



Women and Education

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Abstract

Women's access to education has been recognized as a fundamental right. At the national level, educating women results in improved productivity, income, and economic development, as well as a better quality of life, notably a healthier and better nourished population. It is important for all kinds of demographic behavior, affecting mortality, health, fertility, and contraception, the personal benefits that women attach to education vary widely according to region, culture, and level of development, but it is clear that education empowers women, providing them with increased autonomy and resulting in almost every context in fewer children.

Beyond these few general assertions, however, there is little consensus on such issues as how much education is required before changes in autonomy or reproductive behavior occur; whether the education- autonomy relationship exists in all cultural contexts, at all times, and at all levels of development; and which aspects of autonomy are important in the relationship

between education and fertility. It is in the need to address these fundamental issues that this book took shape.

Its considerable evidence about education and fertility in the developing world that has emerged over the last twenty years does increased education always lead to a decrease in the number of children, or is there a threshold level of education that a woman must achieve before this inverse relationship becomes apparent. Do improvements in education empower women in other areas of life, such as their improving exposure to information, decision-making, control of resources, or confidence in dealing with family and the outside world? Supported by full documentation of the available survey data, this study concludes that such contextual factors as the overall level of socio-economic development and the situation of women in traditional kinship structures complicate the general assumptions about the interrelationships between education, fertility, and female autonomy.

The important roles that women play in



today's societies cannot be ignored. Yet, the value of investing in their human capital often goes without notice. Literacy rates provide one measurable education standard. These initiatives would raise the female profile in the national consciousness, and show girls and women role models and heroes that they could strive to emulate.

Changing ingrained beliefs and attitudes will take time. The government must work to reach both younger generations and the society as a whole. Eventually, change will come, and it will gain momentum as it progresses. It will result in engaging all of Eritrea's most important resource in the drive for development.

“To provide an excellent liberal art education for women who will make a difference in the world”