than 60 schools, the majority of which have only four to six classrooms and lack toilet facilities (for staff or pupils). The schools have no equipment: there are no chalkboards in good condition and any desks/tables or chairs for teachers or for pupils. Every day pupils have to carry stones or empty containers from their homes to sit on for three to four hours a day. Additionally, the classrooms are congested, with the teacher/pupil ratio as high as 1:90, resulting in very high failure rates every year. This

In conclusion, children and in particular girls in Angola face many constraints that prevent them from gaining access to education, including basic education. Those constraints may be of a social, economic and/or cultural nature. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, some of these problems are legacies of the colonial ruler who banned women from attending school during colonial power. Other factors are related to socio-cultural gender relations, which view women as inferior to men, and thus undermine the right of education for girls.

Even after gaining access, children and girls in particular encounter more restrains, which are imposed by inferior learning and teaching methods that determine the success or failure of primary education in Luanda. As such, improving the situation, which would allow a greater number of girls to access primary education, should go hand-in-hand with the increase in the number of schools or classrooms. It will need improvements to social, economic, cultural and school contexts allowing girls to access and to succeed in schools.

Chapter Five: Government Policies Concerning Education for Girls

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the reforms that the Angolan government implementing, which aim mainly to improve the quality of education as well as equity access in terms of gender. The main focus of these policies is primary education as the basis for development in any society (Chinapah 2000:1). The main argument is that there is a range of policies and reforms suggested by international donors as the way to reduce public expenditure and at the same time improve the education systems in developing countries. However, there are many critiques on the way those reforms are implemented and on the outcomes of those reforms.

Those institutions and other donors do not take into consideration the reality in different individual countries. A reform works in one country may not work in another, so donors who are concerned about reduction in public expenditure or shifting expenditure from higher to lower education levels, or any other type of reform, should not simply criticise when there are failures, but rather assist developing countries such as Angola with resources and monitoring systems as a way of ensuring success in the implementation of suitable reforms.

Although a reform may sound good, the lack of resources and proper management may hinder its implementation. Donors should also take into consideration the socio-cultural issues regarding gender within families and communities. All policies should be shaped taking those issues into consideration. Even if the government is willing to adopt a policy that includes girls, the community and family may not agree due to socio-cultural beliefs and practices. Thus, education of the community should be effected simultaneously with other reforms that are gender inclusive. Household and communities should be taught about the need of education girls.

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This chapter discusses the following themes: competitiveness-driven reforms, finance-driven reforms, equity-driven reforms, the reforms that the Angolan government is pursuing and the challenges Angola faces in implementing them.

Carnoy (1991) suggests three main reforms strategies that countries could implement in order to improve education. These reforms take into consideration the New Economic Order and aim at responding to the major challenges that globalisation is imposing on countries individually. First, he recommends *competitiveness-driven reforms*, which aim to improve economic productivity by improving the quality of labour. This entails the expansion of the average level of achievements by students who in the future as workers, will produce better. To that end, improvement of education quality is prioritised.

Heneveld & Craig (1996) argue that the improvement of education quality involves higher resource investment. Colclough and Lewin (1993) suggest that decentralisation, on the other hand, is an important tool for improving education quality. Their argument is based on the fact that decentralisation gives municipalities or schools the autonomy and budget to self-govern and the responsibility for adapting methods to fit community needs, thereby and improving the education quality. Other arguments assert that quality education would emerge with an improvement in the management of educational resources and through an improvement of teacher recruitment and training (Carnoy 1999:38).

Second are *finance-driven reforms*, which aim to reduce public expenditure on education. This is associated with cost-saving reforms suggested by Colclough and Lewin (1993), which can be achieved through shifting public funding from higher to lower levels of education, a reduction in costs per pupil at all levels of education through an increase of class size and pupil/teacher ratios from 40:1 to 65:1 or even more, and privatisation of secondary and higher education. Reducing the cost per student is already in place. At first, the objective was not to increase class sizes to

reduce the costs, but since then circumstances have forced the Angolan government to apply that measure: 65:1 or more. The main challenge of that policy is that it undermines the quality of education and reduces the teachers' incentives. I addition, teachers become more and more exhausted after his/hers first hour (OCHA-IRIN 2001).

Finally, Carnoy (1999) suggests the third set of reforms: the *equity-driven reforms,* whose main goal is to increase equity in economic opportunity. Educational achievement in many countries, including Angola, is the key to determining earning power and to achieving high social positions. As such, equalising access to high quality education can play an important role in raising the welfare of all citizens. The challenge is that investment in greater equity can reduce economic growth (Carnoy 1999:44a). This is certainly true for the Angolan government, which justifies its low investment in equity access to quality education based on the argument that it will have a negative impact on economic growth. (*Angop 2001*).

The same report points out that Angola is facing pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and from the World Bank to reduce public expenditure, which is just one of the packages of the Structural Adjustment. The option suggested by those international institutions and other donors is the shift of public expenditure from the higher levels to entry levels. For example, the government should pay more attention to basic education than to secondary and tertiary education. Although university studies are of great importance to the scientific development of a nation, basic education has higher potential return for society, and should therefore be subsidised by the state.

Within the equity reforms, Carnoy (1999) discusses three main exercises that are used in developing countries: reforms that aim at reaching the lowest income groups through higher quality basic education and reforms that target specific groups, such as women and rural populations that lag behind educationally. These reforms concern women's education and the roles that women can play in economic development, social change through the raising of children, and decisions concerning fertility, among others. The third equity reform aims to target communities at risk and those with special needs.

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These reforms would increase the retention and success rate in school for children from different cultural backgrounds and with lower income parents (Carnoy 1999:45).

With regard to gender, the government has no special policy or provision *that accommodates girls in particular. Girls and boys* have no differential treatment in official enrolment or formal access to primary education. The Angolan government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which states that "a *change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of* women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women" (The Human Development Report 1992).

The Angolan government *is pursuing equity reforms* that aim to reach specific groups such as women. Recognising the role that Angolan women can play in the society, the Angolan Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the Angolan Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women, created a series of programmes *that aims to reach women and girls in areas where most of them spend* time: the informal markets. The intention is to teach them the basic literacy while they are out of school during the day.

This equity policy involves a change of curriculum. *As was discussed earlier in this study, the curriculum in Angola is the* consequence of what happens within families and communities. Girls and boys play different roles in the family and at community levels. The same patterns are found in daily life at school, and textbooks, which are the only definition of the curriculum in the Angolan primary *education system, also* perpetuate *this stereotype. Since it has a negative* impact on the relations between boys and girls as well as between teachers and pupils, it tends to affect the access, retention and success of girls in primary schools.

Recognizing this important aspect and attempting to pursue the equity reform policy, the Angolan ministry through its Gender Department is designing a new curriculum that is more inclusive. In this new curriculum both female teachers and *girls students receive*

more attention. New textbooks are being designed that contain changes such as professor (a) and aluno (a) and pictures in the textbooks depict both girls and boys. This is a good omen for reforms that aim to achieve equity in terms of gender. However, due to lack of resources to invest in primary education, those reforms are being delayed (The Angolan Ministry of Education 2003).

Since the government faces a shortage of resources to invest in projects such as the rewriting of textbooks for primary education, the best option for gaining those resources would be the shifting of public expenditure from higher to basic education. Increasing the investment in basic education would mean an increase in the number of schools and classrooms, not only in Luanda but nationwide. This would have a significant impact on the access to girls to primary education. For example, parents financially unable to send their daughters to school would benefit with this policy reform. In addition, distances between schools and residences, which is one of parents' complaints, would be shortened with the placement of more schools in every district or municipality (MINFAMU 2003:12).

Privatization is a major reform implemented by countries such as Angola, which are lower income countries. This is one of the policy reforms that the Angolan government is following from the last decade. For example, in 2003, Luanda had approximately 100 private schools (from primary to secondary education) and five private universities. Those parents who can afford to pay for better quality education send their children to private schools. Although statistics are not available, one can see that there are more female students in private universities than in public universities. It seems that privatisation is one of the best options for improving education quality (MINFAMU 2003:9).

Unfortunately, due to lower socio-economic levels, most parents cannot afford the costs associated with private education, so public education is still the only option for the majority of households who depend on meagre incomes to survive. The best option that would benefit people with few means to educate their children would be the increase in

the ratio of student/ teacher. However, the disadvantage of that policy would be the decline in education quality.

The main challenge is to reach equilibrium between equity of access, regardless of gender, on one hand, and quality education on the other hand. Although private schools offer a better education quality than public schools, not all parents, particularly those from the lower socio-economic strata, which represent the majority, are able to afford the monthly school fees (minimum of $100 a month) of private schools. Besides, the state still cannot afford to guarantee free access to public schools, nor can it afford to invest in better quality education. This is an impasse that the state faces and in the meantime girls from lower-income households are the victims of both low-quality education (affecting their access, retention and success) and lack of equity in the access of education, particularly basic education.

In this respect, Angola is a poor nation in the developing world that faces difficulties in implementing reforms that aim to improve both equity and quality education for all. Lockheed and Verspoor (1991:63) argue that every nation faces the challenge of improving its education system, including primary education system. They categorise those challenges as follow: the challenge of large-scale reform, the challenge of managing reforms, and the challenge of monitoring uncertainties. According to Lockheed and Verspoor (1991:45), large-scale reforms require sufficient resources and high levels of commitment by the policymakers, and involve high complexity and uniformity.

This means that even though the Angolan government is willing to improve education, implementing those reforms in a large scale requires resources that are not available due to the socio-economic conditions created by the civil conflict. Policymakers may also have differences in terms of priorities. Some may see the implementation of positive reforms in education as an immediate priority and others may postpone those intentions. Thus, due to lack of firm and common interest in commitment, the implementation of reforms may be jeopardized.

Lack of uniformity in terms of school conditions may be a liability in the implementation of large-scale reforms. Specific conditions in one school may limit the entire process of implementation of reforms. Besides, conflicts of objectives in a large-scale reform program may increase the degree of complexity of the reform itself.

Another challenge to implementation of reforms is management and the management of uncertainties. Any reform requires good management that will control the implementation and deal with problems that may arise in the process. This needs the decentralisation of decision-making, the delegation of tasks and responsibilities from top decision-makers to local implementers, who are the school principals, teachers and other school authorities. Also, the decentralisation of power and decision-making would allow those involved in anticipating and managing problems without jeopardising the entire process.

For all countries, such challenges are difficult to overcome, but they are much more difficult in developing countries such as Angola. Due to the economic crisis of the 1980s, Angola, like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, is 'forced' to face those challenges, and the civil conflict made the situation even more difficult for the Angolan government to handle.

There are many criticisms of the way those reforms are implemented and on the failures to implement those reforms. However, those institutions and other donors do not take into consideration the realities of individual countries. A reform that works in one country may not work in another. As such, those donors who are concerned about reduction in public expenditure or shifting expenditure from higher to lower education levels, or any other reform aimed at structural adjustment and the improvement of primary education systems in developing countries, should not simply criticise when

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there are failures. Rather, they should assist developing countries with resources and monitoring systems. This is the only way to ensure success in the implementation of suitable reforms, not only in Angola, but other developing countries as well.

A reform may sound good in theory, but the lack of resources and proper management may hinder its implementation. Donors should take into consideration the socio-cultural issues regarding gender within families and community. All policies should be shaped around those issues. There is a need for more discussion and reform aimed at improving girls' access to at least primary education. Most suggested reforms are concerned with the improvement of education quality and education equity, but there is very little attention given to an improvement in gender equity in primary education systems.

There is also little concern for education of communities and households regarding gender inclusion in primary education. One needs to understand that even if the government is willing to adopt a policy that includes girls, the community and family may not accept it due to socio-cultural beliefs and practices. Thus, education of communities should be undertaken simultaneously with other reforms that are gender inclusive. Household and communities should be taught about the need of education for girls.

However, in Angola and particularly in Luanda, there are signs that steps have been taken to improve gender inclusion and education quality. For example, it used to be very common to see children going to school without breakfast. Recognising that malnourished children have lower levels of achievement, and that it was one of the reasons for dropouts in primary education, from 2001 to 2002 the government provided a basic meal in all public primary schools in Luanda. The government's intention was to raise the level of achievement in malnourished children.

However, government cut that provision due to mismanagement by school authorities in the distribution of those meals. What was noticed was that during that period, public schools registered an increase in the number of children including girls, attending

primary schools. In other words, parents saw more incentive to send their children to school, perhaps because they knew that at least in schools their children would have something to eat, which could not be guaranteed at home (OCHA IRIN 2004:5).

In conclusion, this indicates that even though girls and women compose the majority of the illiterate in Angola, the government did not opt for policies that discriminated against women. Instead, both boys and girls are accommodated within the government education system and the curriculum in primary education is changing towards the inclusion of girls and women.

If the problem of low access for girls to primary education persists, it is due to many factors, some of them from within the education system itself, and others from outside the school (community and family), environments that play important roles in the socialization of children before they reach the school age. These factors have already been already discussed in this study and will be discussed in the following chapter, as those factors still affect the formal and epistemic access of girls to primary education.

Chapter Six: Gender Relations: Barriers and Access of Girls to Primary Schools

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion on gender relations and how these relations play a role in enabling or preventing girls from accessing and/or succeeding in education, particularly at primary education level. The study covers in-school issues and gender-related factors mediating girls' access to primary education. However, the family- and community-related factors preventing or enabling girls' access to primary education have yet to be addressed.

The main argument in this chapter is that access and success of girls in primary education is determined by a number of factors. School environment is one example of those factors. This involves the ways boys and girls interact in the school playground, the relations between them in the classroom, education quality, curriculum, and the way teachers perpetuate stereotypes through differentiation in the distribution of tasks between boys and girls of the same class. School facilities and school management also play a significant role in mediating the access of girls to primary education. However, there are other significant aspects to be dealt with that go beyond the school environment. They include family and community, which are paramount in the process of child socialization.

Gender, family and community are very important aspects in children's socialisation. Gender discrimination spoils trust, hinders family relations, restricts social networks, and depletes social capital, the valuable capacity of societies to work toward common goals. If girls are discriminated against for being girls, they will not have as easy access to resources as boys may have. As the family acknowledges this, they need the necessary incentives to send their daughters to school. Traditionally, only boys benefit from that opportunity, which may explain the gap between boys and girls in education,

particularly primary education. While the family is itself a source of social capital, it is also a "system in a network of mutually interdependent systems" (Bubolz 1998:23).

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. All these lead to the notions of social, human and cultural capital, which are transmitted from parents to children during the socialisation process. What is interesting and is discussed later in this chapter is the way those resources are unevenly distributed among boys and girls within the same household.

When it comes to the influence that community has over children, enabling or hampering their access and success, one should understand that although it makes a smaller contribution to academic performance, community social capital helps children excel in school. Research indicates that both the process components of community social capital and the structural features of the locality are important in influencing students' composite test scores and academic grades (Walls 1998:28).

The key themes of this chapter include the various stumbling blocks constraining girls' access, retention and progression in primary education. Those obstacles vary from social and economic to parents' educational and cultural background, which shape their attitudes towards education of children, particularly girls.

However, in presenting those barriers, the study attempts to separate and categorise them according to the following group of factors:

- [i]*School-related factors*, which will include all factors within school that may enable or prevent girls from gaining formal or epistemic access to primary schools.

These may include gender and culture within the school environment, school facilities and management, the curricula, teaching and learning methodologies, inappropriate

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pedagogies, e.g. pedagogies that exclude girls or promotes boys' dominance, the type of classroom leadership, school and classroom infrastructure and schooling conditions, as well as physical and verbal punishment (Yates 1990:101).

- [ii] *Security/safety-related factors* such as war, crime, and insecurity on the roads;

- [iii] *Poverty-related factors* such as lack of financial resources, distances from homes to schools, health problems, pressure to sustain and generate income for the family;

- [iv] *Culture-related factors*, which may be the subservient role of women within families and the community, male dominance over women and so forth; and

- [v] Parental background, which includes their level of education as well as their background (social capital, cultural capital and human capital), which play an important role in shaping their attitudes towards education for both boys and girls.

6.2. Gender and Culture in the School Environment

The school-related factors refer to all factors that mediate children's access to school. These factors range from the curriculum used in both public and private primary schools, the quality of education provided in both types of schools, and finally, how school management, physical infrastructure and the conditions of schools and classrooms affect the access, retention and achievement of children, including girls.

Becoming a pupil and, entering the new culture of school means learning new patterns of behaviour and developing new expectations and relationships (Hammersley and Woods1993:12). With formal access to primary school for the first time, children from different cultural backgrounds are brought together to share a set of values and experiences, which in most cases differ from what they are taught in their own homes. The playground is an area in which those children will have to share those values and experiences.

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To investigate how children behave in the playground and how gender and culture play an important role in the playground concerning access, retention and success. I decided, therefore, to conduct a participant observation in three schools, each from different socio-economic backgrounds (Escola Grande do Cazenga, Escola no. 518 and the Colegio Elizangela Filomena). As was discussed earlier in this study, participant observation requires from the research a certain degree of involvement in people's lives. As such, it was important to spend some time with the observed people and see how, in school environment as well as in family and community environments, gender relations shaped boys' and girls' expectations, and see whether those expectations varied between boys and girls.

During the playtime, I sat in the playground observing the way the children interrelated among themselves. The schools that I have used as sites have wide yards and I noticed that in the school playground, there is a culture to be negotiated and it is every bit as complex, structured and rule-bound as anything that goes on in the classroom. Observation in school playgrounds also suggests that the process of entering the culture may be different for girls and boys. It revealed that boys and girls in the three different schools did not play together and exhibited different kinds of grouping: the girls in small inward-looking groups, often sitting down, while the boys run about and play football.

Although the details differed, what was common is that after the bell for the playtime, when children come out of classrooms to play, teachers organised the students in groups, boys on one side and girls on the other. In one case, a group of males was short of one member and the teacher sent a girl to join them. The boys started shouting, "No, no, we don't want to play any more"..."She doesn't know how to play" ... "We don't want girls in our group". The teacher simply removed the girl from that group, without protesting against the boys' attitude.

In other cases, the teacher mixed boys and girls in the same group. In each group, boys took the lead, holding the ball all time without giving to girls. After few minutes, girls became upset and stop playing. Groups were dissolved and groups of boys separate from girls were assembled and girls on the other side. I approached the girls and I asked them why they had left the group. A girl replied that boys are very stupid and arrogant. Another girl said "Every time that we play with boys we get hurt" or "They think because they are stronger than us they should play with the ball all alone".

I then approached the boys and ask them why they refuse to play with girls in their group. All agreed that girls do not play well. "Playing with girls is not exciting" "Girls only know how to gossip, they should not play with boys". In another case a boy was teased for playing with girls: "He is gay. He likes to talk and play with girls", "…He's crazy, girls should play among themselves and we should play among ourselves".

In cases whereby football is played in the same area as other games, it usually causes a number of problems and sometimes unpleasantness and rudeness. If left unchecked, the footballers, usually boys, can dominate the whole playground area and those not playing football, i.e. girls are pushed to the periphery and made to feel they are obstructing the way. I also noticed that while boys were teasing girls, girls were busy gossiping about boys. This reflects what happens at family and community levels. Early in their childhood boys learn that they are superior to girls. This leads girls to feel less confident in their own potential and consequently, this shapes their expectations differently from boys' expectations.

Another gendered attitude undermining girls in schools is the classroom authority that is only given to boys. According to research done in the three different schools I have noticed that there are 97% of boys monitoring classrooms. In other words, the responsibility for looking after or preventing classmates from making noise in the absence or presence of teachers is always given to boys, and in few cases, girls act only if the peer is not in class. Whenever teachers ask the peer to control the class using a

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list to write, girls represent the majority in those lists. When I asked why the lists contained more girls the boys, peers, would say: "Because girls talk too much". However, the truth was that boys were noisier than girls. Boys were teasing girls all the time and made fun of their faces, and yet were not reprimanded for misbehaviour in the classroom. The point is that teachers always choose boys to control the class because they believe that boys are stronger than girls and that if it was a girl controlling the classroom, boys who could hurt her outside the classroom would threaten her.

These are just some of the ways in which boys exteriorise their gender attitude towards the position of girls in the classroom. Those stereotypes are, however, sustained by teachers who separate girls from boys in the classroom as well as in the playing field. Teachers claim that those stereotypes are normal and socio-culturally constructed. Their argument is based on history, whereby boys and girls as well as men and women always played different roles in the family and in society as a whole.

6.2.1 Education Quality

If the goal of education is to create individuals capable of contributing to the development of nations, which means improvement in the quality of life, then the quality of education is important. Colclough and Lewin (1993:24) argue that education quality pertains to how well the school or school system prepares students to become responsible citizens and inculcates attitudes and values relevant to modern society.

Besides, the level of students' achievements measures school or schools' quality. This, however, only occurs after an effective assessment of their cognitive capacities. Likewise, if a school system provides poor quality education it tends to discourage students from continuing to attend, and thus contributes to the number of students who drop out. A number of factors determine the extent to which education quality is poor or good. For example, curricula, textbooks and teachers' guides are good indicators of quality education.

During the field research I had the opportunity to attend classes in the three different primary schools as part of participatory observation. I noticed that in Luanda, as one moves from the upper-class areas to the lower-class areas, education quality tends to decline. In other words, even in public schools, those that are located in rich areas provide a better education quality than those in middle- and lower-class areas. Textbooks are old (the same design since 1970s). In attending classes in different schools, I had the opportunity to look at textbooks and it was clear that the same ones I used in the1980s are still in use.

Although school programmes and assessments for all public (and private) schools are provided by the same education authority, the Angolan Ministry of Education, the way they are implemented and followed up varies from area to area as well as from school to school, and of course, teacher training plays an important role in all of these. The government policy on the deployment and allocation of trained teachers is uneven. Normally, trained teachers are located in areas that are better off in socio-economic terms.

For instance, for unknown reasons, trained teachers who may live in areas such as Cazenga will most probably apply to work in schools in town, instead of working in their own living or residential area. This is one of the reasons why there are very few trained teachers working in poor areas. This is exacerbated by the fact that most teachers in rural areas and in poor urban districts, including Cazenga, have very low levels of education. In most cases, those teachers have only reached standard 6 (grade 8).

The quality of education is also related to the lack of incentive from the government towards teachers in public schools. In public schools, the salary is very low ($30 to $300) according to teachers' levels of education/training and working experience. In private schools, the salaries of trained teachers vary from $200 to $800, according to teachers' levels of training, working experience and teaching hours (Angop 2002). For

obvious reasons, most trained teachers would rather work in private schools than in public schools.

The quality of education is also affected by the worsening of social and economic conditions. Due to low salaries and the decline of purchasing power due to high inflation, teachers in Luanda have to find alternative ways of surviving. Consequently, being late for class, leaving the classroom early and high absenteeism are very common among female teachers in poor areas of Luanda.

Teachers have to trade in the informal market in order to cover their own expenses. The consequence is that teachers have less time to accomplish the school programme and because they are always in a hurry to do their own business, students are badly trained or ill prepared. This obviously affects students' achievements.

There are also situations in which teachers demand money and/or services from students. Girls, for example, are required to clean teachers' houses, fetch water for teachers, and when teachers are on maternity leave, they are requested to work in shifts so as to help teachers. This tends to discourage parents from sending their daughters back to school when they drop out.

The argument is: "My daughter is not a slave to clean her teacher's house, so that whenever she needs a domestic worker she uses my girl"; "If my daughter has to clean the teacher's house, I would rather keep her at home cleaning my own house". Another mother said, "I sent my daughter to learn and not to fetch water for the teacher's house".

The girls themselves become disillusioned and discouraged and soon drop out. When I asked dropout girls to describe their school environment, I found that most of girls described the school as the 'last place to go'. They were unanimous in saying that teachers are too demanding and that their parents have no money to buy small gifts and breakfast for teachers.

"Once, when I was 10 years old, I was cleaning my teacher's house and I got cut. I was bleeding a lot and my teacher did not take me to the hospital. Instead, she put some vinegar in that wound and told me to go and called another student to help her, shouting at me calling me lazy... as result of lack of treatment, that wound was aggravated and I got an infection, which cost lot of money to be treated later. The teacher did not visit me in the hospital not even went to see my mother at home to find out about me. When I came out from the hospital, I decided not to go back to school and my parents agreed with that..." _Nela, 14 year- old girl, a grade 3 student._

It all points to a lack of accountability and declining moral values, with dire repercussions on the motivation of learners. Again, the lack of accountability is due to the civil conflict that ravaged the country. During that period, the government paid more attention to security issues and very little attention was paid to social welfare. As a result, there were no governmental structures at local level or even at central level to deal with such problems. According to a report from the Angolan Ministry of Education (2003), after the end of war, one of government's priorities is the strengthening of the National Department of Inspection (NDI), which aims to provide training for more inspectors, among other things, to deal with issues of corruption and mistreatment of children in schools.

I also noted that there is a direct relationship between parents' own level of education and their concerns about the quality of education for their children. Parents with higher levels of education are more concerned about the quality of education their children receive, and because they can usually afford to pay for private education, their send their children, including girls, to private schools.

By contrast, parents with lower levels or no education at all are not concerned with the quality of schools or the quality of education, with the exception of a few parents who

argued that if the teacher is not good, their children will not learn and that they would then be better off at home.

6.2.2 Curriculum Content

The curriculum content is an important aspect in determining the access and retention of students in schools. Thus, there is an urgent need for it to become more inclusive in order to accommodate both boys and girls. According to Yates (1990), the term 'inclusive' has three main characteristics: firstly, it refers to social justice or *equity*, and equal opportunity. Secondly, it refers to the sharing of common values and experiences, taking into consideration the existent cultural diversity. Thirdly, it refers to the pedagogy and the way teaching and learning processes are shaped (i.e. is it shaped by inclusion or discrimination regarding race, ethnicity, sex or other factors?).

Yates (1990) and Paechter (1998), in their arguments on gender and education, emphasize the fact that in most schools in the developing world, and particularly in primary education, girls are separated from boys in terms of leisure. When there is leisure time in schools, teachers have developed the habit of giving the boys a ball and sending them to the football field, while girls are given 'easier' games such as skipping. Regarding the issues of teaching and learning, Onidile (1999: 12) notes that life skills activities in the classroom in Africa tend to emphasize gender discrimination. The school curriculum is clearly defined: while girls are learning sewing activities, embroidery, cooking and other domestic tasks, boys are engaged in learning arts and crafts. During leisure time, in children's fantasies, while boys play games that imitate their fathers, like driving a car, girls invariably play the role of mother, sitting at home playing with the children and cooking for the family.

This illustrates that in most African countries, the school curriculum does not attempt to eliminate gender constraints or retain girls, nor does it encourage them to succeed. Instead, it tends to undermine their self-confidence, which is further eroded when teaching materials portray girls and women as 'lesser beings' than men. Sometimes teachers allow boys to make fun of girls solely because they are girls. Although there is

an intention to change, the curriculum content in Angola has been very exclusive for decades.

To illustrate this, textbooks for primary and secondary education use sexist language in discussing how important education is for men (and not for women). "A educação transforma o rapaz num homem capaz" (education turns a boy in a proficient man); "o trabalho diginifica o homem" (work dignifies the man); "o professor e o aluno" (the male teacher and the male student). These are just some of the discriminatory assumptions to be found in the textbooks in Angola. Most teachers use this curriculum and do not try to adapt to the new circumstances of gender inclusion. Instead, in their everyday dealings with students, they perpetuate those stereotypes. Again, this happens even in private schools and public schools in urban upper class areas. Unfortunately, only private schools employ a more inclusive curriculum. Public schools in all class areas use the same curriculum content, which was prepared by the government during the 1980s.

During participatory observation, I attended maths, science and Portuguese classes. As part of the student group, I noticed that teachers were stimulating more boys to participate in the class than girls, and if a girl answered a question, the teacher would immediately choose a boy to confirm the girl's answer. In mathematics and science classes, boys were always selected to answer problem-solving questions. It seems that even the teachers subscribe to and perpetuate the common belief that boys are better at maths and science than girls.

This is a result not only of the curriculum itself, but it also reflects the way in which they have been socialized. One needs to understand that these teachers were socialized within the socio-cultural parameters of Angolan society. This was evident when in an interview a teacher was asked to describe the relationships between boys and girls, and the relationships between teachers and pupils. The teacher is the mother of a girl in the same class, and yet she admitted: "Although I also do not agree with gender

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