

Regional fact sheet – Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has made striking progress since the Education for All (EFA) goals were adopted in 2000. Primary enrolment has risen and many countries have made great strides towards getting equal numbers of girls and boys into school. Many of these gains are under threat, however, from the global economic downturn. Protecting the vulnerable and ensuring that momentum is not lost are urgent priorities for governments and aid donors alike.

EFA progress and challenges

- Children who suffer nutritional deprivation in the womb or malnutrition during the early years of life are at risk of developmental delays that impede later learning. Thirty-eight percent of children under 5 suffer from severe or moderate stunting in sub-Saharan Africa. About one in seven children in the region is born with low birth weight. In the Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Niger and Sierra Leone, the share rises to at least one in four.
- Enrolment in *pre-primary education* has nearly doubled in sub-Saharan Africa since 1999, to around 10 million in 2007. On average, however, only 15% of children in the region were enrolled in pre-primary education that year, compared with one-third across developing countries.
- Total primary school enrolment stood at 124 million in 2007, up by 42 million since 1999. From 1999 to 2007, the average *net enrolment ratio* (NER) in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 56% to 73%. Madagascar, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia have broken through the 90% threshold towards universal primary enrolment, and Benin is now on track for universal enrolment by 2015. Primary school participation declined in Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea and Malawi. Eritrea and Liberia suffered reversals related to current or recent conflict.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has registered remarkable progress since 1999 in reducing the number of children out of school by nearly 13 million by 2007. Yet the deficit remains large: at 32 million, the total number of out-of-school children represents one-quarter of the region's primary school age children and nearly 45% of the global out-of-school population.
- Seventeen of the forty-one countries with data in sub-Saharan Africa have achieved gender parity in primary education. Getting more girls into school requires *changing attitudes towards girls and household labour practices* as well as keeping girls in school once they reach puberty. One programme in Chad provides scholarships for girls and backs community campaigns to promote girls' schooling.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 21 million *adolescents* were not in school in 2007, equivalent to 38% of the lower secondary school age group.
- The region's secondary enrolment ratio was the world's lowest at 34% in 2007. Country levels ranged from less than 11% in Niger to more than 97% in the Seychelles and South Africa. The regional share of *technical and vocational*

education in secondary enrolment was also among the world's lowest, at 6% in 2007.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, the adult literacy rate climbed by an average of 17% between 1985–1994 and 2000–2007 to reach 62%. Burkina Faso and Chad, with some of the world's lowest literacy rates in the first period, respectively doubled and almost tripled their rates. Other countries also registered large increases, such as Benin, Burundi and Senegal.
- However, about 38% of the adult population in sub-Saharan Africa, or 153 million adults, lack the *basic literacy and numeracy skills* needed in everyday life. Women account for more than 60% of the region's adult illiterate population. Ethiopia and Nigeria are among the ten countries in the world with the largest numbers of illiterate adults.
- Many sub-Saharan African countries have more than doubled the teacher workforce, but twenty-two of those with data had pupil/teacher ratios above the international ceiling of 40:1 in 2007. A total of 1.2 million new teachers are needed in the region to reach universal primary education by 2015.
- No country has achieved or is close to achieving the four most easily quantifiable EFA goals (on the Education Development Index). Of the twenty-five countries with data for 2007, eight countries ranked in an intermediate position and seventeen are far from achieving EFA.

Marginalization in education

Despite the progress of the past decade, absolute deprivation in education remains at extraordinarily high levels throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. A new data set on education marginalization reveals that factors leading to marginalization do not operate in isolation: wealth and gender intersect with language, ethnicity, region and rural-urban differences to create mutually reinforcing disadvantages..

- In Nigeria, a child spends over 6.5 years in school on average. A wealthy urban child averages around 10 years, while poor rural Hausa girls average less than six months in school.
- In eastern Chad, where conflict has led to large-scale internal displacement and there is a large population of Sudanese refugees, over 90% of young people have fewer than four years of education.
- Policies to combat marginalization are making a difference: In Burkina Faso, a national school feeding programme has increased enrolment among younger girls. Bilingual education in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mali has been shown to improve learning achievement, enrolment and attendance.

National education finance

- Public spending on primary education in sub-Saharan Africa rose by 29% in real terms from 2000 to 2005, mostly because of strong economic growth. From 1999 to 2007, the share of education spending in gross national product rose in the majority of the countries with data.
- The impressive regional increases in the proportion of GNP devoted to education have resulted from *government budgets* assigning greater importance to

education. In 2007, half of sub-Saharan African countries with data devoted 17.5% or more of their national budgets to education. Given the economic slowdown, resources for education in sub-Saharan Africa could fall by US\$4.6 billion a year on average in 2009 and 2010.

International aid for education

- Averaged over 2006 and 2007, total annual aid to education to sub-Saharan Africa amounted to US\$3.9 billion, up from US\$2.7 billion a year in 1999 and 2000. However, the share of education in total aid dropped from 12% to 9%.
- A total of US\$1.7 billion was reported as aid for basic education in 2007 - a cut of 24% from 2006 or US\$560 million less in real finance.
- Support for countries affected by conflict remains uneven. Eritrea received US\$26 per primary school age child – more than eight times as much as the Central African Republic or Liberia. The Democratic Republic of the Congo received only US\$2 per child in aid for basic education in 2006–2007.