

Regional fact sheet – Sub-Saharan Africa

Enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa increased significantly at all education levels between 1999 and 2006, yet the majority of countries remain far from achieving EFA.

EFA progress and challenges

- Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for half of the world's 10 million under-5 deaths and its share is growing. On average, 158 of every 1,000 children born in sub-Saharan Africa will not reach age 5. Ethiopia and Mozambique have reduced under 5-mortality by 40% or more between 1990 and 2006.
- In 2006, there were nearly nine million children enrolled in pre-primary education, up from some five million in 1999. Yet the average gross enrolment ratio remained low at 14% in 2006.
- Since 2000, the average net enrolment ratio (NER) in primary education has increased at six times the rate of the pre-Dakar decade, to 70% in 2006. NERs in Benin, Madagascar, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia increased from between 50% and 70% since 1999 to levels in excess of 80% in 2006. Ethiopia more than doubled its NER from 34% in 1999 to 71% in 2007.
- Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 47% of out-of-school children worldwide (including Nigeria, with around one in nine of the world's out-of-school children). Countries including, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania have made rapid progress towards UPE. Over the last 5 years, U.R. Tanzania reduced its out-of-school population from over 3 million to less than half a million through policy interventions.
- Disparities within countries based on wealth, gender, race, language or ethnic group hinder progress towards UPE. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali and the Niger, children from the richest 20% are from three to about four times more likely to attend school than children from the poorest quintile
- The region's average net enrolments in secondary education increased from 18% in 1999 to 25% in 2006. This implies that nearly 78 million of the region's secondary school-age children are not enrolled in secondary school. Tertiary education has expanded rapidly. Some 3.7 million students were enrolled at this level in 2006 – nearly 1.6 million more than in 1999. However, participation at this level remained very low, with an average tertiary GER of 5% in 2006.
- In 2000-2006 an estimated 161 million adults – 38% of the region's adult population – were lacking literacy skills. Nearly two-thirds were women. Since 1985-1994, the region's adult literacy rate rose from 53% to 62% and the youth literacy rate from 64% to 71%.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has made continued progress towards gender parity but many countries still have a long way to travel. The Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and the Niger had fewer than eighty girls enrolled in primary school for every hundred boys in 2006 and more than half of the countries in the region had yet to achieve gender parity at this level by 2006.

- Improving what children are learning in school remains an enormous challenge. Results from SACMEQ II indicate that fewer than 25% of grade 6 children reached the 'desirable' level of reading literacy in Botswana, Kenya, South Africa and Swaziland and fewer than 10% in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia.
- More than 2.5 million teachers worked in primary education institutions in sub-Saharan Africa in 2006, an increase of 29% since 1999. The number of secondary school teachers increased by 42%, to 1.2 million. An estimated 1.6 million additional primary teachers are needed in the region to reach EFA by 2015, and this figure rises to 3.8 million if teacher retirements are taken into account.
- National pupil-teacher ratios often mask large disparities within countries, again influenced by location, wealth and type of school. In Nigeria, PTRs in the state of Bayelsa were five times higher than in Lagos. Trained teachers are in short supply in many countries in the region, the percentage of trained primary school teachers below 50% in Chad, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo.
- According to the EFA Development Index, only one country in sub-Saharan Africa (Seychelles) has achieved the four most quantifiable EFA goals included in the index. Most of the others are either in the intermediate position or far from achieving EFA as a whole.

National education finance

- Low-income countries tend to invest the smallest proportion of GNP in education. In sub-Saharan Africa, about half of all low-income countries with data spent less than 4% of their national income on education in 2006. For all countries in the region, the median education expenditure as a share of GNP was 4.4% in 2006. However, the share varied greatly by country, with low shares in Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea (1.4% each) and high shares in Botswana (9.3%) and Lesotho (10.8%).

International aid for education

- Countries in the region received an annual average of US\$3.3 billion in aid to education over 2005 and 2006, of which US\$1.8 billion was allocated to the basic education level.
- The share of sub-Saharan Africa in total aid to education has remained constant since 1999, at about one-third. The region's share of total aid to basic education has decreased slightly since 1999, receiving just over 40% of total aid to basic education.
- On average, aid to basic education per primary school-age child in sub-Saharan Africa amounted to US\$15 in 2005-2006. Aid allocations to individual low income countries varied considerably, partly influenced by historical and political factors. While Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Togo and Zimbabwe received less than US\$5 of aid to basic education per primary school-age child in 2005-2006, it was above US\$70 in Cape Verde, Eritrea, Mali and Sao Tome and Principe.
- In Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, the increase in international aid has facilitated the abolition of primary school tuition fees, leading to a large expansion of primary school enrolment.