



## CASE STUDY

# Bringing Gender Equity to Education

### Communities take charge of improving quality and equity in education



Photo: USAID

Ayekoffe was the first girl to earn her primary school certificate in her school's 20-year history.

***Ayekoffe is an example that will hopefully inspire girls, parents and educators throughout the country that educating girls pays dividends.***

### Challenge

Benin's education system faces enormous challenges. While enrolment rates have risen dramatically during the last decade, crowded classrooms and a lack of trained teachers threaten the quality of education. From 1998 to 2002, net primary school enrolment was 84 percent for boys, but only 58 percent for girls. Girls' enrolment is rising, but more needs to be done to raise the overall women's literacy rate of 22.6 percent. There are significant geographic disparities in girls' access to education as well. In remote areas, even fewer girls attend school, and fewer women are literate. In many communities quality is barely on the agenda.

### Initiative

In 2003, USAID launched a project to improve the equity and quality of primary education in Benin. It sought to strengthen the relationship between families and schools by training parents to advocate for better education and getting community members more involved in managing schools. USAID also supports curriculum and textbook reform, promoting peer tutoring and group work and raising community awareness about the importance of girls' education.

### Results

The effort is having an impact at the local level. In Ganhounme, one teacher took special care to encourage the family of the only girl enrolled in sixth grade to help her obtain her primary school certificate. Ayekoffe was fortunate because her parents supported the effort, even adjusting her chores so she could dedicate more time to her studies. Ayekoffe's father, Koudaissi Epkebi, explained, "I participated in the third meeting held by the project in Ganhounme. My wife participated in the two prior meetings, during which she became convinced that girls' education could greatly benefit both parents and their daughters." Ayekoffe became the first girl to earn a primary school certificate in her school's 20-year history — just one example that will hopefully inspire girls, parents and educators throughout the country. Educating girls pays dividends, as evidenced by Ayekoffe's stated goal: "to become president of the Republic of Benin!"