

In Angola, the low access of girls at the primary level of education became an issue of concern. The Basic Primary Education Programme was therefore launched in the 1990s after the Peace Agreement, aimed at improving the access of children to primary schools. The programme targeted children, especially girls from poor and different cultural backgrounds. As a result, the country is witnessing an increase in girls' access rates, at least at primary education level. However, the enrolments are moving at a very slow pace and the dropout rate is still very high, particularly in Luanda.

The civil war in Angola, which lasted for more than three decades, destroyed more than 4,000 classrooms (OCHA IRIN: 2004). According to the same report, at the beginning of 2004 about 44% of children from ages 6-10 did not receive basic primary education. Among those out-of-school children, girls were in the majority. In Angola, the Gross dropout rate of children in Luanda is higher amongst girls (Angop 1998).

As one of the signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Angolan government has ratified the Convention on the Right of the Child. It also pursues the African plan on "Education for all", which among other parameters emphasises the prioritisation and acceleration of girls' education (MINFAMU 2002).

The timeline for the achievement of goals on "Education for all" is 2015. However, some issues need to be addressed. Those include the gender gap, and safety and security in the classroom. These issues have a great impact on the access, retention and success of girls in primary education. These and others aspects of education for girls are discussed in the study.

2. 5 Barriers to Learning Affecting Girls

2.5.1 The Role of Gender in School and Family

According to Shaw (1995:53), gender has an impact on girls' and boys' experiences in school and on the outcomes of their education. The reviewed literature posits that in most poor countries there are gender aspects that stereotype the role of girls both within the family and within schools. For example, as is highlighted, within families girls have different roles from boys. Girls have the obligation to cook, clean the house, wash the dishes and do other elementary or domestic work to help the mother. In contrast, boys are kept close to the father, helping to mend the car or paint the house. This indicates that gender relations within the family tend to jeopardise the position of girls, relegating them and preparing them to perform domestic jobs once they get married (Paechter 1998: 48).

Research by Cole (1989) has shown that schools cannot operate in isolation from families. Indeed, it is an illusion to think that it would be possible for schools to do so. Schooling practices are constantly shaped by what children bring from their family experiences and circumstances. For example, children bring to school their cultural capital (their experiences, knowledge, assumptions and preferences) and their economic capital. Just as the amount of money children spend every day in the school's canteen may indicate the parents' economic capital, so the extent to which they have access to cultural capital is strongly influenced by their gender inculcation both within the family and at school (Ballara, 1992: 45).

2.5.1.1 The Household and Influence on the Perception of Education for Girls

The traditional family or household is generally composed of three parts, namely the father, mother and children. As Gullet (1980:43) argues, "No matter whether the relationship is based on adoption or biological/non-biological terms, families are made up of two parts: the parent (s) and child/children, which are connected in such a way that a permanent or temporary absence of one of them may lead to disruption of that cycle". When it comes to each member's role, traditionally the role of the

husband/father is to provide for the family, while the wife/mother should, amongst other duties, keep the house clean and look after the children.

These are the prevailing conceptions, which are shaped by social and gender constructions. Since gender refers to the social construction of women the ways in which men and women live, one may assume that the way girls are perceived within the family and schools results from the way the household and society shapes them. Therefore, it is not surprising to see girls taking on responsibilities aimed at preparing them to be good wives and mothers.

In many areas of Angola, including Luanda, war distorted the structure of traditional roles within the household and society. As a result, many families, even in Luanda, became disrupted. Single motherhood is a very common feature in the poor and middle classes of Luanda, with only one parent, in most cases, responsible for raising the children. Again, in order to help their mothers, girls start to take on 'heavy' responsibilities while they are still very young.

In terms of the gender dimension, although not officially, Angola has a gendered culture whereby men and boys enjoy more opportunities than women simply because it is believed that boys are more responsible than girls and that men are more capable and stronger than women. This culturally and socially constructed notion deprives girls and women of access to resources and increasingly restricts them from exerting some power and control of resources both at family and community levels.

2.5.2 Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Practices

Socio-cultural practices, customs, pregnancy, early marriage, girls' expectations, and religious and other traditions have a significant impact in preventing girls from attending or accessing and succeeding in primary schools. In many societies, early marriage and childbearing is still considered to be the ultimate goal for girls and, hence, parents do not see any need to invest in several years of formal education for them. As

Loutfi (1987:89) notes, "The majority of societies silently believe that educating a girl is like watering another man's garden", with parents, in many cases, not seeing any potential in sending their daughters to school.

In many communities in sub-Saharan regions, including Angola, initiation and circumcision are common practices and create dilemmas in the sense that during those ceremonies, girls have to avoid contact with boys in classes, as well as from uncircumcised peers. Besides, the schedules of these ceremonies normally overlap with the school calendar, which leads to school absenteeism and dropouts.

Another challenge regarding these ceremonies and education is the fact that even though initiation and circumcision are cultural ceremonies that prepare and promote girls from childhood to adulthood, school teachers still continue to view girls who have completed these ceremonies as children and treat them as such, giving them the same punishment as if they had not gone through any of those ceremonies. This is not only frustrating for parents, but also for girls who want to be treated as adult and feel uncomfortable around children who did not experience those ceremonies.

The result is the increase of dropout rate at schools and discouragement for girls who will still need to enrol at the school within those communities (Loutfi:1987). Rose et al (1997:11) also argues that in a number of communities the socialisation process encourages girls to view marriage as the ultimate purpose in life, and if they get a good husband who can take care of them and their relatives, they need not worry about formal education.

The distribution of domestic activities within the household also has an impact on the access and success of girls, not only in primary education, but at all levels. Sinciski (2002:15) argues that "... the amount of time girls spend on chores and other productive activities such as marketing reduces the time and energy they spend in schools, affecting their persistence and success." In many sub-Saharan countries financial constraints oblige some girls to engage in petty trading, which obviously takes much of their time that could be otherwise used in schools.

Cole (1989:37) argues that the performance of girls is related to the greater demand on their time to perform household activities, including fetching water and wood, cooking and the care of younger siblings. The HIV/AIDS pandemic also has a significant impact on retention of girls, not only in primary education, but at all levels. Girls are also expected to care for the sick, which leads to increasing school absenteeism and dropout rates.

Adding to the prevailing cultural practices, the literature under review (Ballara 1992:30) also highlights poverty and war, particularly in Africa, as the main obstacles preventing girls from accessing a primary level of education. According to Spindler (1987:12), the school-age children dropout rate is directly related to socio-economic conditions. The most important of these factors include the immediate and opportunity costs of schooling, parents' levels of education, parents' social and economic status and limited employment opportunities for girls after schooling.

All these factors impact on the 'demand' aspect of education, for both boys and girls. Angola is no exception; as already mentioned, the country was devastated by a civil war for at least three decades, which destroyed almost its entire socio-economic infrastructure. The majority of Angolan people live in extreme poverty. All these factors, coupled with cultural practices already mentioned, make up the context, which may be distressing to girls and obstruct them from accessing or succeeding in primary education, particularly in Luanda.

2.5.3. School Constraints

The school environment plays a significant role in retaining girls in schools, as well as in closing or widening the gender gap in education. "The walking distance to school, teachers' attitudes and teaching practices, gender bias in curricula and classroom culture all affect female attainment and persistence in schools" (Loufti 1987:9). The school environment includes *learning environment*, which in sub-Saharan Africa, due to poverty, war and low level of development, has been acknowledged as being inadequate for measurable success. Teachers' absenteeism and corruption due to low salaries also negatively affect the learning environment and discourage parents from sending their daughters to school.

Cole (1989:63) argues that in sub-Saharan Africa, including countries such as Angola and South Africa, there is a pandemic of sexual violence and harassment in schools, and it is of real concern for students, parents, and school authorities. These abuses include physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and rape. In the majority of cases, the victims are girls who are abused by male students. There are also cases where girls have been abused by their own teachers. In other cases, teachers propose sex in exchange for promotion, money or better grades. This also discourages parents from sending girls to school and, as has been reported, leads to girls dropping out.

2.6 Strategies to Improve Primary Schooling for Girls

Although these factors contribute to the widening of gender gaps in education, there are feasible strategies to improve the situation. Improving the conditions that increase the supply and demand of quality education is the best way to improve the access of girls to education, including primary education. These include the construction of more schools in order to shorten the distance between homes and schools, the training of more teachers and administrative staff to handle the influx of students at schools and improvement in teachers' salaries, to give them more incentive and to keep them teaching full-time in schools, as well as addressing safety concern.

Loufti (1987:14) argues that adjusting the school calendar to accommodate household child labour requirements, lower reductions in distances, costs of stationary and uniforms, reducing, and if possible eliminating school fees in primary universal education to accommodate both boys and girls from poor households, and increasing community participation, among other things, would be significant in increasing the demand for education.

The 'supply' side of education may include the increase of girls' enrolments by lowering the enrolment age, the review of repetition and expulsion policies, the institution of tutoring and monitoring programs, the training of female teachers in 'tough' subjects such as the sciences and mathematics, the creation of conditions to retain and counsel pregnant schoolgirls, and the increase of women's access to the formal labour market. Alphabetization can also be regarded as a strategy to improve girls and women's literacy. However, since it is expensive to finance alphabetisation programmes according to the Angolan Department of Adult Education (2003), it would be better to improve the access, retention and success of girls to primary education now, so that later, when girls becomes adults, they can easily manage resources at both family and community levels.

Besides,, if gender gap in primary schools has to be addressed, the whole community including teachers should be aware of gender relations within the family and community. At school level, teachers have to know that children are socialised not only at school, but also in the broader community and in particular within the family circle. Thus, any measure to address gender discriminations that take place in the classroom and/or in the schoolyard, have to take into consideration the fact that most gender attitudes among children are acquired and reproduced within the family circle.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

A theoretical framework may be seen as "... a set of theories that organises knowledge and gives it a meaning and significance, which allow the interpretation of experiences" (Balara 1992:8). As Woods and Hammersley (1993:4) put it "No natural or social fact or history can be interpreted in the absence of at least some implicit body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief that permits selection, evaluation and criticism". Thus, as a theoretical framework for this study, I have explored a set of theories regarding gender and education, particularly in poor societies, which includes Luanda, the Angolan capital city.

The reviewed literature provides an important theoretical basis for this study. It sheds light on key concepts concerning gender relations, cultural dimensions and barriers that girls in developing countries are forced to confront. These include, for example, the distinction between formal and epistemic access, the notion of gender mediation and the role of cultural experiences in this process, as well as the question of gender inclusion in pedagogical strategies. However, although these concepts are relevant and very useful, there is a need for reframing them in line with the specific contextual specificities of education for girls in an environment such as Luanda.

Bourdieu (1992:31a) defines gender as "... a complex set of systems of personal and social relations of domination and power, through which women (girls) are socially created and maintained, and through which they gain access to (or are allocated) status, power and material resources within society". Tickner (1992:27), on the other hand, defines gender as "the set of culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity".

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obligations and relationships in historically and spatially specific contexts, while cultural dimensions refers to the set of values and beliefs that produces norms which are shared by members of a social unit. These norms produced by cultural beliefs regarding the education of girls may also have an impact on the access and success of girls in primary education. In gendered societies, education for girls is not prioritised, especially when parents experience financial hardship.

According to Owen (1984:64), in poor societies, most parents, given their level of poverty and deprivation, would rather spend money on boys who will one day bring the benefits of education back to their own family. The same is true of societies rooted in religious beliefs, which clearly give women a lower status than men. For example, in Muslim societies such as Iran, prioritising the education of boys over girls is very common and has its roots in gender and cultural dimensions, which favour male children in general (Yates 1990:64). A common thread in these conceptualisations is the notion of mediation or more specific social conditions, including education. In examining how gender relations mediate access of girls to primary schooling, my study draws on feminist theories of gender in education.

For Knaff (2000:74), feminism is the "... organised movement which promotes equality for men and women in all different spheres". Feminist theories have enabled a much deeper understanding of the position of women in society, including in educational spheres.

However, for the purpose of this study, I emphasise theories of liberal feminism and the discourse of social justice that advocates that all people are equal and deserve equal rights. In contrast to stereotypical and demeaning claims made about women and girls, they have the same mental capacity as their male counterparts and are capable of similar performance, given the same opportunities in political, economic and social spheres, rather "Oppression exists because of the way in which men and women were socialised" (Yates 1990: 32).

The study also draws on the liberal feminist assumption that inequalities between boys and girls regarding education remain a common feature of patriarchal societies. This is particularly important to the analysis of schooling in Luanda, where patriarchal norms still dominate relations between men and women, with profound implications in the socialisation of girls. Generally, the study builds on the following main conceptual and theoretical propositions:

2.7.1 The interplay of structural factors and individual/psychological factors

From a structuralist perspective, structural factors such as barriers imposed by a male-dominated society play a critical role in the marginalisation of girls in primary education. However, in order to understand the access and success of girls in primary education, the study focuses on the interplay of structural, social and individual factors (i.e. agency) in the analysis. There is interplay between the structural factors, which refer to barriers to learning imposed by society, and the agency, which refers to individual and psychological factors. The interplay of these two factors has an important impact on the understanding of conditions that prevent or enable access and success of girls in primary education.

2.7.2 The diversity or heterogeneity among girls

This study position itself within the domain of liberal feminism that does not look at women or girls as a homogenous or monolithic group, but essentially as a diverse and heterogeneous group of individuals who experience and respond to gender relations differently. In this perspective, the concept of biography or life history is critical in that it provides a window through which to look at and unpack individual experiences, *vis-à-vis* obstacles or enablers in accessing and succeeding in primary education. In other words, it will unpack the experiences from children to parents and vice-versa.

This is to analyse the extent to which girls from different socio-economic backgrounds have the same attitudes towards education, despite their parents' financial status or perceptions of education. On the other hand, it explore whether girls from the same socio-economic background respond to social pressures in the same way.

2.7.3 Life History/bibliography

The way girls respond to social pressures is directly linked to the notion of background and biography, whether these are assets or liabilities. Biography is "... an account of series of events making up a person's life" (Neuman 2000: 132), and refers to an individual's socio-economic background, which affects to a certain degree his/her behaviour. For the purpose of this study, I use the life history to unpack the experiences girls are going through and relate it to their parents' past experiences. It would help to understand certain parents' attitudes towards education for their daughters, and would explain some girls' attitudes towards their own education. Cross (1984) provides a conceptualisation of background.

Background (that is, different ways of being in the world) consists of "skills, abilities, pre-intentional assumptions attitudes, practices capacities, stances perceptions and actions that we carry from one to another milieu." (Everts 1998:23). Among the functions assigned to background, I would like to highlight two. First, background facilitates certain kinds of readiness (Searle, 1995:136). Second, background disposes one to certain sorts of behaviours.

In this sense, background both enables and constrains what we intend, how we interpret our actions and the world around us, and how we are interpreted or socially constructed by, and in our interaction with, other people. It can be an asset or resource, either individually produced or individually owned, but also a product of social interactions. At the same time it can be a liability.

2.7.4 Formal vis-à-vis epistemic access

As it was discussed earlier in this chapter, the study distinguishes important aspects related to access: formal aspect of access (enrolment) and the epistemic aspect of access (retention and success) of girls in primary education. According to Morrow (1981:36), *once students have entered the school*, the challenge is to ensure that the school environment and practices assist them in achieving epistemic access, i.e. retention and educational success. In other words, formal access refers to enrolment and entrance to the educational institution, while epistemic access refers to the success achieved within a prescribed timeframe.

In poor communities poverty and other related factors constrain parents from sending their children to school. This makes epistemic access *more difficult than formal access*, meaning that it may not be difficult to gain access to primary education. Rather, they may be factors both inside and outside of schools that affect the supply and the demand of education for children, particularly for girls.

2.7.5 Demand and supply of girls' education

From a perspective of demand and supply, it is important to determine, on one hand, the extent to which society in general, school policies and methodologies, and infrastructures, support or hamper the access and success of girls in primary education. On the other hand, there is the individual or personal demand for education. An analysis of the extent to which psychological and other experiences permeate the willingness of girls to access education is necessary. Are girls willing to learn if education is supplied or made available to them?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the set of methods and techniques that were used to achieve the aims of this study. This chapter is therefore divided into the following sections: Research design, data collection techniques and data analyses.

3.2 Research Design

The research design aims to present an extensive literature review and a documentary analysis, followed by case studies, which comprises the practical work of this study.

3.2.1 Literature Review

The study involves an extensive literature review, and aims at redefining the theoretical framework, as well as consolidating the primary data and the available secondary data about education for girls both in the region (sub-Saharan Africa) and in Angola, and then relates this information and applies it to the reality of Luanda.

The following sets of literature were reviewed:

- Theses and research reports on education for girls
- Books and articles that provide a contextual background and a theoretical base for my study, i.e. theories on gender that are related to education
- Books of research methodology, which guided me in the preparation of my field research.

3.2.2 Documentary Analysis

The following set of documents is analysed:

- Statistical analysis of the flow of girls and boys in sub-Saharan Africa, i.e. reports from the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, among others.
- Reports from schools that I visited during the fieldwork.

3.2.3 Case Studies

The case studies, which comprise the practical work of this study, are based on fieldwork that was conducted in three different primary schools in Luanda and communities in the three different socio-economic strata. The schools are located in three different geographical areas.

The Escola Grande do Cazenga is situated in the municipality of Cazenga and was used to as my sample of the lower income or lower class area, due to its socio-economic conditions. The Escola do Primeiro Nivel no. 518 was chosen as the sample for the middle class group and the College Elizangela Filomena was chosen as the sample for the school based on a privileged upper-class group.

The purpose of employing these three different socio-economic realities was to investigate whether gender relations and cultural dimension affected the formal and epistemic access of girls to primary education. Thus, I researched in Cazenga (sampling the lower-class group), Terra Nova (sampling the middle-class group) and as sample of the upper-class group, I chose Miramar Alvalade and Maculusso.

3.2.3.1 Site Identification

Luanda is a diversified province that is home to people who came from all over the country and therefore have different cultural practices and beliefs. Besides which, the ways in which people experience socio-economic difficulties differ, so one finds that Luanda comprises different social, economic and cultural strata.

However, for the purpose of this study, three main socio-economic strata are identified: *the lower, the middle and the upper class*. Each one has its own characteristics and tends to settle in certain suburbs far from each other, which will be discussed in this chapter.

For this study I chose the suburbs of Cazenga, Miramar, Alvalade and Maculusso, Terra Nova, and Cazenga represents *the lower class*, being a poor area with low-income households that are unable to afford the costs of education. Schools in that suburb are normally completely unsuitable for human habitation because they lack proper latrines, furniture and water. Teachers are not well-trained and unqualified, most of them having completed only grade six or grade eight.

Terra Nova, which is inhabited by middle-income households, most of whom own decent houses and decent cars, represented the middle class; public servants are among this community. However, since the government only pays them an average of \$500 per month, and the cost of private primary education is high (\$125 per month), most of parents in this category cannot afford to send their children to private schools. However, they have more enlightened views on the education of girls. Consequently, these parents encourage their children to complete primary education and if possible, go on to higher education.

The upper class in this study is represented by people who own more expensive properties in wealthy zones (Miramar, Alvalade and Maculusso), and comprises high-ranking military officials, government staff, highly educated people with good jobs and salaries of no less than \$3000 per month, businessmen and professionals who can afford

to send their children to more expensive *private colleges*. The parents of these households are able to help their children with homework, either because most of them reasonably high levels of education, or because they can hire domestic workers to do the housework, giving them enough spare time to supervise children's homework. Households in this class view education for both boys and for girls as a social and economic asset.

3.2.3.2 Identification of schools

As part of this study I identified and studied three schools at the primary level of education, all located in Luanda, the capital city. One is in the lower-class area of Cazenga, the second in the middle-class area of Terra Nova and the third in an upper-class area (in town). Since people in the upper-class area have higher incomes, they can afford to send their children to private schools, which are better equipped and employ good staff. They also provide good conditions for learning and teaching.

The fact that I have personal ties to these three schools helped me to choose my sites. Because I grew up in Terra Nova and studied at the Escola Primaria no. 518, I still have connections in that area. Secondly, I have been teaching at the Escola Grande do Cazenga (the lower-class area) for almost 5 years. In 1994 I was appointed as an inspector in charge of the Cazenga municipality. Elizangela College is a private school in the town that, because of its high charges, gives access only to children from privileged families. Because it is a well-known private school, I have used it in my study of an upper-class area.

In addressing the issues regarding education in these three socio-economic environments, this study provides a brief background of the schools that were used as the sites of research:

Escola Grande do Cazenga

This is a school situated in a poor area of Luanda. Cazenga is the biggest municipality in the city, having over 1½ million residents (Angop 2003). In terms of socio-economic infrastructures, it is a very poor region, where people can live without electricity and water for periods of three to six months.

It is also considered the most dangerous area in terms of criminality. The majority of its inhabitants live in poor social conditions, and are mainly unemployed. In order to survive, some people turn to informal marketing, selling food and other commodities.

Escola do Primeiro Nivel no. 518.

School no. 518 is located in a middle-class area named Terra Nova. During colonial times, mostly white people inhabited Terra Nova. The houses have the same designs as some areas of Portugal (a result of Portuguese colonization), which is why many people call them '*casas do colono*' (nobles' houses). Shops and restaurants on almost every corner are a feature of the area. The majority of people have 'decent' jobs and can afford a modicum of comfort.

Schools are built in such a way that confers comfort to both pupils and teachers. In contrast to Escola Grande do Cazenga, pupils do not have to carry rocks or containers to sit on during classes. They are furnished with the basic necessities of a primary school and teachers have a higher level of education than those at the Escola Grande do Cazenga.

However, there is a certain degree of corruption here; because of difficulties in accessing primary schools, parents are obliged to pay the principal or teachers to obtain places for their children. This increases the teacher/pupil ratio to 1:65, and leads to considerable failure rates. Although corruption exists, it is not as prevalent as in the first example. Even in this middle-class school, the rate of girls is lower than the rate of boys (OCHA IRIN, 2001:3a).

College Elizangela

This is a private school located in an upper-class area of Luanda, and features roads with pavements. It has 31 classrooms that accommodate students from pre-primary to pre-university level; it has electricity and water, as well as toilets in good condition that work 24 hours a day; it has a very well trained staff and the ratio of teachers to pupils is 1:25. In terms of methods of teaching and learning, the school is well furnished and provides computer lessons to pupils at primary level.

The school has a very high pass rate and in terms of transportation, it has its own school buses, although many parents are able to transport their children themselves.. This is a 'dream school' in which almost every parent would like to enrol their children. The only issue that prevents lower- and middle-class parents from enrolling their children at this college is affordability (OCHA IRIN 2001:3b).

3.3 Data collection strategies

For effective data collection I decided to use a life history approach, participatory observation and open-ended interviews, which I will present in some detail in this chapter.

3.3.1 Methods

3.3.1.1 Participant Observation

According to Neuman (2000:243), a participant observation is qualitative style in which a researcher directly observes and participates in a small-scale social setting. In other words, when a researcher is involved in a participant observation, he/she has to become involved in the lives of the people being studied. The use of participant observation allowed me to get genuine and practical facts related to gender relations and cultural dimension that affects the formal and epistemic access of girls to primary education. For example, sitting in a household for few hours while observing how boys and girls are engaged in housework and homework was a valuable tool that allowed me to conclude that within family circle, girls tend to be more involved in domestic tasks than boys of

the same age. It also helped me to understand many other issues surrounding the girls' low access, as well the levels of dropout in primary education.

Through participatory observation, it was possible to perceive that the lower the level of education in parents, the lower was girls' access to schooling, and the higher the rate of dropping out, especially amongst girls in primary education. To rephrase it, if the parents do not have an acceptable level of education (at least the secondary) or if they are not educated at all, they do not see any incentive to send their daughters to school and if they do send them to school, it is because of a 'blind imitation'. In most cases in poor areas, less educated or uneducated parents imitate the community by sending their daughters to school.

However, because they do not perceive any benefit in sending them to school, any obstacles arising will discourage parents from persisting with the education of their children. Besides, when parents themselves are uneducated it is extremely difficult for them to help their children with homework, and ensure that they have time for homework.

Before my observational studies, I decided what it was that I wished to see: I wanted to monitor gender relations and cultural dimensions within the families and community. I therefore set questions such as the following: *In household with boys and girls, do girls feel more compelled to do domestic work than boys? Do they attend school? Do they (girls) have any leisure time?* I also wanted to know the extent to which girls received support from parents for coping with domestic activities and homework. To this end, I had to spend days very carefully asking girls questions such as: *Have you done your homework already? If not, why not? When will you do it? Do you take any time to play?*

At community level, my main concern during observation was to investigate the extent to which the community as whole played a role in promoting or hindering the access and success of girls to primary education. I therefore went to observe activities aimed at community development. First I wanted to know who was taking leadership at

community level; I also wanted to know if women and girls were taking any part of those activities and if they were, what kind of tasks were allocated to them. I then wanted to find out whether there were any activities at community level aimed at promoting girls' education. To do that, I had to act as a community member, watching and listening to men's/boys' opinions about women/girls.

During the winter holiday (2004) in Terra Nova, the area chosen to represent the middle class, residents were involved in a pro-environmental campaign. The entire campaign was co-ordinated by two men and the role of women and girls was cleaning and carrying water while men and boys were planting trees and giving out pamphlets saying: "Do not litter" and "Let us preserve the environment". During the campaign, the way that activities were divided between boys, men, women and girls simply reflected the attitudes in schools, families and the broader society.

3.3.1.1.1 Ethical consideration

Participatory observation involves a careful watching and listening process. The researcher has to adopt the way people live and try to become one of them. It becomes even more difficult when it is done within a household. Here, people know that the researcher in most cases is a stranger to their family, even if they are related somehow. Spending time with a stranger tends to restrain people's behaviour and one must take this into account. There is a moral obligation to uphold the confidentiality of data and keep the information private, sometimes by changing names if requested by informants. At the end of the observation period, I had a moral obligation of disclosure to them and ask for authorisation to use the information as part of my research. I only used information that was authorised by the informants.

3.3.1.2 Interviews

According to Neuman (2000:234), open-ended interview or unstructured interview is that style of field interview in which the beginning and the end are not clear and respondents are not limited to give strict answers. Due to its nature, I found this style of interviewing valuable, as the medium of open-ended questions allowed the respondents

interviewing valuable, as the medium of open-ended questions allowed the respondents to answer openly and without restriction. Open-ended questions helped to gather the information that I was hoping to get, as well as information that went beyond my expectations. However, to gain respondents' trust, I had to share my own experiences with them.

The way in which the interviews were conducted permitted respondents to feel relaxed, which enabled them to express their opinions comfortably and without obligation. Interviews were conducted with school principals, teachers and learners (boys and girls), as well as girls who had dropped out, from three different schools in Luanda. Since I wanted to analyse the way parents perceive education for girls and the way gender relations mediate the access, retention and success of girls in primary education, the study sought to conduct interviews with households with different social, cultural and economic backgrounds. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with parents and households from the lower class, middle-class and upper-class strata in the province of Luanda.

The interviews focused mainly on the issues of gender in schools, family and community. For this reason, I asked the following questions:

(Interview with school authorities)

- Taking into consideration the reality of our society, there is a very low rate of girls in primary schools. Could you explain the reasons behind the low rate of access among girls?
- Could you describe the main reasons/barriers preventing girls' retention and success in your school?

- In your experience as teacher/principal, how are cultural and gender relations within the family shaping the retention and the achievements of girls in your school? How are you trying to overcome them?

Within households

- As parent(s), how would you describe the role of education for children, especially girls?
- Do you think that the school your children attend is safe for girls?
- How often do you visit the schoolteacher to get a report of your child's (especially girls') progress? Do you think it is important?
- In cases of financial hardship, if you have to choose between boys and girls, who would you prioritise in sending to school, and why?
- List the tasks performed in your family/ home by women/girls and men/boys.
- How are domestic tasks distributed among the boys and the girls?
- Who does what tasks?
- From whom do you expect more effort in terms of housework, boys or girls?
- Are responsibilities periodically renegotiated or rotated?

- Who likes and enjoys the work he/she is responsible for and why? Who doesn't? And Why?
- How many hours does each person spend each week on each task?
- How do they divide their time between housework and homework?
- As parent(s), what role do you play in helping the children plan their homework? How do you help them with their homework?

3.3.1.3 Life History

The study also made use of the life history approach. Life history is based on narration of personal life experiences. Gender relations and cultural dimensions regarding education for girls are very delicate issues and respondents in many cases do not feel comfortable expressing themselves, particularly to a stranger, who is the researcher. For example, although the research was not planned to discover people's level of literacy, through life history it transpired that many respondents, particularly women and girls, in the poor area of Luanda, especially in Cazenga, are illiterate. Through our conversations those respondents were able to describe their childhood and their life experiences in terms of education.

In this way I could see that poor people who had experienced a 'rough' childhood, are *no able to perceive education* as an asset to both the family and for the community as a whole. Many respondents who undergone 'rough' experiences in the past did not view education as important for a girl-child, with the requirement of regular class attendance to attain a level of literacy.

Rather, parents with this 'distorted' view believed that girls should be taught housework or school subjects based on domestic activities that would prepare them for the future.

Being a good mother and a good wife, able to wash, clean and cook was the best education parents, in this case mothers, could give to their daughters.

I learned of the girls' experiences through a life history approach and noted that their experiences are a reflection of their parents' views regarding education. This analysis was only possible through the use of life history with respondents from different socio-economic background.

One of the advantages of the life history approach is that it allowed me not to only examine patterns, but above all, the socio-cultural values that informants hold and do not easily disclose to strangers. These insights cannot be captured through open-ended interviews. The main reason is that life histories are unique and this approach relies on the fact that everyone has their own history and bibliography that, just like fingerprints, is individual and unique. My task was to find a pattern or characteristic that makes people from the same community or society similar to each other. For instance, I now know that the way in which people are brought up shapes the way they raise their own children.

3.4. My Respondents

As has already been discussed in chapter 3, in the field I employed multiple techniques that I found useful and appropriate for the nature of my research. Open-ended interviews were conducted with thirty households (ten from each of the three different areas), fifteen out-of-school girls (five from each different area) and fifteen teachers (five from each of three different schools). The direct statements of my interviewees were important to my study and were considered a primary source of information.

For the selection of respondents, I took a sample from each population to be studied, i.e. upper-, middle- and lower-class. The sample comprised the following: for the open-ended interview I chose 30 people (male and female) - 10 from each of the different classes/areas. For the life history approach, 15 people comprising five from each of the three classes/areas were interviewed. Teachers and school principals totalled 15, with

five from each of the three schools, as well as the principal of each school. Finally, I observed math, science, language and life orientation/skill classes in the three selected schools. I also spend some time observing children playing during break time.

Because the field is enormous and it would not be possible to approach large numbers of people, I decided to use the same sample size from different populations because I felt that each sample would fairly represent the population I was studying (three different socio-economic class in three different populations). I also used male and female respondents during the research to avoid one-sided opinions that might unfairly weight my attempt to identify culpability for the low access rate of girls to education. . Rather, I wanted to investigate whether there are similarities or differences based on gender and economic, social and cultural beliefs and practices among people from the same background, as well as from different backgrounds. For example: How men/boys and women/girls from the same/different social strata feel about girls' access to school? The objective was to find a pattern for the study.

3.5 Gaining Access

The process of gaining access was not an easy task. In Angola, for example, the lack of political openness prevents people from talking about certain socio-economic realities. Some gatekeepers (school principals) were very reluctant to 'open' the way for my research, while some of them had very high expectations about my work.

Although I explained the grounds of my research, some gatekeepers insisted that I was working for a donor agency and thus, could help them somehow. However, the fact that I was an inspector from the Angolan Ministry helped me to obtain permission in the sense that schools in the lower-class area knew me as an inspector, which was an important asset in enabling me to get the information I needed in that site.

On the other hand, the schools where I was unknown requested for a letter from some authority conferring the right to enter the site. I therefore had to approach my sponsor, which is an institution within the Ministry of Education, to give me a letter of

identification for use in the field. In addition, I had to explain repeatedly the purpose of my research. However, after some days of negotiation, permission to gather the information in schools was granted.

3.6 Sources

There is much literature on issues relating to the education and enrolment of girls at primary level of education. As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, in search of consistent information for my study, I have gone through an extensive literature review of the existing research reports, books, articles, and government policies concerning gender and education.

I visited the library of the Department of Gender within the Angolan Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as the research centre within the Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women. To further my study I also researched some Internet sites with information about girls' access to primary education, as well as other issues in relation to education.

The practical work of this research was arranged to consolidate the practice to the theoretical background in relation to the topic. In order to collect my primary data, I therefore had to conduct some observation, open-ended interviews and life history approaches.

3.7 Data Analysis

As was stated earlier in this chapter, and since this is a qualitative study, for data collection I used qualitative data collection techniques. I sought accurate and viable ways to use a cluster of methods of qualitative data analysis. In order to organise the data on the basis of themes and patterns, and for formulation of new concepts, I used the coding qualitative data. Since there were a lot of raw data gathered from interviews and life histories, I had to use open coding to identify key themes such as gender, poverty, bibliography or parents and children's backgrounds.

I then used the axial coding technique, which helped me to identify the relation between cause and consequence. For example, the axial coding allowed me to establish a linkage between the parents' level of education and their perception of the need to educate their daughters justifying why some parents are concerned about girls' education while others give it lower priority. Besides, it allowed me to identify all issues as well as patterns and new concepts surrounding gender and education within communities and families from different as well as from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to make comparisons and contrasts of attitudes towards gender relations in education, as well as people's attitudes to education for girls, I used the selective coding technique. For this purpose, I used data collected from males and females of the same socio-economic background, as well as from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

This allowed me to realize that there are parents that prioritise girls' education as they do for boys, while others give lower or no priority at all. Besides, it allowed me to identify all issues as well as patterns and new concepts surrounding gender and education within communities and families from different as well as from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to make comparisons and contrasts of attitudes towards gender relations in education, as well as people's attitudes to education for girls, I used the selective coding technique. For this purpose, I used data collected from males and females of the same socio-economic background, as well as from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The aim was to see whether there were any similarities or patterns in terms of attitudes towards girls' education. In the process of identifying the similarities and the contrasts within the collected data, I also used the Analytic Comparison, which allowed me to focus on a few regularities and make contrasts with alternative explanations (Newman 2000: 421). The regularities that I found in the field allowed me establish a pattern:

parents from poor households, as well as poor communities, place higher value on education for boys than for girls; in the middle class just as in the upper class, parents value education equally for boys and girls.

The concepts of social capital, cultural capital and human capital became the main themes in describing the way boys and girls are socialised within the family and community. The field research allowed me to conclude that parents' social, cultural and human resources are transferred to their children. Those resources may be an asset or a liability. They are assets when used to benefit their children in numerous spheres, including education, which presupposes that the parents have those resources in the first place. However, social, cultural and human resources can be a liability when parents lack or misuse them to the point of being unable to transmit them to the next generation. Another argument is that boys and girls are socialised differently. The ways in which resources are distributed to boys and girls within the household and community differs, and this has a significant impact on girls' formal and epistemic access to primary education.

This insight led me to the formation of a new concept: the gendered social capital. This explains that social capital is distributed unevenly between boys and girls, and this inequity affects the access and success of the less privileged girls.

Chapter Four: Girls Education in Angola: Contextual Issues

4.1 Introduction

As was mentioned earlier, a report from UNICEF (2003) states that over 120 million school-aged children are denied their right to go to school -and the majority of them are girls. Every girl left out of school suffers a lifetime of lost opportunity. She is less able to develop to her full potential and is more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation and HIV/AIDS. What is more, her loss impacts her family, her society and future generations. It points out that:

“This gender gap in education not only affronts the dignity and human rights of girls but also blocks national development. Investments in girls’ education have proven returns: girls are enabled to fulfil their potential and their rights-as children and later as women. As mothers, they can better ensure their children’s well being. Economic productivity multiplies, population growth slows; poverty shrinks” (UNICEF 2003: 12).

Behind the gender gap in education between boys and girls in Luanda, there is a mindset that tends to discriminate between boys and girls. This attitude is evident within households and in the community itself, whereby parents view girls as less capable than boys in many ways. For instance, there are parents who think that boys are more intelligent and more responsible than girls, undermining girls because they are the ‘fragile’ sex.

This chapter provides the contextual background of Angola and Luanda in particular and discusses the following themes: the social, cultural and economic contexts of Luanda and how those contexts are interrelated in suppressing girls’ access and success in primary education in Angola. It will also describe the schools in Luanda and their distribution according to different social classes. It will focus on school infrastructure and facilities, and the quality of education, which includes teaching and learning practices in different socio-economic areas.