

GLOBAL EDUCATION DIGEST 2011

Regional Profile: Sub-Saharan Africa

Overview

The sub-Saharan African region has seen a remarkable rise in primary and secondary school enrolment over the past decade. More children are reaching the last grade of primary school with the aspiration of going onto secondary education, but there are places for just 36% of children of age to enrol. The low proportion indicates that countries are facing significant challenges in meeting the demand for secondary education. More than 21.6 million children of lower secondary school age in the region remain excluded from school and many are expected never to enter school. Girls bear the brunt. When a girl enters lower secondary school, her chances of completing this level and moving onto upper secondary education are slim. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where girls are increasingly disadvantaged at the upper secondary level--there are now only 76 girls for every 100 boys.

Key indicators

Primary school enrolment

Between 1999 and 2009, the school-aged population increased by 25% and enrolment ballooned by 59%. The adjusted net enrolment ratio (ANER), reflecting the number of primary school-age children enrolled in primary school, showed that 77% of children in the region were enrolled at this level, compared to the global proportion of 90%.

Primary school completion

Globally, 88% of children completed primary school in 2009, but in sub-Saharan Africa, only 67% did. Girls are particularly disadvantaged. Nearly one-half of the countries where girls were less likely to complete primary education than boys were in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, between 57 and 69 girls enter the last grade of school for every 100 boys.

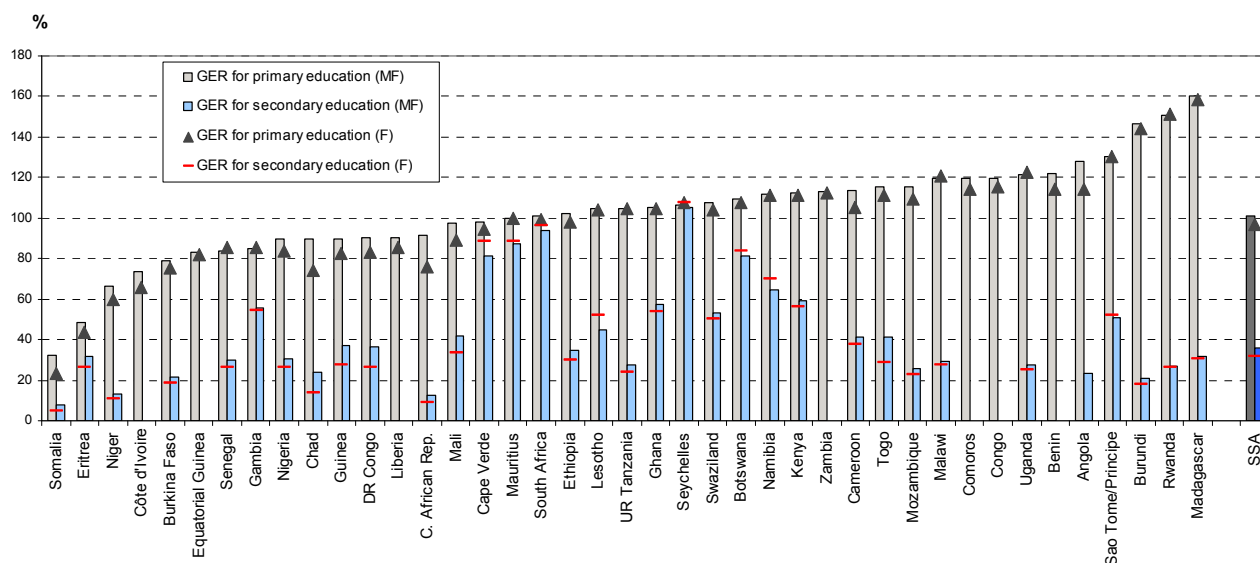
Transition to lower secondary school

A child in the last grade of primary school in 2009 had at best a 75% chance of making the transition to lower secondary school in about 20 countries in the world, most of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. Tanzania and Nigeria had the lowest transition rates at 36% and 44%, respectively.

Lower secondary school enrolment

There was widespread expansion of this education level in all regions of the world between 1999 and 2009. Globally, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for lower secondary education increased from 72% to 80%. The most notable increase occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, where the GER for lower secondary education rose from 28% to 43%.

Figure 1. Primary and secondary gross enrolment ratios in sub-Saharan Africa, 2009 or latest year available



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Gender disparities in secondary school enrolment

While still very low, the percentage of girls participating in lower secondary education grew by 14 percentage points between 1999 and 2009 to 39%. The GER for boys was 48%. Moreover; girls are less likely than boys to complete this level of schooling in a large majority of countries reporting data in the region.

Out-of-school children

In 2009, sub-Saharan Africa was home to 21.6 million, or 30%, of all lower secondary school-age children who are out of school worldwide. Within the region, 40% of all lower secondary school-age girls and 33% of boys were out of school.

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