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**Woman+Teacher+Rural:**

*Bringing Gender into the Policy Framework on Teacher Deployment in Rural Areas*

By Claudia Mitchell and Kyung-Hwa Yang

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**Research to Practice Policy Briefs**

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**Biographies**

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**Kyung-Hwa Yang** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Integrated Studies in the Faculty of Education, McGill University and a doctoral fellowship recipient from FQRSC (Le Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture). Her research interests include exploring participatory visual methods to help the socioeconomically disenfranchised, such as minority women, working class families, or immigrant children, bring to light their experiences and perspectives in order to take action and change the frame of experiences. Her research projects have been presented in national and international conferences and featured in *The Handbook of Participatory Video* (Milne, Mitchell, & De Lange, Eds., 2012), *Creative Arts in Research for Community and Cultural Change* (McLean, Ed., 2011), and other academic publications. She has been involved in media education for children and adults, video production on critical social issues, and educational technology and multimedia production in higher education for the past two decades. She is a founder and instructor of the Video-Telling Workshop, a free video production course available to graduates of the Odyssey Project, which offers free college-credited courses in the humanities to low-income adults in the Chicago area.
Executive Summary

As many countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, seek to improve schooling opportunities for children and young people in rural settings, and particularly in the context of acquiring (and retaining) more girls, the recruitment of greater numbers of women teachers is often seen as one of the key solutions. Women are already there, it is argued, as opposed to men who may be involved in migration to urban centres or specific work sites such as mines or construction, and may be available to work as untrained (and hence lower-paid) teachers. There are also widespread beliefs that women are ‘natural’ teachers for young children. Sometimes employment in and of itself is seen as empowering for women. However, this is far from being a straightforward solution. As a recent study points out, there is the risk of what has been termed the ‘feminization of teaching’, particularly at the primary levels, which in turn can be seen as contributing to new inequalities. At the same time, there are many barriers to attracting women teachers back to rural areas if they are already living in towns and cities. Moreover, as studies within girls’ education highlight, it is far from clear that the presence of women teachers within highly patriarchal structures (and without access to programmes and initiatives that address inequalities) is necessarily empowering to girls, and so this engagement of women in such an instrumental role (we need women teachers because this is good for girls) is highly questionable. As various researchers have highlighted, most studies have paid little attention to the experiences of women teachers both as teachers and as women, and when a rural component is also factored in, there is even less that is known about women’s experiences. The lack of understanding of women teachers as “distinct human identities” (Bista, p. 16) is a serious gap in policies linked to the deployment of women teachers both in relation to rural education and in relation to girls’ education more broadly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1
Gender Training: Develop national policies, strategies and programmes on gender training and teacher education: In order to make rural areas safe and generative spaces for women teachers and for girls, it is critical that teacher education (both pre-service and in-service) responds to the need for gender responsive policies and practice that address gender inequalities in the lives of girls and women.

Recommendation 2
Women and Girls: Review local policies and policy discourses on women teachers and their interface with girls’ education: This is an area that is potentially over-determined in terms of contributing to girls’ education and possibly to the detriment of programmes that would support women teachers (irrespective of their links to girls’ education).

Recommendation 3
IT support: While the ubiquitous nature of IT remains, it is worth pursuing a consideration of best practices to see how IT support (especially through mobile applications) might contribute to reducing isolation for women teachers in rural areas,
and simultaneously contribute to improved pedagogical practice.

**Recommendation 4**
Infrastructure: The patriarchal structures and the burden of care for which rural women teachers are responsible suggests the need for structures that recognize the double and triple shifts that women teachers take up in their teaching and personal lives. Ministries of Gender and Ministries of Education (along with other components of the gender machinery of a country) need to come together to establish policies and practices that support women teachers professionally.

**Recommendation 5**
In depth studies of women teachers’ lives: Following from #4, conduct more in depth studies of women teachers and their experiences. Drawing on the work of Moletsane et al (2010) develop frameworks for studying and analyzing data which seek to evaluate the complexity of women teachers’ lives through such participatory approaches as memory-work and working with the visual in ways that will help to contribute to policy dialogue.

**Recommendation 6**
Pre-service teachers: Study and expand pre-service teacher education programmes that seek to provide experiences for new teachers in rural areas. Build in strong support for addressing issues of gender equality.

**Recommendation 7**
Establish mentorship programmes and other women teacher-friendly programmes which support women in their bid to take on leadership roles in rural schools. Many of the issues around sanitation, housing, and strategies to reduce isolation would benefit from the leadership of women.
**Woman+Teacher+Rural: Bringing Gender into the Policy Framework on Teacher Deployment in Rural Areas**

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

As many countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, seek to improve schooling opportunities for children and young people in rural settings, and particularly in the context of acquiring (and retaining) more girls, the recruitment of greater numbers of women teachers is often seen as one of the key solutions. Women are already there, it is argued, as opposed to men who may be involved in migration to urban centres or specific work sites such as mines or construction, and may be available to work as untrained (and hence lower-paid) teachers. There are also widespread beliefs that women are ‘natural’ teachers for young children. Sometimes employment in and of itself is seen as empowering for women. However, this is far from being a straightforward solution. As a recent study points out, there is the risk of what has been termed the ‘feminization of teaching’, particularly at the primary levels which in turn can be seen as contributing to new inequalities. At the same time, there are many barriers to attracting women teachers back to rural areas if they are already living in towns and cities. Moreover, as studies within girls’ education highlight, it is far from clear that the presence of women teachers within highly patriarchal structures (and without access to programmes and initiatives that address inequalities) is sufficient to empowering girls, and so this engagement of women in such an instrumental role (we need women teachers because this is good for girls) can be questioned as a solution by itself. As various researchers have highlighted (Walkerdine, 1990; Kirk, 2003; Kirk, 2006; Bista, 2004), most studies have paid little attention to the experiences of women teachers both as teachers and as women, and when a rural component is also factored in, there is even less that is known about women’s experiences. The lack of understanding of women teachers as “distinct human identities” (Bista, p. 16) is a serious gap in policies linked to the deployment of women teachers, both in relation to rural education and in relation to girls’ education more broadly. What are the most critical issues that need to be addressed in relation to women teachers in rural schools? What are the promising practices that might support and extend the participation of women in rural schools?

**BACKGROUND**

By increasing the number of girls in secondary school, the pool for female primary school teachers automatically becomes larger. (Rihani, 2006, p. 34)

Female teachers can help to make the school environment more supportive and nurturing for girls. Many girls in Africa are forced to drop out of school because school administrators are insensitive to gender issues. (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008, p. 4)

Female teachers serve as important role models in rural areas where wage work opportunities for educated women are extremely limited so that...
female graduates with greater exposure to female teachers form attitudes that are more favorable to women’s participation in wage work. (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2010, p. 212)

The recruitment and training of female teachers can create a virtuous circle: as more girls get through school, more female teachers become available for the next generation. (UNESCO, 2011a, p. 81)

In the early 1960s, UNESCO described the shortage of female teachers and students as the vicious cycle of girls’ education in rural areas. Almost half a century later, the cycle still seems to continue. The majority of children out of school are rural girls, and rural areas are still short of qualified women teachers (UNESCO, 2010a). Interestingly, though, more than half of the worldwide teaching staff is women. In 2008, 17,263,900 women were teaching in primary schools, and 15,122,010 in secondary schools, comprising 62% and 51% of the teaching staff, respectively (see Table 1). Nonetheless, the sparse data comparing rural and urban schools in the Global South shows that the majority of women teachers are in urban settings. Women teachers have frequently been regarded as a remedy for low school enrollment rates among rural girls. Some studies suggest a positive correlation between girls’ enrollment and the number of women teachers (Birdsall, Levine, & Ibrahim, 2006; Huisman & Smits, 2009). A longitudinal study in India, for instance, showed that girls’ enrollment rates were proportional to the percentage of female teachers, especially in rural areas (UNESCO, 2001). The reason for the correlation has often been explained with the assumptions that women teachers are more responsive to gender issues and that they can offer role models to girls. But have these assumptions and their impact on women teachers’ lives been critically examined in relation to rurality and how does this work in relation to Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, where girls’ education continues to be severely underdeveloped (in 2009, enrollment rates in primary education were 59% and 39%, respectively).

Sub-Saharan Africa

According to UNESCO (2011c), Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest proportion of female teachers in primary schools, and there has only been a small increase between 1990 and 2009 from 40% to 42%. Despite the total number of primary school teachers having increased 79% between 1995 and 2009, the proportion of women teachers, however, decreased from 43% to 42% (UNESCO, 2011b). National case studies conducted in five countries suggest that the majority of women teachers are at urban schools (see Table 2). Because of the shortage of women teachers at rural schools, in Ghana, women teachers have been asked to accept postings to rural schools in order to stand up for girls and contribute to national development (Ghana News Agency, September 23, 2011). In reality, the majority of Ghanaian teachers, irrespective of gender, avoid teaching in rural areas because of the limited access to basic resources—such as markets, social services, electricity, potable water, and extra income sources—compounded with their low socioeconomic status (Casely-Hayford, 2007). Under these circumstances, it seems nearly impossible for most women teachers to provide a positive role model to girls:

Many female teachers were not able to act or behave as good role models and they were acutely aware of this dilemma. Their own presentation,
their social distance from the community, the location of their residences were all critical factors in maintaining a level of respect from community members. (Casely-Hayford, 2007, p. 12)

While women teachers struggle to retain their status in local communities while serving as role models to girls, girls seem to be absent at schools because of reasons other than the lack of role models there. Porter et al. (2011) argued that girls are assumed to help adult women in the household, carrying water and agricultural products and taking care of siblings. A 13-year old girl talked about her life:

I always cook every day so I get tired. I wake up at 5:30 am and sleep at 10 pm. I don’t get enough sleep . . . The key to the tap was missing so I did not get water early and as a result I was late [for school]. (Porter et al., 2011, p. 403)

Malawi shares much of the same situation. Boys tend to ignore house chores, regarding them as the responsibility of the women and girls (Sankhulani, 2007). Thus, girls take on most duties at home and work, more so than boys, which inevitably affects their school attendance. It seems that girls’ absence at schools has more to do with gender disparity in society than the lack of women teachers at schools. Moreover, as shown in Table 3, the pupil-teacher ratio is significantly higher in rural schools than in urban schools. This suggests that scarce resources are available to rural teachers in general. The low economic status of the teaching profession seems to aggravate hardship in teaching at rural schools. A rural teacher said:

Because of our low status, some parents do not see the value of education. They comment that if teachers cannot afford even to own a bicycle, then education is not worth much. Parents who look down on teachers might, in some cases, own a few heads of cattle, an ox drawn cart, or a bicycle. (As cited in Sankhulani, 2007, p. 101)

Clearly, the harsh reality does not only affect women teachers, but does seem to affect women teachers more than male teachers. Frequent male teachers’ absenteeism—to earn extra income or for other reasons—leaves more of the workload to the women teachers (Casely-Hayford, 2007). Abraha et al.’s (1991) study implies that this may affect girls’ education more than the presence of women teachers at school. They argued in their study that in primary education in Ethiopia:

Girls tend to persist at higher rates when attending schools with more experienced teachers, even in rural communities. On the other hand, the share of teachers who are female and teachers’ level of pre-service training are not related to girls’ persistence. (Abraha et al, 1991, p. 116)

In comparison, studies suggest that the presence of female teachers is generally seen as more critical to girls’ secondary education. Between 1999 and 2009, girls’ gross enrollment rate (GER)\(^1\) in secondary education rose from 69% to 79% globally. During the same period, the GER rose from 25% to 39% in Sub-Saharan Africa, marking 9% below GER among boys. Despite the increase in enrollment, the graduation rate is still

\(^1\) Gross enrolment ratio (GER) indicates “the number of pupils or students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education.” (UNESCO, 2011b, p. 301)
very low. In three quarters of 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the graduation rate is below 40%, with a higher rate among boys (UNESCO, 2011b). Gender-based violence, in addition to economic barriers to education, seems to be a major factor that hinders rural girls from access to secondary education. As Porter et al. (2011) noted:

Harassment is not merely perpetrated by peers and in travel contexts some male teachers at both primary and secondary schools seem to regard sexual access to young girl pupils as their right, as a few of our life histories with young women in their twenties attest. (p. 407)

Because of gender-based violence in schools, parents often withdraw their daughters from school when they reach puberty. This situation lends support to the argument that more women teachers should be recruited for girls’ education because they could create a female-friendly school environment. However, although women teachers may contribute to reducing sexual harassment or violence at schools, there is little indication that women teachers are able to succeed in changing a school environment. In a study in rural South Africa, De Lange, Mitchell, and Bhana (2012) argued that women teachers often lack agency in addressing gender-based violence at schools. While male teachers talked about gender-based violence openly, women teachers were less likely to speak out (Bhana, De Lange, Mitchell, 2010). This may result from normalized gender inequalities in daily life. When this is the case, it is difficult for individual women teachers to influence girls’ lives at school, especially because they themselves tend to have limited authority at the school (Kirk, 2006). Similarly, Motalingoane-Khau (2010) suggested that women teachers are expected to be powerful although they exercise only limited authority, whereas at home, they are powerless women trapped in gender disparity. (See also Leach and Mitchell, 2005) As various women teachers in secondary schools in Lesotho commented:

I felt trapped by the fact that as a teacher I had to teach the children what was required by the syllabus [sexuality and HIV], but also I was seen as inappropriate for the job because I was not traditionally trained even though I had the academic qualification. . . . It was really bad for me because even when I was just walking in the village I could hear people giving me bad names and saying how I had no morals. (A woman teacher, pp. 175-176)

I found my strength in other women in our Women’s Association. I have achieved so much with my meagre salary because of the association that he [her husband] and my in-laws have become jealous. He now mocks me on my achievements and accuses me of having a rich lover who is giving me money. (A woman teacher, p. 203)

A lack of sanitary facilities is another factor that discourages girls to come to schools. This lack is grounded in the traditional view that “menstrual blood is viewed as impure and therefore contagious” (Gender Violence and its impact on girls’ education in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2004). Thus, girls are left to share toilets with boys. Such ignorance makes school toilets an unsafe place for many girls (Mitchell, 2007). The lack of sanitary facilities also deters women teachers from working at rural schools. Similarly, safe housing is critical to women teachers in rural areas. In Tanzania, for instance, although 93% of all the schools are located in rural areas, there is a significant shortage of teacher
housing especially in those areas (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). Before deploying women teachers in rural areas, at least, safe housing and proper sanitary facilities at schools have to be provided for them.

The educational drive calling for more women teachers in rural areas also needs to take into consideration the debates around the feminization of the teaching profession (see also Kelleher, 2011). A key issue in the debate is whether feminization contributes to lower teachers’ salaries. Between 1990 and 2009, the total number of teachers in secondary education increased by 156.9% in Sub-Saharan Africa while the proportion of women teachers in the region decreased from 33% to 29%, as compared to an increase from 49% to 52% at a global level (UNESCO, 2010b, 2011b). Not surprisingly, teachers’ salaries in terms of a ratio of average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita are still relatively high in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially where men dominate the teaching staff, although salaries have been declining relatively (UNESCO, 2010b). Furthermore, a reduction in support for teacher education has been reported in certain countries. In Senegal, for instance, teacher education has been reduced from four years to six months; in some cases, training does not exist, and untrained teachers are rushed into the classroom to meet the standards pushed by the international community in relation to Education For All (West Africa: Meeting education targets-access versus quality, 2007). There has been a significant increase in the number of teachers in Sub-Saharan African countries, although the proportion of women teachers has decreased overall. How does this affect women teachers in rural areas?

South and West Asia

In Afghanistan, gender disparity in education persists at all levels, and the proportion of women teachers is also the lowest in the region (29% in 2008, UNESCO, 2010b). Although girls’ enrollment rates have risen from nearly 0% to 32% since 2002, their participation in secondary school is still extremely low (Plessis, 2011). Under the premise that “improving Afghanistan’s education system is essential to national development” (p. 2), Solotaroff, Hashimi, and Olesen (n.a.) argued:

In many rural areas, the lack of female teachers is a barrier to girls’ enrollment and retention at the primary and secondary levels. . . . The shortage of qualified women candidates in both urban and rural areas and female teachers’ lack of motivation to work in rural or remote areas are major constraints on girls’ educational attainments. (p. 3)

This argument implies that problems in girls’ education in rural areas will be solved if women teachers go to rural areas, and that investment in education will bring about national economic prosperity. Here, women teachers are seen as instrumental to girls’ education; women teachers and girls are seen as vanguards for national reconstruction. Yet, it is not clear how much is in effect invested to support women teachers in rural areas. Nadya, the only woman teacher in a rural area in Afghanistan then, said:

I don’t agree with the government and international community when they claim they have given top priority to education. There are very simple ways that are not too expensive and too complicated to improve education in rural areas. I am sure there are many women teachers in the capital that would come with their husbands to teach in rural areas if they were paid good salaries. (IRIN, 2003)

Studies pointed to a lack of facilities as another common barrier that women
teachers face in rural South and West Asia, similar to in rural Sub-Saharan Africa. The absence of separate toilets and access to water affect both women teachers and girls. In India, less than 2% of rural primary schools, as compared to 14% of urban schools, had separate toilets for girls in 1993, which forced women teachers to visit someone’s house to use the toilet (UNESCO, 2001). In 2010, India brought to the fore girls’ education with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. Key recommendations of the Act include separating toilets and providing residential facilities, transport, and other incentives to bring qualified women teachers to rural and remote schools (Action for Girls’ Education, 2011). By making the recommendations requirements, the Act may accommodate the basic needs of women teachers as well as girls in rural schools, thereby promoting girls’ education.

As Table 4 shows, there has been an increase in the proportion of women teachers in rural schools. Yet, the majority of women teachers are still in urban areas. Because, in South Asia, both parents and students are generally more comfortable with interacting with women teachers rather than men (Chitrakar, 2009), bringing more women teachers to rural areas is considered key to girls’ education. Why do both parents and students feel more secure and comfortable with women teachers? A study suggests an answer to this: Children were generally more comfortable with women teachers in all the schools where interactions were held. This was true for both girls and boys. They were also candid in citing the reasons—“they are more sympathetic”, “they make us understand well”, “they are more affectionate”, “they do not snub us if we ask questions” and so on. It may be added that children were comfortable even with male teachers wherever they possessed these qualities. (UNESCO, 2001, p. 20)

As this observation suggests, what matters to girls is not so much the teacher’s sex as the teacher’s attitude toward them.

In Pakistan, single-sex schooling is a tradition. This aggravates the problems of girls’ education in rural areas if there are not sufficient female teachers. However, studies suggest that although rural parents prefer women teachers for their daughters, they are open to co-ed schools if the schools provide safety and protection to girls (Lloyd, Mete, & Grant, 2007, Lockheed, 2010). Because of growing concerns over safety, some parents even favor co-ed schools as long as they are located near their homes, as opposed to single-sex schools located far away (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2002). Most public schools are single-sex schools in Pakistan, and there are not many for girls in rural areas. In contrast, most private schools are co-ed and often located near girls’ homes. Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja (2002) did not separate data only relevant to rural schools, but their comparative analysis between public and private schools presents an interesting point to consider for girls’ education. They observed that private schools drew as many girls as boys by offering a high proportion of moderately educated women teachers and charging low fees. Interestingly, while 48% of public schools have toilets, 84% of private schools do.

**RESPONDING TO THE ISSUES RELATED TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF WOMEN TEACHERS IN RURAL AREAS**
The issues noted above are critical to a number of different policy arenas within international development. The area of rural education has implications both for rural development, something that is seen to be of key importance in a country like Ethiopia, for example, where close to 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, as well as for improving schooling in rural areas. This is a particular challenge, especially when taking into account distance and isolation, a frequent absence of resources, opportunities for development in IT in relation to pedagogy, challenges to recruiting trained teachers and to the preparation of new teachers for rural contexts. When the role of women teachers is considered within the framework of Gender and Development, this leads to further issues such as women’s empowerment and the place of of women in rural development more broadly. At the same time, when the role women teachers play in the lives of girls is factored in, policies for women teachers are clearly not just for the teachers themselves, but closely related to girls’ education. Perhaps, as an umbrella to understand the range of issues that rural women teachers face, we might need to think of the double and trifle shifts that they take on behalf of girls in classrooms and their families. Added to the issues of security, long distances of travel and the patriarchal structure of schools, then, it is easy to understand the burden of care imposed on women teachers.

PRE-EXISTING POLICIES: A PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH

This section looks at various policies which have an impact on aspects of the work of rural women teachers:

Physical Facilities

Because rural schools are often located in areas with no public transport system and at great distance from towns and cities (Chandra, 2004), transport and security are often some of the biggest concerns. Provision of safe housing is important to women teachers. Indeed, a strong correlation between access to adequate housing and the presence of women teachers has been suggested in rural Malawi (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). The Program to Motivate, Train and Employ Female Teachers in Rural Secondary Schools (PROMOTE) in Bangladesh (1995–2005) is an example of a programme that combined teacher training and housing in rural areas. It provided women teachers with safe housing near schools once they completed teacher training (Solotaroff, Hashimi, Olesen, n.a.). Provision of safe housing may also help retain women teachers in rural areas. If safe housing is not economically feasible, daily transport has to be offered to women teachers in order to retain them in rural areas. Improving sanitation facilities at schools is a policy issue for both girls and women. Improving such facilities has resulted in an increase in girls’ enrollment in some contexts. According to UNICEF, girls’ enrollment rates soared by 17% in Guinea after school sanitation was improved (LaFraniere, 2005). A study in Indonesia suggests that the presence of a toilet raised girls’ math scores (Suryadarma, Suryahadi, Sumarto & Rogers, 2004; as cited in Lockheed, 2010). More research is required in the area of sanitation in relation to women teachers.
Local Teacher Education Initiatives

Different ethnicities and languages often prevent women teachers from being integrated into rural communities (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). Though male teachers could face the same barriers, they pose more difficulties to women teachers because of the social norms attached to women, especially those working outside the home. One of the solutions to retain women teachers in rural areas could be to provide local girls and women with teacher training. Nepal’s Feeder Hostel Program (FHP) (1975-2006) is an example. It brought rural girls to 18 hostels throughout the country to provide them with secondary education along with free accommodation and meals. Its objective was to prepare rural girls to become primary teachers in rural areas. However, it failed to supply a significant number of women teachers to rural schools, in part due to lack of funds (Bista, 2004).

In contrast, teacher training may be more successfully integrated for in-service teachers. Over the past two decades, contract teachers, who typically have no pre-service teacher training and are paid less than regular teachers, have been recruited at local levels in rural India for primary education (Kelleher, 2011). The proportion of women among contract teachers is high (in 2006-07, 75% of contract teachers in the state of Kerala were women, as cited in Kelleher, 2011). Although a short training course is given to them, it is hardly adequate. Not only to enhance the quality of education, but also to empower contract women teachers, it may be necessary for local governments to intervene more actively in the process of in-service teacher training for them. In some cases, as Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja (2002) suggest, developing moderate teacher training programmes for rural women may be effective. Non-formal education, which typically provides adolescent and young women with an opportunity to gain literacy, numeracy, and other skills in addition to vocational training in South Asia (see Lockheed, 2010), could be effectively used to train women to become local teachers.

The idea of preparing pre-service teachers is something that has been taken up in South Africa through the Rural Teacher Education Programme (RTEP) through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Each year since 2007, a cohort of beginning teachers, both male and female, complete an extended practicum in a rural area (Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane, 2009; Islam et al, 20111). Each cohort lives in a rural area for four weeks, and staff at the university provides on-site supervision. While RTEP does not focus solely on women teachers, it does provide support and engagement around such issues as gender violence and the gendering of HIV&AIDS.

Economic Incentives

Provision of economic and other incentives is considered a key factor for bringing teachers to rural areas (Bennell, 2004). However, as indicated in Table 5, provision of economic incentives to rural teachers is not common practice. Even if a hardship allowance is given, it is not enough for most teachers to undertake additional hardship in rural areas; in certain cases, bonuses for rural teachers exist only on paper, and are rarely paid in reality (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Especially when the number of rural schools is considered (for instance, 93% of all the schools in Tanzania are in rural areas), it may be very difficult for most countries to provide rural teachers with significant economic incentives. Lack of economic incentives may be a deterring factor, especially for married women teachers to move to rural areas because their husbands may find
fewer job opportunities there than in urban areas. If provision of economic incentives cannot be sustained, governments should look into other ways to invite women teachers to rural schools. As discussed above, safe housing, sanitation facilities, and clinics may be an important factor in retaining them in rural schools.

**Collective Action**
The potential impact of teachers’ unions and other organizations should not be dismissed when it comes to improving the working conditions for women teachers. Kenya’s teachers’ unions have been successful in negotiating teachers’ work environments with the government (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). However, the majority of the executive members are men. Though this may be proportional to the ratio between male and female teachers, there has to be more affirmative action to encourage women teachers to become leaders if the National Union of Teachers is committed to gender equity and social justice, as claimed as one of their core values. By organizing women teachers’ unions or professional associations, rural women teachers may be able to promote their rights, as did women teachers in rural India through Women Teachers Forum since early 1990s (Chandra, 2004). This also speaks to the potential support of international organizations such as the Canadian Teachers’ Federation. Issues related to HIV&AIDS and women teachers’ lives, in particular, should be a critical concern for teachers’ unions. This is especially so in relation to women teachers living in rural areas who are more vulnerable because of the social discrimination and stigma attached to HIV&AIDS in addition to a lack of clinical services (Courage & Hope, 2008).

**Women teachers and school leadership:** The idea of women teachers in school leadership is important for advancing the status of women teachers. This is a particularly important area in rural schools where longstanding patriarchal structures and community norms may mean that even (or especially) women do not support the advancement of women teachers to leadership positions. Various countries have taken on initiatives to promote and support women teachers (See for example the Matthew Goniwe Leadership Programme in South Africa). Capacity in IT as a component of women’s leadership in schools is an area which, to date, has been understudied. However, as a recent study in South Africa with rural women teachers has highlighted, the widespread use of cellphones in many sub-Saharan African countries offers new entry-points to using technology in school leadership, as well as offering some potential antidotes to isolation. (See Mitchell, DeLange & Moletsane, 2012)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1**
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**Recommendation 3**
IT support: While the ubiquitous nature of IT remains, it is worth pursuing a consideration of best practices to see how IT support (especially through mobile applications) might contribute to reducing isolation for women teachers in rural areas, and simultaneously contribute to improved pedagogical practice.

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Infrastructure: The patriarchal structures and the burden of care for which rural women teachers are responsible suggests the need for structures that recognize the double and triple shifts that women teachers take up in their teaching and personal lives. Ministries of Gender and Ministries of Education (along with other components of the gender machinery of a country) need to come together to establish policies and practices that support women teachers professionally.

**Recommendation 5**
In depth studies of women teachers’ lives: Following from #4, conduct more in depth studies of women teachers and their experiences. Drawing on the work of Moletsane et al (2010) develop frameworks for studying and analyzing data which seeks to evaluate the complexity of women teachers’ lives through such participatory approaches as memory-work and working with the visual in ways that will help to contribute to policy dialogue.

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Pre-service teachers: Study and expand pre-service teacher education programmes that seek to provide experiences for new teachers in rural areas. Build in strong support for addressing issues of gender equality.

**Recommendation 7**
Establish mentorship and other women teacher-friendly programmes which support women in their bid to take on leadership roles in rural schools. Many of the issues around sanitation, housing, and strategies to reduce isolation would benefit from the leadership of women.
APPENDICES

Table 1. Worldwide women teachers in primary and secondary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Primary teaching staff</th>
<th>Secondary teaching staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (000)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>27,845</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>10,033</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>2,919</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America and Western Europe</td>
<td>3,739</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and West Asia</td>
<td>4,970</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>2,835</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: UNESCO, 2010b)

Table 2. The proportion of women teachers in rural and urban primary schools in Southern and Eastern Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Lesotho</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
<th>Mozambique</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women teachers</td>
<td>80% of teachers in general, including 70% of teachers in mountain areas.</td>
<td>82% of urban teachers; 31% of rural teachers.</td>
<td>80% of teachers in general. They are reluctant to accept postings to rural schools.</td>
<td>They are concentrated in urban schools and scarce in rural schools.</td>
<td>It is difficult to attract and retain females at remote rural schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Mulkeen & Chen, 2008)
Table 3. Primary School data in Malawi by rural and urban locations in 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rural schools</th>
<th>Urban schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools</td>
<td>4,932</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>5,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils</td>
<td>2,896,356</td>
<td>270,430</td>
<td>3,166,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>37,805</td>
<td>6,147</td>
<td>43,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil-teacher ratio</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Malawi Ministry of Education, as cited in Mulkeen & Chen, 2008)

Table 4. Women teachers (%) in rural and urban areas in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Kelleher, 2011)

* includes upper primary and secondary/senior secondary

Table 5. Economic incentives for rural teachers, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesotho</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
<th>Mozambique</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat monthly bonus is given to teachers in a mountain area.</td>
<td>No incentives are given, but they are being considered.</td>
<td>No incentives given to most primary teachers. Bonuses up to 100% of salary given to highly qualified teachers.</td>
<td>None. Incentives available in the 1980s were abolished in the 1990s.</td>
<td>Hardship allowance (20% of salary) given only to qualified teachers in “hard-to-reach” areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Country ministries of education, as cited in Mulkeen & Chen, 2008)
REFERENCES


Solotaroff, J., Hashimi, N., Olesen, A. (n.a.). Toward greater gender equity in education [Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series, No. 1.] Washington, DC: The World Bank. (The publishing year is not specified, but presumed to be 2009 or later)


