

# Gender and Education for All THE LEAP TO EQUALITY

## Summary Report

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# Foreword

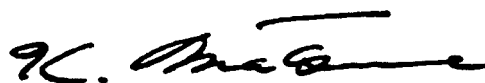
The goals of Education for All (EFA) are centrally concerned with equality. If children are excluded from access to education, they are denied their human rights and prevented from developing their talents and interests in the most basic of ways. Education is a torch which can help to guide and illuminate their lives. It is the acknowledged responsibility of all governments to ensure that everyone is given the chance to benefit from it in these ways. It is also in the fundamental interests of society to see that this happens – progress with economic and social development depends upon it.

Nevertheless, millions of children around the world still fail to gain access to schooling, and even larger numbers among those who do enrol leave prematurely, dropping out before the skills of literacy and numeracy have been properly gained. A majority of such children are girls. As a result, the scourge of illiteracy still affects more than 860 million adults, almost two-thirds of whom are women.

The World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 adopted six major goals for education, two of which also became Millennium Development Goals later in the same year. The Dakar goals covered the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender equality, improving literacy and educational quality, and increasing life-skills and early childhood education programmes, and were to be achieved within 15 years. However, the gender goal was judged to be particularly urgent – requiring the achievement of parity in enrolments for girls and boys at primary and secondary levels by 2005, and of full equality throughout education by 2015.

As this issue of the *Global Monitoring Report* goes to press, the world is two years away from the date by which the gender parity goal is to be achieved. It is, then, timely that the report should pay particular attention to the progress being made with its implementation – and with that of the longer-term goal of achieving gender equality in education. The report shows that, while many countries are likely to miss the 2005 goal, this circumstance could change quickly if appropriate changes in policy were made. However, achieving equality throughout education is more profoundly challenging. Educational inequality is caused by deeper forces in society that extend well beyond the boundaries of educational systems, institutions and processes. The report demonstrates that changes in a wide range of economic and social policies – as well as in education itself – will be needed if gender equality in education is to be attained.

I am convinced that the world is on the path towards gender equality in education, but there remains some way to travel. This report provides a map for at least the first part of the journey. The united efforts of governments, NGOs, civil society, the corporate sector and the international community will be crucial to ensure maximum possible progress as the route unfolds.



Koïchiro Matsuura  
Director-General of UNESCO

In two years time, by 2005, gender disparities in enrolment in primary and secondary education should be eliminated. This is the commitment the international community made at the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000. At the time, 57% of the 104 million children not in school were girls and two-thirds of the 860 million adults without literacy were women. The 2005 goal is just the first step. By 2015, we are collectively committed to gender equality in education. So this is not just a matter of numbers. Parity is important, but it is not enough. Education is a right. This requires equal access to good-quality education for all; a learning process in which girls and boys, and women and men, have equal chances of fully developing their talents; and outcomes that bestow social and economic benefits on every citizen without discrimination. These benefits are immense. And they are attainable. As this report points out, there are policies and strategies which can put all societies on the educational path to gender equality, as those states which are well down this road can testify.

## Chapter 1

# Rights, equality and Education for All

- > Landmark treaties
- > Time-bound goals
- > Development benefits

'Education for All' means what it says. The international community is committed to eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling by 2005 and to achieving equality throughout education ten years later. Why does gender equality receive such prominence in the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Declaration, both adopted in 2000?

In no society do women yet enjoy the same opportunities as men. They work longer hours and they are paid less; their life chances and choices are more restricted than for men. Girls' unequal access to, and performance in education is both a cause and a consequence of these disparities. This report focuses on the main dimensions of these educational inequalities and pinpoints strategies to overcome them.

Educational inequality is a major infringement of the rights of women and girls and an important barrier to social and economic development. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledged the right to education, declared that elementary education should be free and compulsory, and that the higher levels of education should be accessible to all on the basis of merit. Ever since, treaties and declarations have been promulgated to turn these aspirations into reality. The International Bill of Human Rights<sup>1</sup> contains provisions on compulsory and free primary education and on non-discrimination in education. The two most recent conventions – on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1990) – contain the most comprehensive set of legally enforceable commitments



A girl in Guatemala reads the news to her grandmother.

©VU/Miquel Dewever-Plana

concerning both rights to education and to gender equality. By mid-2003, some 173 countries had ratified CEDAW, whereas the CRC has been ratified by all the nations of the world with the exception of Somalia and the United States.

Nevertheless, discrimination against girls and women remains pervasive in most societies, in education and more generally. Therefore, human rights legislation has had only partial success in delivering equality. To stimulate action, a number of political instruments have been agreed. Declarations of international conferences convened by the United Nations aim to secure compliance with human rights obligations. Major conferences in the 1990s – on human rights, women, population and social development – have reaffirmed, and in some cases extended, the gender equality provisions in education to which states were already committed by the human rights conventions.

**In no society do women yet enjoy the same opportunities as men.**

1. Comprising the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Declarations carry political weight, treaties carry legal authority. Political messages and legal commitments can become mutually reinforcing. The Jomtien Declaration (1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) actually go substantially beyond the human rights treaties in their coverage. They give attention to early childhood care and education, learning programmes for all young people and adults, and improvements in the quality of education. Dakar and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also include time-bound targets, which human rights treaties do not. This encourages the sense that what really counts is making progress towards the goals, rather than

Strategies to achieve gender equality in education entail no unwelcome trade-offs.

whether or not particular countries are in default of their obligations. Time-bound targets also facilitate more explicit monitoring of progress, making it possible to anticipate how well countries are faring, and to indicate priorities for national or international action. Such an approach holds both governments and international organizations to account, especially as the international community has pledged that no country with a credible plan for achieving Education for All (EFA) will be prevented from implementing it owing to a lack of resources.

## An economic and social imperative

The right to education is clearly enshrined and accepted internationally. There is also a powerful developmental case for achieving gender equality. Indeed, countries that heed their moral, legal and political commitments also act strongly in their own economic and social interests. The evidence is clear. It is in the private and social interest of everyone to reduce gender inequalities in education wherever they exist. In short, investing in the education of girls has a high pay-off. The private rates of return to education are at least as high as returns from the other ways in which families might invest their money. Although in most countries women earn less than men at given ages and levels of education, the proportionate increase in wages associated with an additional year of schooling

tends to be about the same for both sexes. Furthermore, in countries where primary and junior secondary schooling is not yet universal, private returns to education are highest at the primary level. Thus, closing the gender gap at primary level is a very sound investment.

More and better female education has a positive impact on overall labour supply. Increasing the incentives for women to take paid employment – and to increase the time they spend in it – has favorable consequences for both the tax base and economic growth. For women involved in agricultural work, education helps to increase their productivity to a significant extent, thereby adding to household incomes and reducing poverty. Education also nourishes citizenship, by giving girls the knowledge to influence the nature and direction of society, and to engage in political life as adults.

Investing more in the education of girls drastically increases personal and social well-being – the end objective of all development activity. When parents, in particular mothers, are educated, their children – both boys and girls – will be healthier, better nourished and have a greater chance of going to school and doing well there. Investing in educating girls now is one of the best ways of ensuring that future generations will be educated.

The impact of women’s schooling on rates of fertility is widely known. In some societies in Africa, the first few years of schooling appear to have little effect on fertility. But elsewhere, education is associated with clear reductions in fertility for each additional year. This also has a positive impact on economic growth by reducing the proportion of dependents in the population.

Strategies to achieve gender equality in education entail no unwelcome trade-offs. Arguments that equality cannot be afforded, or that it would generate pressures that conflict with other, more pressing development priorities, are largely false. On the contrary: a committed shift towards the creation of gender equality in education can deliver a wide range of associated benefits. This is why it is one of the most important challenges facing governments and societies during these early years of the new century. ■

## Chapter 2

# Towards EFA: assessing progress

- > Parity and equality: what's the difference?
- > Girls' unequal chances before school
- > Climbing the education pyramid
- > Literacy inches up
- > A dearth of quality teachers
- > The EFA Development Index

Using the most recent data on education systems for the year 2000, the *EFA Report 2003/4* monitors progress towards achieving the six EFA goals, with a particular emphasis on gender. The analysis also introduces a new EFA Development Index as a means of providing a more comprehensive picture of national progress.

## Formal education and the gender goals

The year 2005 is an important milestone. Gender parity in primary and secondary education is the target, with a further decade to 2015 for achieving gender equality. Parity is a purely numerical concept: reaching gender parity implies that the same proportion of boys and girls – relative to their respective age groups – enter the education system and participate in the full primary and secondary cycles. It is measured by the ratio between the female and male values for any given indicator, with parity being equal to one. This is the Gender Parity Index (GPI).<sup>2</sup>

Gender equality is a more complex notion that is also more difficult to measure. Full gender equality would imply that girls and boys are offered the same chances to go to school and that they enjoy teaching methods and curricula free of stereotypes and academic orientation and counselling unaffected by gender bias. It also implies

2. Gender Parity Index (GPI). Ratio of female-to-male value of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 means a disparity in favour of boys; a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of girls.



The EFA goals cover all stages of learning.

### Box 2.1. The six goals: a reminder

*Goal 1.* Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

*Goal 2.* Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

*Goal 3.* Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.

*Goal 4.* Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

*Goal 5.* Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

*Goal 6.* Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Source: *The Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*, adopted by the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000), para. 7, Paris, UNESCO, 2000.

equality of outcomes in terms of length of schooling, learning achievement and academic qualifications and, more broadly, equal job opportunities and earnings for similar qualifications and experience. Current indicators on educational outcomes and learning achievement allow only a partial assessment of gender equality. More



qualitative indicators, for example to measure perceptions and expectations regarding the treatment of girls and boys, would be required to paint a more accurate picture.

## Access to school: sharp discrimination

Achieving gender parity is obviously intricately linked to universalizing primary education (Goal 2, Box 2.1). Access to Grade 1 – measured by the gross intake rate – increased in the majority of developing countries since 1990, with substantial advances in some cases owing to the abolition or reduction in school fees and charges. However, this fact should not mask genuine decline in several countries (Algeria, the Congo, the Islamic Republic

of Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania).

### Girls' enrolments have increased faster than those of boys over the decade to 2000.

Despite significant shifts towards greater gender parity, girls continue to face sharp discrimination in access to

schooling. In eleven countries, seven of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, girls have 20% less chance of starting school than boys. Countries with a GPI below 0.80 are unlikely to achieve the 2005 goal. Chad, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, the Niger and Pakistan are the poorest performers in terms of girls' access to school, with a GPI of 0.75 or below. In fourteen countries the index ranged from 0.80 to 0.90, most being in sub-Saharan Africa but also including India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Sudan. Nations with the highest disparities (GPI below 0.80) tend to be the most disadvantaged in economic terms, often with a per capita income of less than one dollar a day.

## Girls' enrolment on the rise

Total enrolment in primary education rose from 596 million in 1990 to 648 million in 2000, an overall increase of 8.7%. Sub-Saharan Africa showed the highest relative increase (38%), with smaller but significant advances in South and West Asia (19%) and the Arab States (17%). Still, in these two regions, almost 20% of the age group remain out of school. Half of the countries with a net enrolment ratio (NER)<sup>3</sup> between 60% and 80% are African, while a further fourteen countries in the region fall below 60%. Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the Sudan are also in this category. East Asia and the Pacific witnessed a drop in NER (96% to 93%), with China accounting for most of this disappointing trend. Latin America and the Caribbean made striking gains and are close to achieving universal primary education (UPE), with net enrolments of 97%.

3. The net enrolment ratio is the number of pupils in the official age group for a given level of education enrolled at that level expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

Girls' enrolments have increased faster than those of boys over the decade to 2000. Globally, the GPI rose from 0.89 to 0.93 and the gap closed in the East Asia and Pacific region. Industrialized and transition countries have also achieved gender parity since 1990. In the three regions where gender inequalities are greatest – sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and South and West Asia – disparities have eased substantially. In the last of these, the GPI rose from 0.67 to 0.85.

In some countries of sub-Saharan Africa, repeaters constitute one quarter of the enrolment, potentially keeping others out of school. With the exception of sub-Saharan Africa, boys repeat more than girls in most countries. School survival rates – a crucial indicator of the system's ability to retain pupils – are higher for girls than for boys in most countries, except in sub-Saharan Africa. Very low survival rates are also found in several Asian countries, notably India, which has the highest survival disparity in favour of boys (GPI 0.81), Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In Latin America, survival rates are often below 80% and are an obstacle to the achievement of UPE.

## Out-of-school children: 57% are girls

An estimated 104 million children<sup>4</sup> of primary-school age were not enrolled in school at the turn of the millennium. Three-quarters of them live in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. In the latter, education systems expanded rapidly over the 1990s, such that the number of out-of-school children fell by about 20%. In contrast, the number of African children out of school increased by the same percentage, partly because of continuing rapid population growth. Girls comprise 57% of all out-of-school children, down 6 percentage points from 1990, with the steepest reduction in East Asia and the Pacific, falling from 71% to 49%. The number of out-of-school girls is highest in sub-Saharan Africa (23 million), followed by South and West Asia (21 million).

## Female teachers: a predictor of progress

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of female teachers has increased in almost all countries where data are available for both years. In some cases (Bangladesh), this is the result of deliberate policy measures. More worryingly, a decrease has occurred in a number of countries where the percentages of women were already among the lowest in 1990 (Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Djibouti and Togo).

4. The present estimate of 104 million out-of-school children in 2000 is considerably lower than the estimate of 115 million for 1999, given by the 2002 *Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO 2002a: p. 52). This is a consequence of a change in the duration of primary schooling in China, India and Russia, amongst other countries. In each of these cases, the official length of the primary span was reduced by one year, thereby reducing the size of the school-age population and, thus (for any given enrolment ratio), the number of children counted as being out-of-school.





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A teacher with her baby, at work in Cameroon.

Women hold only one-third, or less, of teaching posts in sixteen sub-Saharan African countries – representing 40% of those with data. With the exception of Nepal, there are no countries in any other region of the world where the gender balance among teachers are as unequal as this. In the primary-school systems of fourteen of these sixteen countries, the average GPI for net primary enrolment is 0.79. In contrast, in several southern African countries where gender ratios in school enrolments in favour of girls exist, over three-quarters of the teachers are women. This is a revealing correlation. Countries with the lowest number of women teachers at the primary level are those with the highest gender disparities.

In a large majority of countries, including the industrialized ones, the presence of women teachers decreases from primary to secondary to higher education, where women teachers are generally in the minority.

### Secondary education: reducing the gap

Demand for secondary education is set to intensify in many countries as more pupils graduate from primary school. In industrialized and transition economies, over 95% of pupils move on from primary to secondary education, a figure which is generally much lower in other regions. Disparities in transition rates in favour of boys are frequent in sub-Saharan Africa and in some Arab States, although they lean in favour of girls in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Enrolment levels vary greatly across the world: in twenty-six countries (nineteen in sub-Saharan Africa), less than 30% of the age group are enrolled. The Arab States and Latin America tend to have enrolment ratios above 70%,

whereas Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and most Central and Eastern European countries are at, or close to achieving, universal secondary enrolment.

Gender disparities in intake rates are much reduced at secondary level in comparison with primary. This suggests that the difficulties that hinder girls' access to primary education do not prevent them from performing as well as, or better than, their male peers once they are enrolled. This does not imply a smooth school career for girls, as other problems – puberty, early marriage, pregnancy – have a strong influence on completing the full cycle.

Girls' participation in secondary education has increased in all developing regions over the 1990s, with strong gains (over 20 points on the GPI scale) in Algeria, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal, the Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Tunisia. In Bangladesh disparities were reversed, with girls now in the majority at secondary level (GPI jumped from 0.52 to 1.05). However, countries with large disparities in favour of boys in primary education further accentuate these in secondary (Cambodia, India, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan and numerous sub-Saharan African countries). Those with moderate disparities appear to reduce them or fill the gap (some Arab States and several in Asia and the Pacific), whereas countries very close to parity tend to close the gap or reinforce the female advantage in secondary education (Latin America and Caribbean countries, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom).

**Countries with the lowest number of women teachers at the primary level are those with the highest gender disparities.**

### Tertiary education: wide variations

Tertiary enrolment worldwide increased from an estimated 69 million in 1990 to 88 million in 1997, with a 50% rise in developing countries. Women continued to progress towards achieving parity with men: their share in tertiary enrolment rose from 46% to 46.8% at world level, with the highest gains in absolute terms in developing countries. Still, differences in participation are striking: gross enrolment ratios (GERs) at tertiary level stand at about 45% in a majority of countries from OECD and transitional Europe, whereas the great majority of developing countries have values below 30%. No countries in sub-Saharan Africa (with the exception of South Africa) or South and West Asia have GERs above 15%.

In over half the countries for which data are available, women comprise the majority of tertiary students (most European countries, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America). They are poorly represented, however, in sub-Saharan Africa, and there are wide

variations in the Arab States (two students out of ten are women in Mauritania), whereas in several countries of Asia and the Pacific female enrolment ratios are less than two-thirds those of males.

What women choose to study is a key issue. They often represent three-quarters or more of enrolments in the field of education, especially in industrialized and transition countries. Sub-Saharan Africa is an exception: in only three countries (Botswana, Mauritius and Swaziland) do women account for more than half of the total enrolments in education programmes. In most of the other regions, 'health and welfare' emerges as the second most-chosen field of study (between two-thirds and three-quarters of students are women), followed by humanities and the arts. Women generally account for only about 20% of students in engineering, manufacturing and construction programmes, and are weakly represented in sciences and in agriculture.

## Chances of achieving the 2005 gender parity goal

This brief survey points to mixed progress in expanding girls' education. On the basis of rates of change between 1990 and 2000, what are the prospects for achieving the 2005 gender parity goal?

- 52 out of 128 countries for which data are available for 2000 have either already achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary enrolments or are likely to have done so by 2005. This group (green in Table 2.1), includes most countries from North America and Western Europe (14), Central and Eastern Europe (13), Latin America and the Caribbean (6) and the Arab States (5).
- 22 of those countries (yellow in Table 2.1) will miss the 2005 goal but should achieve parity in primary and secondary by 2015. In most of these cases, secondary education will be the lagging sector.

**Table 2.1. Gender parity in primary and secondary education: national prospects for goal achievement in 2005 and 2015**  
(based on past trends, 1990-2000; all countries with GPI between 0.97 and 1.03 are considered to have achieved parity)

		Gender parity in secondary education				Number of countries
		Achieved in 2000	Likely to be achieved in 2005	Likely to be achieved in 2015	At risk of not achieving the goal by 2015	
Gender parity in primary education	Achieved in 2000	Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cape-Verde, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guyana, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Rep. of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, TFYR of Macedonia, United States 40	Austria, Bolivia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Portugal, Samoa 7	Belize, Botswana, Finland, Namibia, Nicaragua, Panama, Qatar, Spain, United Rep. of Tanzania, Venezuela 10	Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Zimbabwe 24	81
	Likely to be achieved in 2005	Oman 1	Egypt, Iran, Mauritania, Nepal 4	Brunei Darussalam, Gambia, Lesotho, Saudi Arabia 4	Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia 3	12
	Likely to be achieved in 2015	Paraguay 1	Cuba, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic 3	Comoros, Congo, Ghana, Uganda 4	Algeria, Benin, Cambodia, Chad, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Togo 6	14
	At risk of not achieving the goal by 2015	Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Swaziland 3	Sierra Leone 1	Burundi, Macao (China), Niger, South Africa, Thailand 5	Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Madagascar, Mongolia, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, Turkey 12	21
Number of countries		45	15	23	45	128

### Notes:

- Where countries are shown in bold blue, enrolment disparities at the expense of boys are observed at both primary and secondary levels; non-bold blue indicates that such disparities occur at secondary level only.
- Nine countries in the pink zone had high GPI values at both primary and secondary levels in 2000, even though their recent GPI trends had been slightly negative. They are in a different category to most of the other countries in this group, in that policy change could easily and quickly change their circumstances. These countries comprise: Denmark, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Macao (China), Madagascar, Mexico, Serbia and Montenegro, South Africa, and Swaziland.

Source: Statistical annex, Tables 5 and 7 in the full EFA Report. The methodology is explained in Appendix 2 of the full Report.

- More than 40% of the countries shown (pink in Table 2.1), 54 out of 128, are at risk of not achieving gender parity either in primary (9) or secondary education (33) or at both levels (12), even by 2015. These are mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (16), East Asia and the Pacific (11), and the Arab States (7). Two E9<sup>5</sup> countries are at risk if present trends continue: India (for both levels), and China (for secondary). In some countries where far fewer girls are enrolled than boys, the situation of girls has recently further deteriorated.
- Countries where enrolment inequalities are in favour of girls are concentrated in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Arab States and Asia (marked in blue in Table 2.1). In almost all the countries where, with present trends, such disadvantage would remain by 2015, it would be at secondary level only.

In sum, almost 60% of 128 countries are likely to miss reaching gender parity at primary and secondary levels by 2005. However, in a good number of these countries, policies are available that are capable of delivering parity within a few years, as the following chapters explain.

## Early childhood: uneven exposure

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes have a highly beneficial impact in preparing children for school. Figures show, however, that children entering primary schools in the various regions are very differently equipped to face their new environment. Furthermore, ECCE provision is very unequally distributed within countries – more so than the provision of primary and secondary education, with particularly pronounced urban/rural disparities. There is extensive private funding and management, reflecting the fact that governments, especially in developing countries, do not feel either obliged or able to provide pre-primary education.

In all regions, enrolments have generally increased considerably over the last decade, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. But setbacks were substantial and widespread in Central Asia and in Central and Eastern Europe, where the real value of state expenditures in education, as in other sectors, has been in decline.

One-third (56) of the 152 countries for which data are available have very low pre-primary enrolments (fewer than 30% of the age group), almost half of them being in sub-Saharan Africa. All countries in North America and Western Europe and most of those in Central and Eastern Europe have enrolments equivalent to more than half the

pre-school age group, with near-universal provision in half the world's richer nations.

In most of the 145 countries with data available by sex, disparities by gender in favour of boys are much less pronounced in pre-primary education than at other levels of education. In fact, only one-fifth of countries (30 out of 145) report such gender disparities (GPI of 0.96 or less), whilst almost as many (23) reported disparities in favour of girls. The fact that in many developing countries, ECCE programmes are often supported by NGOs and include the reduction of gender inequality and empowerment of women among their explicit goals helps to explain higher attendance by girls.



United States, the joy of teaching.

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## Learning programmes for life skills and literacy

The *EFA Report 2003/4* addresses Goals 3 and 4 jointly because many programmes link literacy with 'life skills'. The classical approach to literacy training – isolated from learning other skills – is now widely considered to be ineffective.

These two goals pose major monitoring challenges. Literacy rates as conventionally measured are well known to be inadequate. They are often based on self-declared literacy, or on the assumption that an individual is literate after completing a particular number of years of basic education. A new methodology is currently being developed and tested in a number of pilot countries. Life skills are also difficult to measure: they include generic skills such as problem-solving and negotiating, and contextual skills – linked to livelihood, income generation, health and the environment. Both can be key to the success of literacy programmes. These important caveats aside, what are the chances of increasing literacy rates by 50% by 2015?

Present estimates indicate that there were approximately 862 million illiterates in 2000 – a 2% reduction over the decade. A further 7% reduction is expected by 2015. This signals modest progress. Almost half of the world's illiterates live in South and West Asia

5. The E9 countries are: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan.

**Table 2.2. Estimated number of adult illiterates – population aged 15 and over (1990, 2000 and 2015)**

	Adult illiterates (15+)						Percentage change	
	1990		2000		2015			
	Total (thousands)	% F	Total (thousands)	% F	Total (thousands)	% F	1990 to 2000	2000 to 2015
World	879 130	63	861 966	64	799 152	63	-2.0	-7.3
Developed and transition countries	21 970	70	14 895	67	7 521	61	-32.2	-49.5
Developing countries	857 159	63	847 071	64	791 631	64	-1.2	-6.5
of which:								
Sub-Saharan Africa	131 380	61	135 980	61	132 844	61	3.5	-2.3
Arab States	62 400	63	67 473	64	70 803	64	8.1	4.9
East Asia and the Pacific	232 904	69	186 404	71	114 123	73	-20.0	-38.8
South and West Asia	382 151	60	412 242	61	436 704	62	7.9	5.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	41 932	56	39 254	56	33 055	54	-6.4	-15.8

Source: Statistical annex, Table 2 in the full EFA Report.

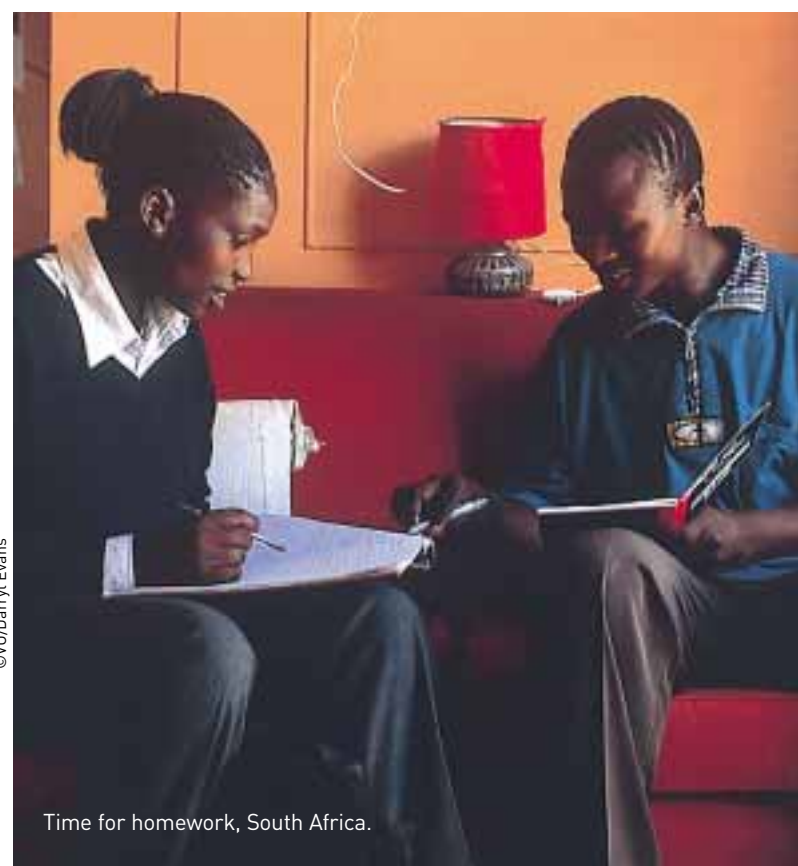
[Table 2.2]. Their numbers are still increasing, and mainly reflect the situation of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Among countries with literacy rates below 75%, five (Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Nigeria and Pakistan) belong to the E9 highly populated countries. China has witnessed an important decrease in the number of illiterates between 1990 and 2000. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States, literacy rates increased by about 20% over the decade to 2000, although in some African countries, and in Iraq, they still remain below 40%.

Women account for almost two-thirds of the world's illiterates, a share expected to remain fairly stable except in East Asia and the Pacific, where women may comprise up to three-quarters of the total by 2015. Demographics strongly affect these statistics: women live longer than men hence they make up the majority of the population in the older age groups, where illiteracy levels are highest. In a number of countries, female literacy rates are half the male rates or less, including Burkina Faso, Iraq, Mali, the Niger and Pakistan.

Prospects are brighter for the 15–24 age group in the four regions with the lowest levels of adult literacy. The contrast is particularly striking in East Asia and the Pacific, where almost all the youth population is already literate. While no country with a literacy GPI below 0.75 in 1990 is projected to reach gender parity by 2015, there are a number of countries, including some in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States, which should approach that target for their younger generation.

## Educational quality

The difference between good and bad education matters in terms of what, how and how much people learn. The statement holds particular truth for poorer societies and for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The best proxy indicators currently available to assess quality are the number of students per teacher, teacher training, public expenditures and educational achievement. The survival rate to Grade 5 is also commonly used.



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Time for homework, South Africa.

**Students per teacher:** Data are available for 122 countries on pupil/teacher ratios at primary level. The greatest variations are found in sub-Saharan Africa, where the ratio is above 70 in some countries. The average has risen from 40 to 46 in the same region, which augurs badly for the quality of education. In South and West Asia, despite a slight improvement since 1990, averages are greater than 40. These national and regional averages, of course, conceal intra-country differences which are often large.

**Teacher training:** There are countries in all developing regions where half of the teachers have received no pedagogical training. Less than two-thirds of teachers are trained in some countries of the Asia and Pacific region. In two-thirds of the countries having available data by gender, women are proportionally more trained than men. In many low-income countries, there is a tendency – often dictated by fiscal constraints – to recruit an increasingly higher proportion of untrained and poorly qualified teachers, often with serious consequences for educational quality.

**Expenditure:** Half of the countries for which data are available allocated between 3.4% and 5.7% of national income to education, a share that can reach 8% in countries of the OECD and of Central and Eastern Europe. Most developing countries, where tertiary systems are less well established than in rich countries, allocate between one-third and half of their education spending to the primary system. In half of the countries with available data, primary education receives between 1.1% and 2.2% of national resources.

**Learning achievement:** Several studies monitoring educational quality in all but the poorest regions reach the same conclusion: girls perform much better in reading than boys, who tend to do better in mathematics although the difference is less pronounced. The situation is evenly balanced for science. Some studies suggest that girls are more motivated to learn, driven by higher expectations for their future. This profile tends to be most accentuated in industrialized and transition countries, less pronounced but clearly present in Latin America and the Caribbean, and least evident in Africa. There is a strong over-representation of boys among low-performing pupils in some middle-income countries. In less-developed countries, the over-performance of girls is weaker or often absent. Several surveys conclude that gender differences in learning achievement are either small or insignificant in sub-Saharan Africa. The tendency suggests that girls benefit more than boys when education is more highly developed.

## Box 2.2. Conclusions of the Education for All Development Index (EDI)

- Only sixteen countries (out of ninety-four) have either achieved or are close to achieving the most quantifiable EFA goals – having an EDI of 0.95 or higher.
- No country from sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States or South and West Asia (except Maldives) is close to achieving the goals. Those that are close include a number of countries from Latin America which have a long-established tradition of emphasizing widespread participation in basic education.
- Forty-two countries have EDI values between 0.80 to 0.94. Countries in this group are found in all developing regions and Central and Eastern Europe.
- Thirty-six countries have EDI values lower than 0.80. Twenty-two of these lowest EDI countries are in sub-Saharan Africa but they also include Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. In most of these cases, there is low achievement across each of the EFA goals, implying multiple challenges if EFA is to be secured.

## A new index to compare progress

The EFA goals are closely intertwined: countries moving rapidly towards universal provision of good quality schooling can also be expected to make good progress in reducing levels of illiteracy. Achieving gender parity at primary level generally has a positive, though delayed, impact on gender ratios at secondary and higher levels.

A new EFA Development Index (Box 2.2) is designed to give the advantage of a more rounded picture of progress and to help identify countries that are doing well on all fronts, those succeeding in some areas but not in others, and those experiencing all-round difficulties. In practice, incorporating the six goals into an index is difficult: learning and life skills programmes are not yet conducive to quantitative measurement, while data on ECCE are not yet sufficiently standardized across countries. Accordingly, the EFA Development Index incorporates indicators for Universal Primary Education (measured by net enrolment ratio), adult literacy (literacy rate of the age group 15 years and over), gender parity (average value of the Gender Parity Index in primary and secondary education and in adult literacy) and quality of education (survival to primary Grade 5). It can be calculated for ninety-four countries for the year 2000. Most OECD countries are excluded, owing to having incomplete data. However, estimates are available for between 50% and 80% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, South and West Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The results, which are summarized in Box 2.2, also show that gender parity is the most efficient predictor of EFA. ■



# Why are girls still held back?

- > Household dynamics
- > The power of tradition
- > Hidden domestic labourers
- > Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS
- > Adding up the school bill
- > Enduring stereotypes
- > High achievers
- > Labour market inequalities

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**W**hat holds girls back? A three-step rights agenda provides a framework for understanding the multiple dimensions of inequalities, both outside and within the school. First, a concern with *rights to* education points to constraints in the family and within society that affect girls' access to education. Second, *rights within* education invite a focus on how school systems take girls' specific needs into account through curricula, teaching methods and the learning environment. Finally, *rights through* education raise the issues of how girls perform in school and the extent to which achievement translates into equal opportunities in the social and economic spheres. Gender inequalities can only be addressed by taking all three dimensions into account.

## Rights to education: what happens outside school

The decision to send a child to school is taken in the family. Recent research shows that resources, work and opportunities are not allocated equally among household members, as traditional theory once upheld. Do women or girls have a tougher time than men or boys, in part because their influence over decision-making in the household is not as strong? It appears that when different household members secure additional income, women spend more on education, health and household services than do men.



The end of the school day in Mindouma, Cameroon.

How power is shared within the household reflects society-wide norms. The most marked gender inequalities are found in societies where women are confined to the home. Other values, such as patrilineal principles of inheritance and descent, further limit women's life chances. Such societies are characterized by marked son preference and discrimination against daughters from the early years of life. Countries and regions where there is strong cultural preference for sons also tend to have the greatest levels of gender inequalities – North Africa, the Middle East, Pakistan, much of Bangladesh and India, and countries of East Asia. In these places, inequalities can take extreme life-threatening forms. But power in the

household and social norms can change through the deliberate actions of the state and civil society, and in response to broader political and social development.

## Working children: a major brake on schooling

One of the most common reasons for children not attending school is that their families require them to work. Policy design *must* take this into account. Global estimates are only available for 'economically active' children who produce a marketable output: this includes waged work and regular work done on a household farm or enterprise. According to the most recent estimates, 18% of children aged 5–14 are economically active, amounting to some 211 million children, about half of whom are girls. It is safe to assume that the true figure for all working children is considerably greater because it does not include children engaged in domestic chores and other household work not leading to marketable output. However, excluding those involved in these household activities, it is estimated that 61% of working children are in Asia (128 million), 32% in Africa (68 million) and 7% (15 million) in Latin America. The vast majority are engaged in agricultural work, typically on family-run farms. Many children combine this work with attending school, even though there is an obvious trade-off in terms of attendance and achievement.

Parents are the main employers of children. Affecting their circumstances and attitudes provides a major challenge for education. Child labour falls as economic development proceeds, and its existence is undoubtedly a result of poverty. Recent research also shows that, where child labour exists, its incidence is lowest where power is equally divided between husbands and wives.

## In the name of tradition

'I was seven years old when I was married. Now I am 14. I wanted to come back to school and left my husband. I am now doing well,' says Silenat Libsework of Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup>

Early marriage massively impedes the educational progress of girls, whether it occurs so as to lighten a family's economic burden or to secure a daughter's future. In Nepal, 40% of girls are married by the time they are 15. In Ethiopia and in some countries of West Africa,

marriage at 7 or 8 is not uncommon. Changing the legal age of marriage is unlikely to alter local practices if underlying conditions are not changed. This is why promoting the importance of girls' education through campaigns, role models, improving conditions of safety and security, and working directly with adolescent girls to strengthen their voice, are important measures to allow them to complete an education.

Traditional practices around adolescence and rites of passage can often be to the detriment of education, particularly for girls. In some societies, girls can be enslaved to atone for the sins of a male relative or to provide security for their family in other ways. Social pressures on girls and boys are particularly strong during puberty. In many countries, adolescent pregnancy almost always results in girls interrupting their education. Inadequate information about sexuality in many schools reinforces the hold of these practices.

## HIV/AIDS, conflict and disability

The global HIV/AIDS scourge (Box 3.1), armed conflict and various forms of disability all play a part in curtailing girls' right to education.

### Box 3.1. The toll of HIV/AIDS

In 2002, 42 million people lived with HIV/AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa, women make up as much as 58% of those living with the pandemic, against 20% in North America. The picture is bleak for adolescent girls. In Southern Africa and the Caribbean, girls between 15 and 19 are infected at rates four to seven times higher than boys, a disparity linked to widespread exploitation, sexual abuse and discriminatory practices. Sexual violence and coercion, both inside and outside the school, reinforce girls' vulnerability.

Education is a social vaccine. There is evidence that HIV infection may be declining more markedly among young educated women than among those with less education. Studies point to the example of Zambia, where prevalence for young women between 15 and 19 dropped from 27% in 1993 to 15% in 1998. The declines are greatest among those with secondary and higher levels of education. Fighting the pandemic requires more resources to promote new training, curricula, counselling and to allow orphans and other affected children to attend school. The worst-affected countries cannot mobilize these resources by internal reallocation alone. The principle of sustaining education systems without external support needs to be set aside as long as HIV/AIDS ruins the lives of so many orphaned and infected girls and boys and continues to have such a devastating impact on teachers.

<sup>6</sup> W. Yelfign, 'Ethiopia report', background paper for *A Fair Chance: Attaining Gender Equality in Basic Education by 2005*, Brussels, Global Campaign for Education, 2003.



Of seventeen sub-Saharan Africa countries in which enrolment rates declined in the 1990s, six are affected by or recovering from major armed conflict. In Rwanda, more than two-thirds of teachers either fled or were killed during the 1994 genocide; in Mozambique, 45% of the school network was destroyed during the civil war. In times of conflict, there is ample evidence to show that girls are even more vulnerable to rape, sexual violence and exploitation. It is estimated that approximately 100,000 girls directly participated in conflicts in at least thirty

**In times of conflict, there is ample evidence to show that girls are even more vulnerable to rape, sexual violence and exploitation.**

countries in the 1990s as fighters, cooks, porters, spies, servants or sex slaves.

Armed conflict has also resulted in a swelling refugee population. The majority of the world's

estimated 25 million internally displaced persons worldwide are women and children, in nearly half of the countries they face sexual violence. Disability is another neglected outcome of conflict: for every child killed in armed conflict, three are injured and permanently disabled by landmines.

In conflict, women often find themselves working outside the home for the first time, becoming income-earners and living in a more public sphere. While in post-conflict societies, education is sometimes used as a weapon of cultural repression, it also opens the opportunity to transform conventional systems and to renew both teaching methods and curricula.

UNESCO suggests that 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. Poverty and disability also form a vicious circle: women and girls, in the face of limited resources, are more likely than their male counterparts to be deprived of basic necessities, such as food and medicine, increasing the risk of physical or mental impairment. The education of girls with disabilities has gone largely unnoticed by those committed to promoting either gender equity or disability equity. Little policy attention has been paid, for example, to the combined sexual and disability harassment faced by female pupils.

## Decent and free schooling

In spite of the human rights instruments which commit states to provide free and compulsory education at primary level, school fees continue to be levied in at least one hundred and one countries around the world. Other costs, such as books, school uniform, transport or community contributions, are added to these. In six

African countries, parents were found to contribute almost one-third of the total annual costs of primary schooling.

There is strong evidence that these costs, along with the need to work, are the most important causes of children not attending or dropping out of school. Household income strongly determines enrolment: in Ethiopia, increasing a household's wealth index by one unit enhances a boy's chances of attending school by 16%, against 41% for girls.

So, measures to reduce the direct costs of schooling are one of the most potent ways to increase school enrolments, particularly for poorer households, and most specifically for girls. There is ample experience of potentially huge numbers of children enrolling in school when costs are sharply reduced (see Chapter 5).

Even where direct costs do not serve as a barrier, it is well documented that the distance of school from home influences enrolment. Remote habitations and dispersed populations continue to suffer disadvantages that affect girls more severely as parents fear for their daughters' safety on the way to school.

School infrastructure is all too often unsuitable: the availability of separate toilets is particularly decisive for menstruating girls.

As with reducing distance between school and home, the case for investing in water, toilets and basic school infrastructure is most persuasively made by governments that, having done so, have experienced remarkable progress in closing gender gaps and universalizing education. In Bangladesh, drinking water is now available in about 90% of schools, although 30% of co-educational schools have no toilets.

**Despite the human rights instruments which commit states to provide free and compulsory primary education, school fees are still levied in at least 101 countries.**

## Can non-state providers boost girls' education?

In most countries of the developing world, non-state providers have had a longer engagement with education service provision than the state. NGOs can be major contributors and are generally committed to ensuring that education reaches the poorest, most disadvantaged groups. This landscape also includes commercial providers – a rapidly growing sector – and community groups such as religious bodies.

The paucity of official data makes it difficult to arrive at conclusions about the impact of private schooling on gender equity, but evidence suggests that in most countries access to private schools is still mainly limited to the better off. Private schooling for girls is largely

**Private schooling for girls is largely associated with higher income levels.**

associated with higher income levels. In Mali, where community, non-state schools outnumber state ones in primary education, girls' enrolments remain higher in the latter. At secondary level, on the other hand, private schools have contributed to boosting parity: new senior

secondary schools have given better-off town dwellers access to 'safer' places of learning for daughters. This suggests that increasing the number of public girls' schools and improving their quality remains a key policy challenge where gender ratios are highly unequal.

Community schools are often portrayed as being more relevant to local development, more cost effective, and more accountable than public schools. Several studies report their success in improving access to schooling and note a rise in girls' enrolment. Innovative programmes, however, can increase the direct costs that households face and exacerbate gender inequalities. Communities may have to meet the cost of teachers' salaries, for example. In Malawi, discussions with parents and school committees reinforced the view that the burden of community activities was placed mainly on women.

Faith-based organizations continue to play a strong role in offering schooling to deprived social groups. Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mali provide illustrations of the positive impact of religious schools in boosting girls' enrolment. However, evidence suggests that this is the case partly because they tend to reinforce stereotypes of women as submissive and dependent. Parents may value this kind of socialization for both boys and girls, but often send only their daughters to religious schools. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, increased demand for girls' schooling was spurred by conservative policies introduced after 1979. Nonetheless, the trend has provided an impetus for social change: there is evidence that educated women are delaying their age of marriage and seeking changes in their traditional roles.

Although the religious sector can contribute strongly to boosting parity for girls, its institutions are essentially conservative and their impact on equality is thus less certain. In several Latin American countries, for example, the Church has used its influence to block information campaigns about sexuality and related issues in schools.

## Rights within education: safe schools, fair treatment

Education institutions are supposed to be places of learning, growth and empowerment. Yet far from being safe havens for learning, schools are often sites of intolerance, discrimination and violence. Girls are disproportionately the victims. Closing the gender gap also means confronting the reality of sexual violence and harassment that is responsible for underachievement and high drop-out rates. A recent report from South Africa found that the threat of violence at school is one of the most significant challenges to learning. The pattern is different in Europe and North America where a large body of research shows that boys are more often involved in violence than girls. The few studies that have been carried out suggest that much gender violence in schools is unreported or under-reported, because students fear victimization, punishment or ridicule. When it is reported, prosecutions of teachers for sexual assault or rape appear to be rare. Sanctions are essential to laying the foundation for more equitable relations between men and women in society.

**Closing the gender gap also means confronting the reality of sexual violence and harassment that is responsible for underachievement and high drop-out rates.**

Everyday classroom practices reinforce gender differences. A study from nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa showed that girls were in general more involved in tasks such as cleaning floors and fetching water than were boys. Studies from numerous countries reveal that teachers often consider girls as less intelligent and destined to less well-paid jobs than boys. In Bangladesh, most teachers did not themselves expect their own daughters to take a job after finishing their education. In Jamaica, however, the opposite tendency emerges, with teachers giving boys less praise and more menial tasks.

Teacher training rarely focuses on issues of gender awareness, while sexism in textbooks remains common. Even in Eastern Europe, where women made rapid gains under the former socialist governments on the job market, strong biases are still entrenched in the curriculum, with textbooks from several countries only portraying women in their home environments.

The importance of female role models is widely accepted as a means of promoting greater gender equality. Yet the number of women teachers remains extremely low in many countries. In India, almost 90% of single-teacher schools, which account for at least 20% of all schools, are staffed by men and 72% of two-teacher schools have no

women teachers. These schools tend to be located in rural and remote areas where girls are at a disadvantage. In Mali's community schools, the female/male ratio among teachers is very low, at 0.24.

The teaching profession tends to become more feminized as school enrolments rise and women's economic role expands. In some cases, this trend is accelerated by wage reductions imposed by economic transition and adjustment: across Central and South-Eastern Europe, teachers' salaries no longer suffice for basic subsistence. This has resulted in an exodus of male teachers from the classroom. Studies from other countries show that shifts towards feminization are being made within a changing professional structure – contracts for relief teachers for example or ones working in non-government schools are short and insecure and the pay is lower than in formal schools. There is a higher percentage of women taking these posts.

## Rights through education

Evidence that girls are outperforming boys in several developed countries has created a public stir, yet careful interpretation is required to establish which girls are outperforming which boys, and in what institutional and socio-cultural contexts. Developing countries present a very different picture. For many, where gender parity is still far from being achieved, both boys and girls fare badly.

Many examples show that girls are unable to convert their academic edge over boys into greater equality in other spheres of life. Subject choices are instructive. Girls are invariably under-represented in science subjects. In Chile,

where subject-streaming occurs halfway through the secondary system, over 80% of women are enrolled in commercial specializations (against 33.8% of men) whereas only 13% are enrolled in industrial streams. In the former Eastern bloc, marked by a striking feminization of higher education in the 1990s, women are concentrated in the education and health fields, whereas men dominate in programmes on governance, financing and banking.

Boys' underachievement in the educational arena has not yet resulted in their falling behind in the economic and political spheres. Women may require higher levels of attainment if they are to be successful in competition for jobs, equal pay and decision-making positions. A survey of Asian countries' performance in relation to gender equity shows higher rates of unemployment prevail for women at all educational levels, while a recent UNIFEM report argued that in industry and services, women on average earned 22% less than men in the late 1990s.

**Boys' underachievement in the educational arena has not yet resulted in their falling behind in the economic and political spheres.**

Assessing the extent to which girls are held back at each stage of the rights agenda – in the home and society, by schooling costs and biases, lack of security, unfair treatment and lack of opportunity – leads to a set of challenges. Urgent action is required in countries where the gender gap is still large: addressing poverty constraints, making schools safe, revising discriminatory content and changing attitudes are all part of the equation. But achieving parity does not end with equal numbers: equal opportunities, treatment and outcomes in education and in society are all crucial yardsticks of progress. ■

## Chapter 4

# Lessons from good practice

- > Demographic shifts
- > Women in the labour force
- > Changing the law
- > Incentives to reduce child labour
- > Scholarships and food
- > Changing attitudes
- > Early childhood benefits
- > Empowering women

Although there is no 'magic bullet' for narrowing the gender gap and promoting equality in education, a wide range of recent international experiences points to breakthroughs that have facilitated girls' access to schooling and improved their performance. Such initiatives often involve reducing schooling costs and improving the quality of the learning environment.



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Schoolgirls on their way home, Egypt.

Education policies are developed within specific national and global contexts. A historical perspective reminds us that the drive to educate women is often set within wider ideologies of their appropriate role in society. As such, extending education to women has always been highly political, given the history of gender discrimination that has characterized most societies. In countries that have achieved parity, the rapid progress made in women's education was a feature of the second half of the twentieth century. In many countries of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, formal education was initially available only for boys.

Public policy can transform women's education, even where economic growth remains modest. Change is often spurred by broad social movements built around the right to development. At several international conferences in the 1990s, women have pressed for political and legal reform, while states have responded in different ways, signing up to international conventions, putting in place quota systems or removing discriminatory laws.

## Shifts in the global economy

Global economic trends and women's participation in the labour market influence the context in which education policies are developed. The global labour force has become more female, rising from 36% in 1960 to 40% in 1997 – a figure that does not take into account the fact that much of women's work still goes unrecorded. This trend is partly due to the consequences of poverty, economic shock or crisis. In many parts of the world, more women must now work to ensure family survival, in the face of declining real wages and cutbacks in public services and subsidies. Greater women's participation in the global economy has often coincided with a decline in job security, deregulation in the conditions of work and poor or non-existent social and legal protection.

Furthermore, employment gains made by women are vulnerable: in some export-oriented manufacturing sectors, women have been ousted by higher skills requirements. In Central and Eastern Europe, their formal employment has fallen since the onset of economic reforms. In these economies, education has suffered

through cuts in public expenditure, less household capacity to contribute to the cost of schooling and increased reliance on children's financial contribution. Despite these trends, greater female participation in the workplace can clearly trigger change, gradually influencing social norms and perceptions of women's abilities and roles.

## The demographic transition

Accompanying the changes in the global economy there has been a dramatic and sustained decline in mortality and subsequently in fertility. The largest declines have occurred in Asia and Latin America, while sub-Saharan Africa lags noticeably behind. The education of women is widely believed to contribute to this transition. As women's educational attainment rises, their fertility rate and desired family size decline. But there are 'threshold effects': in some patriarchal settings, primary schooling alone is insufficient to help to postpone the age of marriage. Nor is lower fertility systematically associated with increased women's empowerment in the economic and political spheres, although the relationship is strong.

## Public policy fit for girls

Gender parity and equality in education need to be set within this global context, as greater access to education can support and, in turn, be strengthened by these trends. Education remains one of the most powerful levers for weakening the forces that lead to inequalities between the sexes. In this respect, the state has a critical role to play on at least three fronts: creating the enabling environment for promoting female education through legislative and policy reform; investing in redistribution; and introducing reforms which respond to the particular circumstances of girls and women. These should include mitigating the burden of external shocks on women such as the effects of conflict, economic crisis and HIV/AIDS.

### Legislative change

Legislative change and reform is essential for gender equality to take root. Property and inheritance rights, and the establishment of gender equality in family law are cornerstones for securing economic and social justice for women. These legislative reforms can underpin changes in the sphere of education. In Costa Rica, for example, the Act for Promoting the Social Equality of Women (1990) made all education institutions responsible for guaranteeing equal opportunities for men and women. Strong supportive frameworks must complement legislation. Ethiopia enacted an overall strategy that pays

attention to gender issues in curriculum design and places emphasis on recruiting and training female teachers. Complementary strategies were adopted, such as raising the minimum age at marriage of girls from 15 to 18, ensuring equal employment opportunities and encouraging women to take up jobs in the civil service.

Since the United Nations Decade for Women (1976–85), many countries have also created special mechanisms within government to address gender equality in education. All too often, however, these units are marginalized and under-resourced, and fail to make an impact on national development planning.

## Creating equal chances: the cost of girls' education

As noted in Chapter 3, the direct and indirect costs of schooling to households impede access to education. Abolishing primary-school fees can have a major impact on boosting enrolment of both girls and boys, as Chapter 5 details. However, the fee aspect is only one, albeit important, part of achieving parity. Targeted interventions are required to ensure that girls and boys have an equal chance of attending school.

The need to work is one of the most important causes of under-enrolment. Accordingly, measures to reduce or remove the need for child labour represent a potentially important means of increasing school enrolments among both girls and boys. Legislation banning child labour is desirable, but it has no impact on the large number of children who work with or for their parents. In Bangladesh and Nepal, a recent study found that by the age of 10 it is not uncommon for girls to be working an average of ten hours per day.

To the extent that the main underlying cause of child labour is poverty, pro-poor growth policies and measures to reduce discrimination in employment and wages against women are required. Where the driving force behind sending children to work is a comparison between the relative returns of work as compared with schooling, investments in the quality and availability of the latter will pay off.

### Changing the balance of incentives

Policies can be designed specifically to change the balance of incentives that lead to girls, in particular, being excluded from school. Scholarships, income-support schemes and school feeding programmes are three types of targeting measures that have proved effective in a variety of contexts.

## Legislation banning child labour is desirable, but it has no impact on the large number of children who work with or for their parents.

Financial incentives, such as cash transfers to cover the forgone wage of the child, have an impact on enrolments, with the funds generally made conditional on school attendance.

Brazil's Bolsa-Escola, a national programme reaching an estimated 2 million children, attempts to address high drop-out rates by providing income subsidies to families with school-age children on the condition that each child attends school at least 90% of the time. Cash transfers are paid directly to mothers. Studies show sharp reductions in school drop-out rates and higher enrolments in post-primary education. Although the amount of the subsidy is less than the expected income from child labour, its dependability, together with the reduction in violence and health problems associated with work in the informal sector, outweighs the loss of income for most families.

### Bursaries for a better future

In Bangladesh, the Female Secondary School Stipend Programme has had a significant impact on enrolment (see box), with a five-fold increase in the number of awardees in some areas. In Cambodia, the Kampuchean Action for Primary Education piloted a scholarship programme enabling girls from low-income backgrounds in Grade 6 to continue their studies for three years.

### School feeding programmes

Meals, snacks at school or dry food rations to take home can be a make or break factor in sending a child to school. A study from India reveals that female school participation was about 15 percentage points higher when the local school provided a midday meal. Several conditions must be met for food incentive programmes to pay off. The poorest families must be targeted, rations must be large enough to be viewed by parents as a significant income-transfer, and local communities and parents need to be responsible for managing such programmes to avoid malpractice in food distribution. Food incentives need to be part of a more comprehensive package for improving girls' education and, in particular its quality.

## Recasting the schooling experience

As Chapter 3 notes, the quality of the schooling experience is often replete with threats and unfriendly to girls. Sexual violence, stereotypical views of girls as less able to succeed than boys, and teaching styles that reinforce such views are common currency in a large number of countries. Ensuring that education does not fail

children requires paying attention to the 'softwares' of change. The role of the curriculum is crucial in this regard. Many countries have initiated reforms both to reduce biases in subject choices confronting girls and boys and to remove gender stereotyping from teaching materials. However, irrespective of the formal curriculum, the ways in which it is interpreted by teachers is of overwhelming importance.

Teachers are powerful role models, capable of challenging stereotypes provided they are given the right support. The presence of strong feminist movements during the 1970s in several industrialized countries helped to focus initiatives on girls' participation in mathematics, science and technology and on the creation of 'girl-friendly' environments in schools.

In many developing countries, training teachers to be more attentive to gender dynamics in the classroom, and to their own attitudes towards the capabilities of girls and boys, is simply overlooked. The Forum for African Women Educationalists has set up 'centres of excellence' in several countries that take an integrated approach to improving learning for girls. Attention is given to learning materials and curricula, physical facilities, guidance, counselling and community sensitization. Teachers are trained to be sensitive to differences and prejudice, with an emphasis on teaching science, mathematics and technology. In other settings, strategies targeting boys to address violent, aggressive and generally derogatory behaviour towards girls are also being explored.

### Box 4.1. Bangladesh: stipends for schooling

Initiated in 1982 by a local NGO with USAID financial assistance, the Female Secondary School Stipend Programme aims to increase girls' enrolment and retention in secondary schooling, assist them in passing final examinations, enhance their employment opportunities and delay their marriage. The programme became nationwide in 1994 with foreign support (World Bank, Asian Development Bank, NORAD). Free tuition and stipends are awarded to all eligible female secondary-school students enrolled in recognized institutions outside the metropolitan areas. To be eligible, a girl must attend school for at least 75% of the school year, achieve certain marks on her evaluations and examinations, and remain unmarried. Stipends are paid directly into her bank account. Case studies show that girls from poor rural backgrounds have been able to gain jobs in business and to delay marriage in order to work. But, a disturbing trend is declining performance in examinations and high drop-out rates for girls (46% compared with 39% for boys) in Grades 6–10, highlighting the risk of a trade-off between higher enrolments and lower quality, unless adequate investments are made.



Recruiting female teachers, particularly for rural or isolated schools, remains a high priority. Restrictions against women travelling or living away from home, accommodation problems and family responsibilities all stand in the way of recruitment. In many countries, women require support and encouragement to break powerful social norms and to adopt a teaching career. In Rajasthan (India), the Lok Jumbish programme has created a Women Teachers' Forum to boost the participation of women teachers in residential training camps and to encourage them to become trainers.

### Breaking taboos

Specific groups of girls are excluded from school on grounds other than poverty. There is increasing debate about why pregnant girls, for example, face expulsion

**In Nepal's Siraha District, discrimination against girls and women still affects almost every area of their lives and ten girls die for every seven boys.**

from formal education. In a 1998 ruling, the Constitutional Court in Bogotá (Colombia) described this discrimination as punishment. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child explicitly recognizes the right of pregnant girls to an education. In response, some countries, including Botswana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia, now permit the re-entry of girls into formal education after pregnancy.

Urgent attention needs to be paid to issues of sexuality and reproductive health information for adolescents, particularly in the contexts of HIV/AIDS. For women in particular, the knowledge and skills required to manage their sexual lives are vital. In many countries, sex education remains a taboo subject and is often hindered by resistance from teachers and parents and by inadequate teacher training. Despite such resistance, however, many countries in Latin America and Africa have taken up the challenge of addressing these issues through innovative programmes.

### Tackling violence

As Chapter 3 underlines, schools are not safe havens, particularly for girls. In recent years, several African countries have set up programmes to build awareness, teach girls strategies to resist unwanted sex and make male teenagers sensitive to the rights of girls and women. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa runs the Safe Schools programme, which seeks to show young people alternatives to violence and other negative behaviour.

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On the bus, London, United Kingdom.

Much of the innovative work to counter school violence has been initiated by NGOs, often outside the formal school setting, in part because ministries of education have been reluctant to address the issue. Much more vigorous action is needed, in cooperation with students, parents, teachers and school administrators, to protect girl pupils from perennial harassment, sexual assault and rape at school.

### A second chance

Many girls get a late start in education and need help to catch up with their schooling or pursue it after an interruption. 'Bridge' schools, organized either as residential camps or education centres within communities, appear to be a replicable, cost-effective mechanism for progress towards UPE. In India, the M.V. Foundation (Andhra Pradesh) organizes camps for child workers and bonded children to help them catch up with their peers in formal school.

Expanding early childhood programmes influences both girls' enrolment and performance in primary school, as several studies demonstrate. An eight-state study in India found that retention in primary school was 10 to 20 percentage points higher in the ECCE group than in the



control group, with girls benefiting most. A study from Nepal reports that children with ECCE experience are more self-assured, capable, motivated and quick to pick up new skills and information.

Numerous projects tap the synergies between early childhood education and women's empowerment. They typically involve parents by providing them with professional development training as an ECCE assistant or teacher. In Jamaica, the Teenage Mothers Project engages both young mothers and their children in learning activities on the grounds that educating the mother raises her awareness of the importance of learning.

## NGOs and new models for education

In many countries, NGOs are boosting state efforts to achieve UPE in innovative ways. In southern Sudan, CARE's work in sensitizing communities about the importance of sending children to school, in particular girls, is reported to have increased the latter's enrolment by 96%. In Bangladesh, the rise in total primary enrolments over the 1990s and the 'reversal' of the gender gap has had much to do with the expansion in NGO-managed schools. A key example is the Non-Formal Primary Education Programmes organized by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), which ensures that 70% of its students are both girls and from poorer families. Classrooms are close to home and generally cater for some thirty pupils, timetables are set in meetings with parents, teachers undergo intensive training with annual refresher courses, the curriculum emphasizes active learning methodologies, and community members and parents are strongly involved in various aspects of school management.

## Empowering women

Learning opportunities for young adult women are a right and a goal in itself, but they also enhance the chances that young girls will receive an education. Literacy training is increasingly combined with the acquisition of skills in the areas of saving and credit, maternity, health and family planning. One recent study found attendance rates of 80% in programmes with an income-generating component, compared with 20% without it. Programmes are preferably developed in dialogue with the learner and, in some cases, even learner-generated materials are used. Initiatives can be important vehicles for political participation by women. In India, the Delhi-based NGO Multiple Action Research Group (MARG) developed a series of manuals to educate women about their legal

rights, which eventually led groups of women to claim equal wages or fight for the prevention of early marriage.

## Conclusions

As this selection of initiatives highlights, promoting greater gender parity and equality in education necessarily entails interventions on several fronts. These include reducing schooling costs, providing incentives to families that make sending children to school a worthwhile proposition, confronting violence, working with parents, empowering women, and tailoring measures to the needs of the most disadvantaged. Major points emerging from this overview are:

- The state must play the leading role in promoting equal education for all. This has been the case in most of the countries which have made considerable progress. Legislative changes, reforming curricula, managing incentive schemes, increasing the number of educational facilities in underserved areas and improving teacher training are all endeavours requiring strong public commitment, albeit with the support of other non-state actors.
- Measures to redistribute resources within education to meet girls' specific educational needs are a top priority. Much can be done to reduce the direct and indirect costs of educating girls that families have to face. Besides subsidies, governments need to pursue a range of wider economic and social policies to remove the pernicious influence of child labour and discrimination in pay and work.
- Social change may be slow but it cannot be achieved without directly empowering women. Initiatives to help them identify their needs (health, environment, education, etc.), make decisions and improve their livelihood are critical to achieving greater equality in society. Education is obviously a vital part of this transformative process. ■

# From targets to reform: national strategies in action

- > Good governance and education
- > Translating global commitments
- > Civil society: strengthening engagement
- > Decentralization: a shifting terrain
- > Fee-cutting experiences in Africa
- > Challenges in industrialized and transition countries

Achieving greater gender equality requires both targeted educational reforms and more fundamental political and social measures that extend well beyond the mandate of ministries of education. Without attention to the broader environment of governance and the engagement of civil society in decision-making, education-specific policy levers are likely to fall short of their intended outcomes.

As Chapter 2 indicates, the Education for All Development Index (EDI) offers one way of obtaining a more composite view of progress towards EFA. Associated with other data, this index can provide a clearer understanding of the impact of well-developed institutions, economic growth, aid flows and education-specific policy levers on the achievement of EFA. The broad relationships that emerge from a study of ninety-four countries for which EDI data are available for 2000 must be treated with caution. Yet they are instructive.

## Variables that matter

Virtually all democratic and semi-democratic countries have high or medium EDI levels. Investment in education tends to decrease sharply from full democratic to more authoritarian regimes, with the former allocating no less than 4% of their gross domestic product to education. While the correlation between economic growth and EDI is not strong, the impact is more obvious in countries with



A crowded class in Cambodia's Samlot district, where landmines remain a threat.

well-functioning institutions. The per capita value of total aid flows has a positive impact on EDI where effective institutional structures allow resources to be properly channelled. High levels of debt impact negatively. The legal guarantee of free education among poorer countries, even in democracies, does not have a positive relation with EDI. Legislation is only beneficial to the extent that provision of education can be ensured and people are in a position to benefit from such learning opportunities. School fees have a negative impact, with a significantly greater effect in authoritarian states, suggesting that democratic governments find ways to moderate the effect through, for example, targeted subsidies.

These broad relationships must be set within the circumstances and contexts of individual countries. In some cases, the sheer numerical scale of the educational challenge is the defining factor. Fifteen countries (Table 5.1) account for about 40% of the global population of out-of-school children and a similar share of the world's illiterates. And these figures exclude the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India and Nigeria. In the Niger, 54% of the total population comprises out-of-school children and adult illiterates, in Ethiopia 42.1%, in Pakistan 38.6% and in Mozambique 37.7%. Seventeen countries – all located in the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa – reported a NER under 60% in 2000. In all these countries, and others for which data are not available for 2000, piecemeal reform and individual projects will not make the difference: a massive expansion of basic education is required.

In other cases, geography imposes its own constraints on education policy. Of the 203 states covered in the annexes to the full EFA Report, about a hundred countries have a population of less than 1.5 million. Many are located in the Caribbean and the South Pacific. The implications of migration and the speeding up of globalization are setting additional educational challenges for many of these small states, where governments are limited in their ability to offer a complete range of educational opportunities.

Even in countries where NERs are relatively high (85 and over), meeting the needs of those who are difficult to reach by virtue of geography, language, ethnicity, orphanhood, or rural and urban poverty, demands specific solutions. The rights of ethnic minorities are a case in point. In the Lao PDR, a much higher percentage of ethnic minority children have never enrolled in, or attended school than children who have Lao as their first language.

Across the board, HIV/AIDS is undermining the ability of education systems to provide basic services to young people. As Stephen Lewis, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, put it after a visit to the continent: 'My own sense is that education [there] is on the brink. (...) It felt in every instance, as though the education sector was under siege.' In South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province alone, 70,000 new teachers will be needed by 2010.

## An era of commitments and targets

There is no shortage of formal international commitments to EFA, yet translating these into learning opportunities remains a tall order in most countries. Nevertheless, commitments represent a well-defined platform for action and accountability, and a tool for injecting both urgency and focus into policy.

**Table 5.1. Illustrating the scale of the challenge (2000)**

Country	Primary-school-age children out of school (thousands)	Adult illiterates (15+) (thousands)	Out of school and illiterate % of total population
China	8 054	141 903	11.8
Pakistan	7 785	46 702	38.6
Ethiopia	5 499	21 005	42.1
United Rep. of Tanzania	3 618	4 827	24.0
Islamic Rep. of Iran	2 436	10 552	18.5
Sudan	2 405	7 881	33.0
Indonesia	2 046	19 377	10.1
Bangladesh	1 957	50 558	38.2
Kenya	1 909	3 049	16.2
Saudi Arabia	1 438	2 760	20.6
Ghana	1 290	3 239	23.5
Niger	1 287	4 564	54.0
Mozambique	1 153	5 741	37.7
Yemen	1 098	4 914	32.8
Angola	1 010	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Statistical annex, Tables 2 and 5 in the full EFA Report.

As indicated in Chapter 1, international commitments are of two types: treaty obligations and political commitments. Treaty obligations require that states observe and report their results. And, while the reporting record of countries varies, by far the majority of the world's states have given full or partial guarantees of the right to education, which represent legal obligations.

Governments also agree to international frameworks for action, of which the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the Dakar Framework for Action are clear cases in point. These commitments are not binding but they are influential and are increasingly subject to both international and national monitoring processes. A good number of states enshrine the right to education in their constitutions: 83 out of 131 countries based on one survey, excluding OECD countries. Of course, it is the extent to which these rights and obligations translate into enforceable legislation and well-conceived policies, plans and programmes that matters.

Guided in part by these international commitments, many governments are increasingly setting specific national education goals within their plans, including gender-related targets. Countries are not only setting UPE targets in terms of net and gross enrolment, but also establishing measures of participation, survival, graduation and completion. Literacy and early childhood goals feature as part of education plans in a number of countries. Brazil has stated that illiteracy will be eradicated by 2010, Pakistan intends to halve its illiteracy rate by 2015 and reach 50% participation rates in ECCE by 2015, while Egypt aims to reduce illiteracy to less than 15% and to make pre-school provision free and part of compulsory basic education.

## Industrialized countries: cohesion and competitiveness

In the industrialized world, setting performance-related targets is common practice. The challenge is to offer education of good quality to all, for life in knowledge-based economies. The United States government plan, *No Child Left Behind*, requires that low achievement, especially among low-income, minority and disabled children, should be eliminated by 2014 when every child must be proficient in reading/language, mathematics and science. Participants at the Lisbon Summit of the European Union in March 2000 agreed to make continuous efforts to turn Europe into the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. A benchmarking process is being developed that challenges member states towards higher performance levels in education and training.

## Leadership

In both developing and advanced economies, a strong legislative base, leadership at the highest level to secure adequate resources, sound management, and education grounded in professional competence and sound pedagogies, are prerequisites for improving education. The *EFA Report 2003/4* points to several vastly different countries – Algeria, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chile, China, Ecuador, Kiribati and Mauritania – in which education reform is clearly part of wider reforms to promote democratization, poverty reduction and, indirectly, economic well-being. Chile targets support for schools in low-income and rural areas and has shown specific sensitivity to pedagogical issues related to gender. In the Pacific nation of Kiribati, strong political leadership led to having a junior secondary school on each of the country's twenty inhabited islands. China is paying increasing attention to the education of ethnic minorities, rural-urban migrants and the disabled as part of its strategy to provide nine years of universal compulsory education.

## Civil society: spaces for dialogue

Within these broad reforms, the engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) deserves attention. The importance of engaging CSOs in educational development has been underscored many times since the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien (Thailand). The strategy is echoed by many international statements on governance 'with' as opposed to 'of' the people. Civil society is extremely heterogeneous, making it particularly

challenging to translate a broad variety of individual interests into a collective policy position. Most education NGOs are active as service providers, without the resources to participate in time-consuming policy-related dialogue. Even where there is a clear wish and capacity to be engaged in policy, partnerships are not possible unless governments provide the space and opportunity for dialogue to take place.

National EFA Forums were conceived in the aftermath of Dakar as vehicles for dialogue and coordination and planning, but it is difficult to gauge their activity. The Collective Consultation of NGOs (CCNGO) Forum in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 2003 concluded that they were not well established, while a survey in a sample of Asian and Pacific countries suggests that these forums serve primarily as a means of sharing information. Lack of technical and political knowledge is also a barrier to effective engagement. In eleven African countries, UNESCO has initiated a programme to reinforce civil society contributions to education through enhancing the professional skills of NGO/CSOs.

Creating opportunity for dialogue with governments often happens in the context of political change. In Guatemala, for example, the signing of a peace treaty in 1995 was followed by a consultative process to define reform and involve civil society in policy making. Indigenous people and other groups were involved in a joint committee on education reform that led to proposals enshrined in the country's National Education Reform. In Viet Nam, the National Education for All Action Plan 2003–2015 was developed through a broad consultation in the country's sixty-one provinces. In India, the government's newly-published National Action Plan for Education sets out an approach involving NGOs, social activists, university teachers, teacher union representatives, local government representatives and women's groups at state level. A more established engagement is found in Brazil. Set up in the 1990s, Management Councils operate from local to federal level on a principle of parity between representatives of civil society, service providers and government. Primarily active in health and education fields, these councils oversee public resources and the infrastructure of schools, communities and health centres.

While CSOs appear to have learned some lessons on engaging internationally and nationally and promoting a strong advocacy strategy, it remains uncertain whether the decade will be characterized by a more participatory approach than the 1990s.

**Partnerships are not possible unless governments provide the space and the opportunity for dialogue.**

## Decentralization for better learning?

Government reforms in support of decentralization are often held up as one path towards responding more effectively to local needs. One recent survey suggests that 80% of developing countries are experimenting with some form of decentralization. The motives for devolving authority to state and local levels are varied: some are fuelled by aid agencies as a means of promoting local democracy. In other cases, specific political pressures are cited: in recent years, devolution of authority in Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Russian Federation and the Sudan has come about to prevent secession. Efficiency motives – lessening the financial burden on central government – are also invoked.

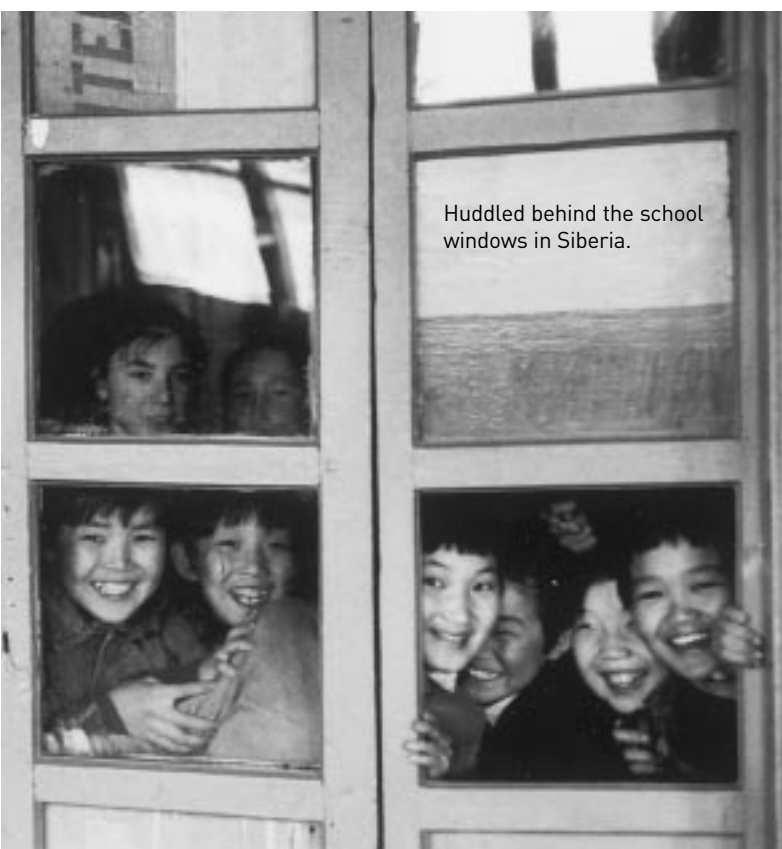
Although the relationship between decentralization and better education is difficult to assess, a few case studies are enlightening. Since 1992, Indian decentralization has picked up steam following changes in the Constitution which makes it incumbent on individual states to set up representative rural (*panchayats*) and urban bodies. In some states, village authorities take on responsibility for school maintenance inspection, free textbook and uniform distribution, and scholarship management for Scheduled Castes and Tribal children. One positive benefit has been the greater willingness of parents to send girls to school. But some studies show that vested interests remain strong and village authorities often lack expertise to carry out their tasks. In South Africa, mandatory school

governing bodies are designated to assist school managers and teachers, encourage parents to support their children's education and mobilize additional resources. In Brazil, where one of the most decentralized fiscal systems of all developing countries prevails, global revenue for education is allocated between states and municipalities to ensure that there is a minimum level of investment for each student. Funds are set aside for states that cannot meet this commitment.

The record to date indicates that decentralization is primarily about shifting the locus of management responsibility. There is less evidence that it touches on the definition and monitoring of actual teaching and learning activities. There is also scant evidence of the impact of decentralization on learning outcomes. As this process gains pace in many countries, particular attention must be paid to the risk of increasing disparities in educational opportunities.

## Making primary education affordable

It is very expensive to be poor: study after study shows that poverty is a major barrier to schooling. A recent six-country study<sup>7</sup> reconfirms that lack of money is the primary constraint for leaving school. The study also shows that even the poorest households make judgements about the quality and relevance of schooling, and that girls are likely to suffer most when decisions are made about which children to send to school. In this context, what happens when governments introduce free primary education? A study of five sub-Saharan African countries<sup>8</sup> where free primary education was announced over the past nine years is instructive. Most recently in Kenya in 2002, it was a major campaign pledge by the future president. In Nairobi (Kenya), early in 2003 many schools very rapidly experienced a doubling or more of numbers. What 'free' means varies across countries: in the United Republic of Tanzania, the cost of uniforms and books remains a curb on regular attendance. All five governments increased the share of the national budget to education however, in response to the vastly greater numbers of students, spending per student typically fell substantially. Sustaining educational quality in these circumstances will be difficult and will remain heavily dependent on external funding. Recent studies suggest significant levels of drop-out in Uganda, for example, and a severe lack of qualified teachers in Malawi. Projections



Huddled behind the school windows in Siberia.

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7. Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Zambia – study by S. Boyle et al., *Reaching the Poor. The 'Costs' of Sending Children to School. A Six Country Comparative Study*, London, UK Department for International Development, 2002.

8. Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia.



for four of the five countries show that a more than doubling of educational aid, in real terms, will be needed in order to sustain their move towards UPE over the years to 2015. These policies are being implemented against the backdrop of HIV/AIDS and its impact on the teaching force.

## Tackling EFA in industrialized and transition countries

While this report gives priority to those countries where the task of achieving EFA is greatest, industrialized and transition countries<sup>9</sup> face the challenge of interpreting the Dakar agenda in their respective contexts. A century after the introduction of compulsory education, industrialized countries have not yet achieved high quality education for all: it is estimated that roughly 10%–20% of the population's learning needs are not adequately met. The situation in some transition countries is not significantly better than that in some developing regions. The experience of these countries suggests that even the universal provision of primary education is a fragile achievement, vulnerable to socio-economic crisis.

Very few industrialized countries set their own education policies in terms of Education for All and only a small minority has produced an EFA plan. Norway's plan identifies international development work as the most important focus of EFA. Many European countries recognize a growing international dimension to education policy and reform, notably through indicators to compare educational performance and identify good practice. Free education and language of instruction for minority children are also prominent issues. Reaching youth who do not complete secondary education is high on the agenda, encouraging innovative policies. Sweden, the United Kingdom and other countries are experimenting with Individual Learning Accounts to ensure the right to learn regardless of age, time, place and provider.

In analysing their own national circumstances through EFA plans, the Nordic countries emphasize problems associated with the mentally or physically disabled, minority groups and people with reduced literacy levels. Plans also draw attention to gender inequalities. The Norwegian document states that the country has 'one of the most gender segregated workplaces in the whole of the OECD'. One of the EU targets for 2015 is to raise the number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology, mainly by making these studies more attractive to young women.

Countries moving from planned to market economies in Europe and Asia are fighting to reverse declining enrolment trends. In the Republic of Moldova, where primary GER fell from 93.1 to 83.8 between 1990 and 2000, the number of out-of-school children has risen sharply, with poor families unable to afford school expenses. In the Russian Federation, the modernization of the education system is driven in part by a long-term vision of a post-industrial information society that will allow the country to compete in a globalized economy. The government's plan draws particular attention to risks confronting young people, the reform of higher education, student support schemes and more flexible vocational education opportunities.

**Countries moving from planned to market economies in Europe and Asia are fighting to reverse declining enrolment.**

## Reform for better education is a global agenda

Education for all is a global agenda. In developing countries, the overriding challenge is to achieve universal access to education within a relatively short timeframe. This pressure to quickly complete this large-scale 'roll-out' makes it difficult to do justice to the diversity of learning needs with which industrialized countries are still struggling. The quality of education, with a focus on groups at risk of exclusion, is on the policy agenda of industrialized, transition and developing countries. As countries grapple with extending educational rights to all their citizens, there is a clear case for mutual learning between different regions of the world. ■

9. The term 'transition country' applies to countries moving from planned to market economies.

## Chapter 6

# Meeting our international commitments

- > The global aid picture
- > The Fast-Track Initiative
- > Decades and flagships
- > Coordinating EFA

©VU/Daniel Sauveur



Returning refugees, Sierra Leone, 2002.

©Magnum Photos/John Vink



Class in a bombed building in Angola, 1997.

**T**rends in aid flows to education and international initiatives provide two lenses through which to capture how global commitment to achieve the EFA goals has advanced over the past year. These, along with the mandate to strengthen international coordination, are analysed in this chapter.

## Total aid inches up

Aid flows to developing countries fell during the 1990s, although there has been an upward trend since 1997. Total aid flows rose 5.7% in real terms from 2000 to 2001, to reach US\$52.4 billion. This figure, however, stands well below the 1990 figure of US\$60.6 billion. Bilateral agencies accounted for 69% of total aid in 2001, with the increase since 2000 solely explained by a rise in multilateral aid, notably from the World Bank and the European Community. Sub-Saharan Africa received almost one-quarter of Official Development Assistance (ODA) disbursements, followed by one-sixth to East Asia and the Pacific and one-tenth to South and West Asia. There was some decline over the two biennia (1998–99 and 2000–01) in aid to East Asia and the Pacific and small increases in that for sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.

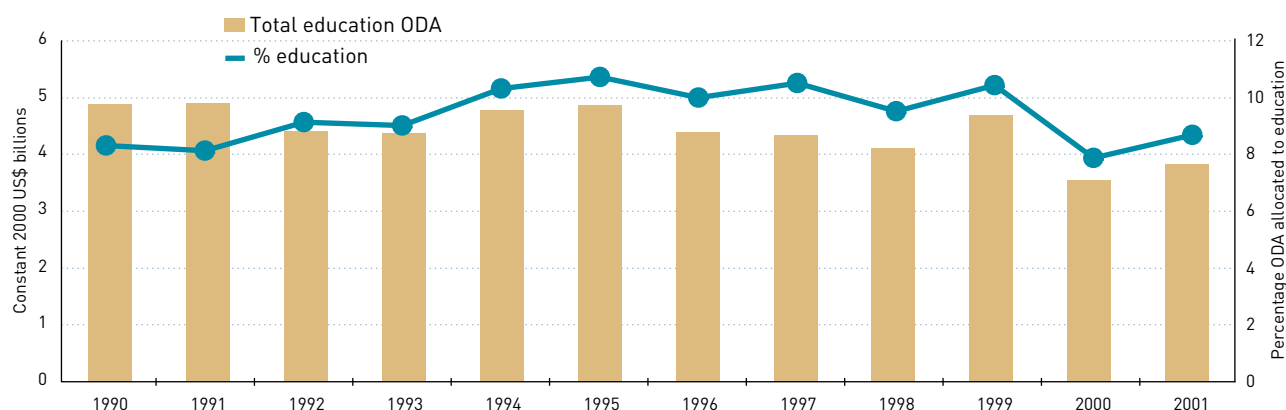
## Bilateral aid to education declines . . .

As with total ODA, bilateral aid flows to education declined in the 1990s – from almost US\$5 billion at the beginning of the decade to slightly less than US\$4 billion in 2001. Although there was some improvement in 2001 over the previous year, taking the two years together, bilateral aid to education fell by 16%, and from 10% to 8% of total aid commitments between 1998–99 and 2000–01 (Figure 6.1).

Six countries accounted for more than three-quarters of the bilateral aid commitments to education in 2000–01 – France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States – although the first three were among the countries who reduced these over the two biennia.



Figure 6.1. Bilateral aid to education (1990–2001)



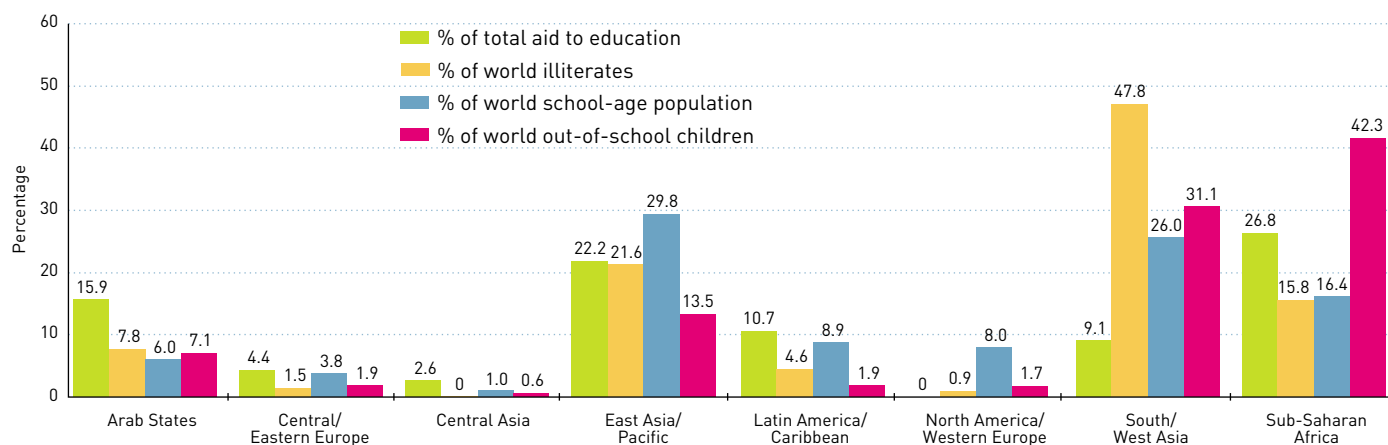
Source: DAC on-line database, (OECD-DAC, 2003a, Table 5).

### ... while basic education's share rises

In contrast, aid to basic education increased by more than 60%, from US\$486 million to US\$800 million between 1998–99 and 2000–01. Support for basic education from all OECD-DAC countries increased from 13% to 24% of bilateral education aid during this same period. One group of countries has a strongly positive record of increased aid to education (and to basic education within the total) – Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Luxembourg, Portugal and the United States. In some countries (France and Japan), education aid as a whole fell, while aid to basic education increased. In others, the latter fell (Austria, Germany, Switzerland and three of the Scandinavian countries). However, in order to get a complete picture of aid to education, direct support for government budgets and for education under other sectoral programmes must be taken into account.

In recent policy statements, the bilateral agencies have indicated strong support for education, stressing its role in reducing poverty, with several drawing specific attention to improving opportunities for girls and women. These indications have been accompanied by some new funding commitments. At the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada (2002), Japan and Canada announced additional funding for basic education. At the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, in the same year, France indicated an increase of its ODA to reach 0.7% of its GNP over ten years. The United States announced a 50% increase in core assistance to developing countries over the next three years, resulting in a US\$5 billion annual increase over current levels by 2006. The new fund would be placed in a Millennium Challenge Account, available on a competitive basis to countries that have demonstrated commitment to sound development policies. In addition, US support for basic education is

Figure 6.2. Regional distribution of bilateral aid to education, average (2000–01), adult illiterates, school-age population and out-of-school children (2000), percentage.



Note: Total education aid does not add up to 100% because of the 'unspecified' allocation.

Source: Compiled from CRS on-line database, (OECD-DAC, 2003a) and Statistical annex, Tables 2 and 5 in the full EFA Report.

expected to increase by about 50% during 2001–03. The Netherlands recently announced its intention to allocate €2.5 billion (US\$2.9 billion) over five years for basic education.

## Aid attracted by better-performing systems

Sub-Saharan Africa receives approximately 27% of bilateral aid to education, followed by East Asia and the Pacific (22%), and the Arab States (16%) (Figure 6.2). Other regions such as South and West Asia (one-third of the world's out-of-school children) face similar difficulties but receive far less education aid (10%). More aid than this was received by Latin America and the Caribbean. Analysis of country data shows that aid is attracted by better-performing education systems. For example, an analysis of seventy-seven countries shows that the amount of bilateral aid per out-of-school child increases significantly with the level of net enrolment. Similarly, for 120 countries having these data, a positive relationship is apparent between literacy rates and aid per illiterate adult.

## Multilateral aid

Aid from the World Bank International Development Association (IDA) has declined since the mid-1990s. Education has also fallen as a proportion of total lending in recent years, and the IDA element now constitutes only half of its mid-1990s level. High priority is given to sub-Saharan Africa and to South Asia. Support to basic education from other multilateral agencies (excluding the World Bank and the EC) fell over 1998–99 and 2000–01, because of declines in support from the regional development banks.

In short, both bilateral and multilateral aid to education decreased between 1998–99 and 2000–01, although there was a positive development for basic education. Bilateral aid flows dominate the picture. Current levels of support for basic education, however, of around US\$1.5 billion per year remain small compared with the estimated additional aid of US\$5.6 billion per year needed to reach UPE, as detailed in the *EFA Report 2002*.

## Attention to gender

To what extent are the gender goals reflected in aid commitments? Gender equality clearly has an increasingly prominent place in the policies of a good number of

funding agencies, as the Partnership on Sustainable Strategies for Girls' Education suggests.<sup>10</sup> Many bilateral agencies have issued policy statements citing gender equality as a major objective. Yet the extent to which gender is really being addressed in education sector projects and programmes is unclear. A study of four Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) found that 'attention to gender was shockingly limited'<sup>11</sup>. There is a weak analysis on what inhibits girls' full participation in schooling. This weakness resurfaces in national Millennium Development Goal Reports. A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) review of thirteen country reports showed that not all provided sex-disaggregated data while three made no mention of gender issues in education.

## International initiatives

Global commitments are spurring global initiatives, funds and broader international developments on financing for development and the harmonization of aid procedures. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is a case in point.

The Fast-Track Initiative (FTI), designed primarily by the World Bank, was launched in April 2002 as a 'process that would provide quick and incremental, technical and financial support to countries that have policies but are not on track to attain Universal Primary Completion by 2015'. The FTI has raised high expectations that significant new funding would be mobilized for achieving this goal, but has yet to receive substantial and specific international support for its activities. Countries with a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and an agreed 'credible' education sector plan are eligible to develop proposals to join the FTI. Plans are evaluated using criteria from the Indicative Framework, developed by the World Bank (Box 6.1) and derived from the Bank's analysis of a group of developing countries that have either attained UPE or made considerable progress towards this goal.

Of the eighteen countries that initially applied to participate in the Initiative, seven were endorsed for funding in November 2002 (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Mauritania, Nicaragua and the Niger). Three more proposals were endorsed in March 2003 (the Gambia, Mozambique and Yemen). The remaining eight countries are working on PRSPs and sector plans (Albania, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zambia).

10. A partnership of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank.

11. A. Whitehead, *Failing Women, Sustaining Poverty: Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*, London, UK Gender and Development Network, 2003.

### Box 6.1. The FTI benchmarks

- Public revenues: 14%–18% of GDP
- Education expenditures: 20% of revenues
- Primary education expenditures: 50% of total education expenditures
- Pupil/teacher ratio: 40:1
- Non-salary costs: 33% of recurrent expenditure
- Teacher salaries: 3.5 times per capita GDP
- Repetition of 10%

Since the first tranche of invited countries has a relatively small proportion of the world's out-of-school children, special attention is also being paid to five high-population countries (Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Nigeria and Pakistan). These countries have been selected for the so-called Analytical Fast Track, which aims to provide technical support to enable them to qualify for the mainstream Initiative. There is some evidence to suggest that there may have been insufficient discussion with the governments in question and within the agencies between their headquarters and field offices. Special efforts are also being considered for countries with poor short-term prospects for FTI eligibility but great need for support. The overall aim is to ensure that all low-income countries form part of the Initiative within the next two to three years.

What is the experience to date of the seven endorsed countries? Some of the adjustments to the benchmark criteria have major policy implications. In some cases, projections are made on the basis of annual economic growth rates or on the assumption that governments will be able to push through lower salaries for new teachers. The extent to which FTI proposals reflect country ownership are also questioned, because of strong involvement of external partners in the development of the sector plans which underpin FTI proposals.

The Initiative is at a critical juncture. By August 2003, the estimated financing gap for the seven countries for 2003–05 remained at about US\$118 million. This gap may seem small in the context of new ODA commitments but large compared with the US\$207 million of commitments secured by the Initiative thus far. At the same, a number of bilateral agencies have

reservations about the FTI becoming a major channel for aid to education. These issues need to be resolved. The FTI can still become a real and practical response to the Dakar commitment. In its absence, its critics need to demonstrate how aid for education can be mobilized for countries that have the poorest education indicators, the least resources and the weakest capacity in a well co-ordinated way.

## Projects, decades and campaigns

A number of major international projects and activities are focusing upon strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. These include the Millennium Project, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General and the Administrator of UNDP; and the Global Governance Initiative, launched by the World Economic Forum. Both have specific task forces focusing on education.

The United Nations Literacy Decade 2003–2012 and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 are also of direct relevance to EFA. Such Decades have the potential to raise awareness and focus action on critical global issues, provided that there is strong coordination internationally and nationally to avoid parallel planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Over the past decade, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have played an increasingly important role in campaigning for education and making their voices heard within governments and international agencies. Since the World Education Forum in Dakar, INGOs such as the Global Campaign for Education have influenced the deliberations of the G8, the World Bank and the European Community's education and development policies.

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Chiapas, Mexico,  
after a day's work in the fields.

## Strengthening coordination

As part of its coordination role, UNESCO has established the EFA High-Level Group, which meets annually, and the Working Group on Education for All, which has met on four occasions since 2000. On current evidence, the High-Level Group, mandated 'to serve as a lever for political commitment and technical and financial resource mobilization', has had little if any visible international impact.

The EFA Working Group has a broad mandate, including to provide technical guidance to the EFA movement and recommend priorities for collective action. This group has vacillated somewhat between a proactive task-force approach and a more general sharing of experience. There is clearly a price worth paying for evidence-based, international consultation, networking and dialogue. However, as presently constituted, it is difficult to see how either of these two mechanisms can deliver strongly on their respective mandates.

Several options might be considered. The High Level Group might comprise a smaller body of high-profile, ex officio members whose reputation would attract global attention to their findings. To ensure greater sustainability, they might be invited to serve for a minimum of three years. The output of the group would be formally presented to the United Nations Secretary-General and clear channels identified to highlight its findings to the World Bank, the G8 and major regional forums. The Working Group could become more of a technical committee charged with preparing High-Level Group meetings and monitoring progress and actions year on year.

UNESCO is under-resourced for the role that it has been asked to play. The existing EFA coordination capacity is not able to undertake much more than an administrative function. A larger and more technically diverse secretariat is needed, so as to enable a more professional dialogue to be maintained. The UNESCO Institutes might be more thoroughly engaged in this process. If EFA is to compete successfully with other major development issues for the attention of world leaders, a strong, well-coordinated, well-publicized 'platform' for its messages is an essential prerequisite.

## Better data, better monitoring

Accurate and timely data are critical if education policy is to be evidence-based and the monitoring of progress meaningful. Many countries, however, are constrained in their ability to promote well-informed planning and programming. While there is a regular and justifiable call

to strengthen the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the scale and complexity of the issue of improving the quality of data requires well-coordinated international partnerships, notably to avoid data duplication and to reflect national needs.

## Flagships: agencies working together

The World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) emphasized the benefits of international and regional agencies working together on major cross-cutting themes that have a strong bearing on the achievement of EFA. 'Flagship' inter-agency programmes were put forward by UNESCO as one way of consolidating international cooperation and raising the status and profile of activities that might be less influential as individual programmes. Nine such flagships are now in place, in the fields of school health, HIV/AIDS, early childhood care and education, literacy, girls' education, disabilities, education for rural people, education in situations of emergency and crisis, and teachers and the quality of education. Some flagship programmes are formal initiatives with time-bound objectives, others emphasize activities that offer direct technical support to countries, while others stress advocacy, research and information exchange.

It remains too early to judge whether the flagships will add significant value to achieving the EFA goals, although the idea gives a sense of collective endeavour and offers a framework with the potential to tap linkages, for example in the relationship between girls' education and HIV/AIDS. There are basic conditions for moving forward: each flagship requires both strong leadership from its respective lead agency or coordinating group and a sufficient resource base to ensure well-coordinated activity across partner agencies. Ultimately, it is the extent to which the programmes contribute to achieving significant outcomes at country level that matters.

**If EFA is to compete successfully with other major development issues for the attention of world leaders, a strong, well-coordinated, well-publicized 'platform' for its messages is essential.**

There has been some discussion of UNESCO playing a central coordination role across the flagship programmes. For the present, UNESCO is the lead agency in two flagships and shares the lead in five others. This provides the opportunity to play a co-ordination role across most of the flagships. ■

# Gendered strategies for EFA

**T**he removal of gender gaps in education should have first priority in all programmes of school expansion and quality improvement. This is needed in order to deliver on human rights undertakings and on the political commitments made by leaders of most governments. However, it is also strongly in the interests of all states and peoples: investing in the education of girls and women translates into reductions in poverty, improved farm output and livelihoods, better health and nutrition, reduced fertility and improved prospects for future generations. This is particularly so where gender disparities in education are significant. It should then, represent a first call on public resources for education.

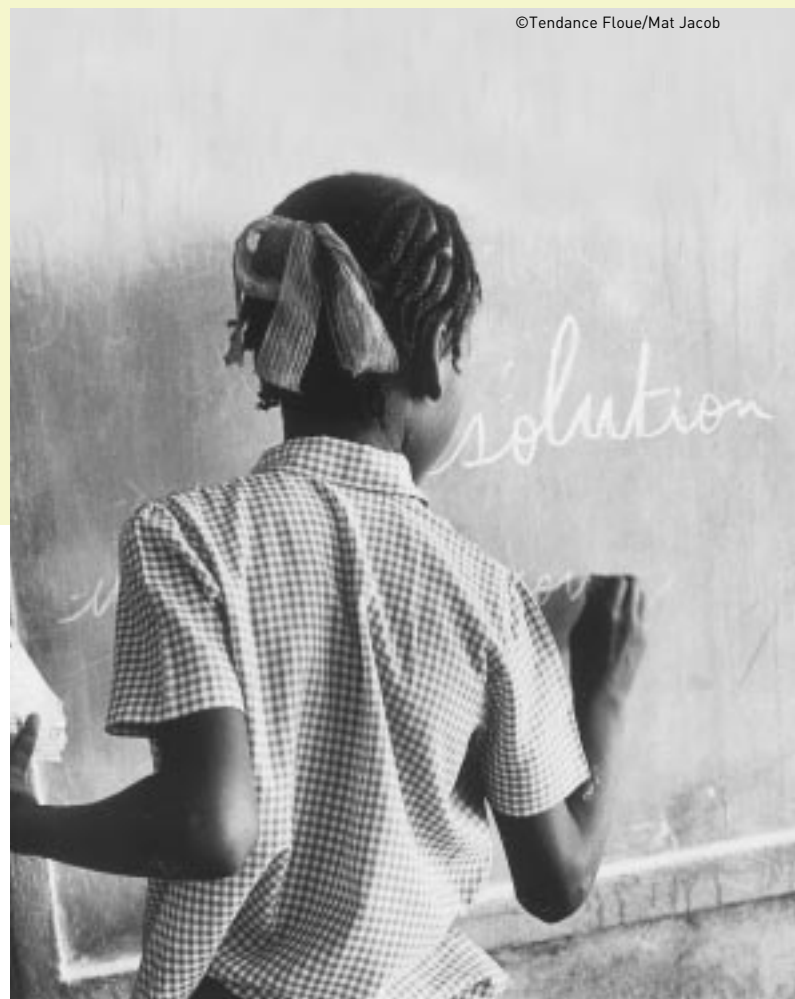
This report has shown that many states are far from achieving gender parity at primary and secondary levels, and that the target for 2005 is likely to be missed by more than 70 of them. The goal of achieving full gender equality in education is distant for most countries. Nevertheless, the report has indicated that there are policies and strategies available to change these circumstances.

Evidence for the value of a wide range of interventions has been reviewed, the most important of which are briefly summarised below.

**Fees are still charged in twenty-six of the thirty-five countries that are unlikely to reach the gender parity goal for primary schooling in 2005.**

The State has a fundamental role to play. First, it needs to create an **enabling environment** for promoting gender equality in education through legislative and policy reform. Legal measures should ensure that women enjoy non-discrimination and protect their fundamental freedoms. Establishing property rights and reforming family law can be a highly controversial agenda but one that provides a decisive counterweight to entrenched social norms that also affect whether or not children go to school. In most countries, a strong general policy on gender equality is required so that both women's and men's interests are explicitly considered in the design of all legislation, policies and programmes.

NGOs can be major contributors to education in developing countries. They have often had a longer engagement with service provision than the state, and



The right answer.  
Sainte Alphonse school in Cité Soleil, Haiti.

they are generally committed to ensuring that education reaches the poorest and most disadvantaged groups. Their energies and innovations need to be encouraged in ways which do not compromise the central obligations of governments as educational providers.

Second, **strategies of redistribution** in education, towards girls and women, are required. Where school fees exist at primary level, they must be removed. Fees are still charged in twenty-six of the thirty-five countries that are unlikely to reach the gender parity goal for primary schooling in 2005. To offset the consequences of higher enrolments, new classrooms have to be built and teachers trained, bolstered by international assistance that focuses on countries most in need to bridge the resource gap.



Measures to reduce or remove the need for child labour represent a decisive means of increasing school enrolments among girls and boys. Legislation and trade sanctions are required, but so are financial incentives to secure higher school attendance, particularly of girls. Increasing data and knowledge about domestic child labourers – the vast majority of whom are girls – also demands urgent attention.

A further element in this strategy is that schools must be places where stereotypes are undermined, not reinforced, through gender-aware curricula and professional teacher training. Gender training for teachers should be a pre-requisite for qualification. Locating schools closer to homes, providing sanitary facilities, furniture, together with acceptable class sizes, are all investments that encourage parents to send their daughters to school.

Third, the effects of crises which affect women and girls require specific policy attention. This includes the impact of armed conflict which has affected many of the poorest countries during the past decade. Refugee education and

post-conflict rehabilitation require special measures for girls and women who comprise the majority of the most-affected groups. HIV/AIDS prevention and sexual and reproductive health education should be a subject area in its own right, with adequate support given to teachers. Finally, sexual harassment and violence within schools needs to be confronted vigorously.

The international community must support these processes. The Fast Track Initiative is at a crucial stage – requiring a significant commitment of resources if it is not to fail. Total aid to basic education is as yet far short of what is required. Aid to basic education needs at least to quadruple on an annual basis from recent levels if it is to measure up to the task. Thus, a major effort in international cooperation is needed to support the poorest group of countries furthest from EFA. Using gender as a leading edge for this support, in countries currently with low NERs and major gender disparities in school enrolments and literacy, would represent a substantial step – if not a leap – towards gender equality and Education for All being achieved. ■

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# Summary Report

## Gender and Education for All THE LEAP TO EQUALITY

All countries have pledged to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. This was agreed at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, a year when a significant majority of the 104 million children not in primary school were girls and almost two-thirds of the 860 million non-literate people were women.

But ensuring the right to learn is not just a question of numbers. It is part of a much broader agenda to achieve gender equality so that girls and boys, women and men, enjoy the same learning opportunities and outcomes, personally, professionally and politically. This intention is enshrined in the 2015 goal to achieve gender equality which covers rights to, within and through education.

This new edition of the EFA Global Monitoring Report paints a picture of where countries stand in their efforts to achieve these goals, highlights innovative and best practice, suggests priorities for national strategies and looks at how the international community is meeting its commitments towards EFA.

*Cover photo*

Pumla studying in front of her home,  
Khayelitsha, South Africa, 2003.

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