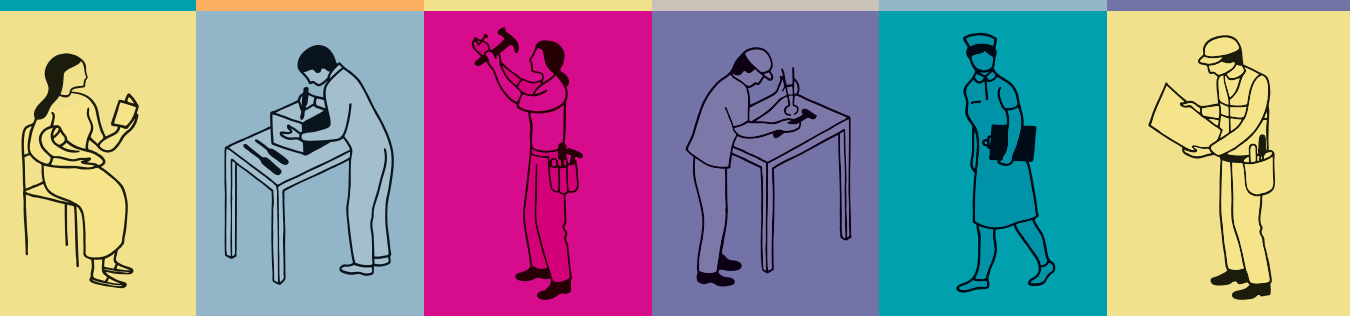
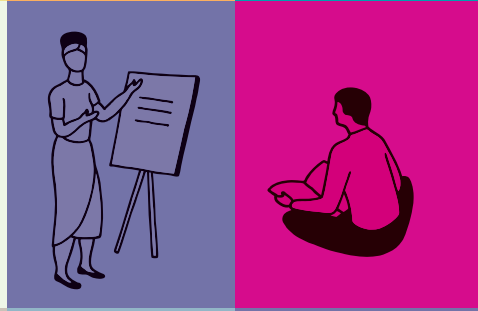




Education for All

## YOUTH AND SKILLS

Putting education to work



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



**EFA GMR** EDUCATION FOR ALL  
GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT

# Gender Overview

# Youth and Skills : Putting Education to Work

## **Gender Overview**

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First edition  
Published in 2013 by the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France  
Graphic design by FHI 360  
Layout by UNESCO  
Printed by UNESCO

*Cover illustration*  
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**Despite advances towards gender parity in primary schools in many countries, significant gender gaps remain. Progress towards gender equality continues to be held back by discrimination in education and the workplace.**

## Education for All goals

- The number of girls out of primary school halved between 1999 and 2010, while the number of teenage girls out of school fell by over a third.
- The number of countries with severe gender disparities halved between 1999 and 2010, from 33 countries to 17.
- Despite progress towards gender parity, much remains to be done. Sixty-eight countries have still not achieved gender parity in primary education; girls are disadvantaged in sixty of them.
- Some countries' school records show huge gender gaps. Pakistan still has over three million primary school-aged girls out of school. In Afghanistan, despite huge progress, latest data show there are only seven girls to every ten boys in school.
- At the secondary level, ninety-seven countries have not reached gender parity; in forty-three of them, girls are disadvantaged. In many middle- and high-income countries, boys are more likely to be out of secondary school than girls.
- Girls perform better than boys in reading at both primary and secondary school level, and the gap is widening. Boys have an advantage in mathematics in most countries, although there is some evidence that the gap may be narrowing.
- There are long term effects of denying girls and young women access to education. Of the 775 million adults who cannot read or write, two-thirds are women.
- Gender disparities are further aggravated by wealth disparities. In most poor countries, girls are less likely than boys to have ever been to school.

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## Youth and Skills: Putting education to work

- A history of neglecting education has left a skills deficit among young people now facing the world of work, with young women the worst affected of all: 116 million young women aged 15-24 in developing countries have never completed primary school and lack skills for work.
- Discrimination faced by girls and young women at school is reinforced in the workplace. Young women are far more likely to be invisible in the labour market than men, often working long hours in household and informal labour that is less visible to policy-makers.
- Even for those who are in work, young women with equal or higher levels of education than young men are more likely to be paid lower wages, and so earn wages below the poverty line.





# Part one

## Monitoring progress towards the Education for All goals

**Table 1 : Key indicators for EFA goals**

**Progress towards gender parity by EFA goal**

Indicator		1999		2010		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Goal 1	Pre-primary gross enrolment ratio (%)	World LICs <sup>1</sup>	32 11	33 10	48 15	48 15
Goal 2	Primary net enrolment ratio (%)	World LICs	85 62	79 55	90 82	88 78
	Out of school children (million)	World LICs	45.5 18.3	62.1 20.9	28.6 10.3	32.1 11.9
Goal 3	Secondary gross enrolment ratio (%)	World LICs	62 32	56 26	71 45	69 39
	Out of school adolescents (million)	World LICs	46.5 10.2	54.6 11.6	36.4 8.5	34.2 9.1
Goal 4	Adult literacy rate (%) <sup>2</sup>	World LICs	82 60	69 42	89 70	80 56
	Youth literacy rate (%) <sup>2</sup>	World LICs	88 67	79 53	92 77	87 71
Goal 5	Primary gender parity index	World LICs	0.92 0.86		0.97 0.95	
	Secondary gender parity index	World LICs	0.91 0.83		0.97 0.87	
Goal 6	Share of female teaching staff, primary (%)	World LICs	58 38		62 43	
	Share of female teaching staff, secondary (%)	World LICs	52 30		52 30	

<sup>1</sup> LICs = Low income countries    <sup>2</sup> Progress is reported for the periods 1985/94 (left column) and 2005/10 (right column)

Number of countries with disparity in:			2010
Goal 1 <sup>1</sup>	Pre-primary education, at the expense of	Boys	40 out of 162
		Girls	28 out of 162
Goal 2	Primary education, at the expense of	Boys	8 out of 176
		Girls	60 out of 176
Goal 3	Secondary education, at the expense of	Boys	54 out of 157
		Girls	43 out of 157
Goal 4	Adult literacy rate, at the expense of	Men	2 out of 146
		Women	81 out of 146
	Youth literacy rate, at the expense of	Men	11 out of 146
		Women	37 out of 146
Goal 6 <sup>2</sup>	Reading (2009 PISA), at the expense of	Boys	74 out of 74
		Girls	0 out of 74
	Mathematics (2009 PISA), at the expense of	Boys	8 out of 74
		Girls	38 out of 74

<sup>1</sup> Disparity in goals 1-4 means that the gender parity index is below 0,97 or above 1,03

<sup>2</sup> Disparity in goal 6 means that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of boys and girls



Egypte©UNESCO/Chris Stowers/Panos

## Introduction

Gender parity and equality in education constitute a basic human right, as well as an important means of improving other social and economic outcomes. Narrowing the gender gap in primary enrolment is one of the biggest EFA successes since 2000. Even so, some countries are still in danger of not achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2015. The goal goes beyond numbers of boys and girls in school. More needs to be done to ensure that all girls and boys have equitable access to educational opportunities and achieve equal educational outcomes.

At pre-primary level, gender parity had already been achieved, on average, in 2000 and has been maintained since, although enrolment levels remain low for both boys and girls in many parts of the world. The Arab States is the only region still falling short, even though major progress has been achieved, with the gender parity index (GPI) rising from 0.77 in 1999 to 0.94 in 2010.

At primary level, the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa, each with a GPI of 0.93, have yet to achieve parity. These regions have, however, made significant progress since 1999, with the GPI increasing from 0.87 and 0.85, respectively. South and West Asia has

made huge progress since 1999, reaching gender parity in primary education by 2010.

A key reason for fewer girls being in school is that they are less likely to start school in the first place. Once in school, their chances of progressing through the system are similar to those of boys.

At secondary level, the picture varies by region. Of particular concern is sub-Saharan Africa, whose GPI of 0.82 has not changed since 1999. Girls also remain disadvantaged in the Arab States and in South and West Asia. Latin America and the Caribbean, by contrast, faces a 'reverse gender gap', with more girls enrolled than boys (goal 5 policy focus). Yet disadvantage in secondary school – in access as well as learning outcomes – is preventable.

Gender disparities in secondary education enrolment are also narrowing. Of the 137 countries with data in both years, in 1999 there were 28 with fewer than 90 girls enrolled for every 100 boys; 16 were in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2010, this had declined to 22 countries, of which 15 were in sub-Saharan Africa.

At tertiary level, regional disparities are even greater than at secondary level, with as few as six girls for every ten boys in sub-Saharan

Africa, while around eight boys for every ten girls are studying at this level in North America and Western Europe.

Reaching gender parity remains a challenge in many countries – but gender equality is about more than making sure equal numbers of boys and girls enter and progress through school. It is also about assuring their equal treatment within school – which means providing a safe, secure and supportive learning environment for all – and equal learning outcomes, which help build equitable access to social, economic and political life in adulthood.

Analysis of international and regional learning assessments shows that there are notable gender differences in learning outcomes by subject, which suggests that more needs to be done to prevent these gaps. Girls perform

better than boys in reading, and there is evidence that the gap is increasing. Boys retain an advantage in mathematics in most countries, although there is some evidence that the gap may be narrowing.

With the emergence of several new initiatives – including the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education and the High Level Panel on Girls' and Women's Education for Empowerment and Gender Equality, both launched by UNESCO in May 2011 – there are renewed opportunities to highlight and challenge barriers to gender parity and equality for girls. It will be important for these initiatives to tackle the root causes of gender disadvantage, ensuring that the high level initiatives translate into action leading to an equalizing of opportunities between girls and boys.

## Girls face obstacles entering school

Considerable progress has been made in reducing gender disparities in primary education over the past decade, but several countries still have a long way to go. They have not only missed the deadline that was set for 2005, but are in danger of missing an extended deadline of 2015.

The reasons for girls' disadvantage vary, but new analysis prepared for this Report indicates that the biggest obstacle for girls in the countries furthest from achieving gender parity is entering school in the first place. Once enrolled, their chance of progressing through the cycle is usually similar to that of boys.

The number of countries where girls face extreme disadvantage, or a gender parity index below 0.70, fell from sixteen to eleven from 1990 to 2000, and to just one in 2010 – Afghanistan. Despite its place at the bottom of the rankings, however, Afghanistan has overcome the biggest obstacles to girls' education any country has witnessed: from

an estimated female gross enrolment ratio of less than 4% in 1999, when the ruling Taliban had banned girls' education, to 79% in 2010, resulting in an increase in the GPI from 0.08 to 0.69. With a long way still to go, the government needs to continue to address constraints on girls' schooling. Community schools that reduce the distance from home have proved to be a successful approach to address the insecurity that continues in many parts of the country and affects girls' enrolment in particular (Burde and Linden, 2009).

Severe disadvantage – measured by a GPI below 0.90 – is also lower than ten years ago. Of the 167 countries with data in both 1999 and 2010, 33 had a GPI below 0.90 in 1999, including 21 in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2010, there were only 17 countries in this group, including 12 in sub-Saharan Africa.

Countries where severe gender disparities remain are more likely to have fewer children in school overall. This is the case in

Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Mali, the Niger, Papua New Guinea and Yemen, which all have gross enrolment ratios below 80% and GPIs below 0.90.

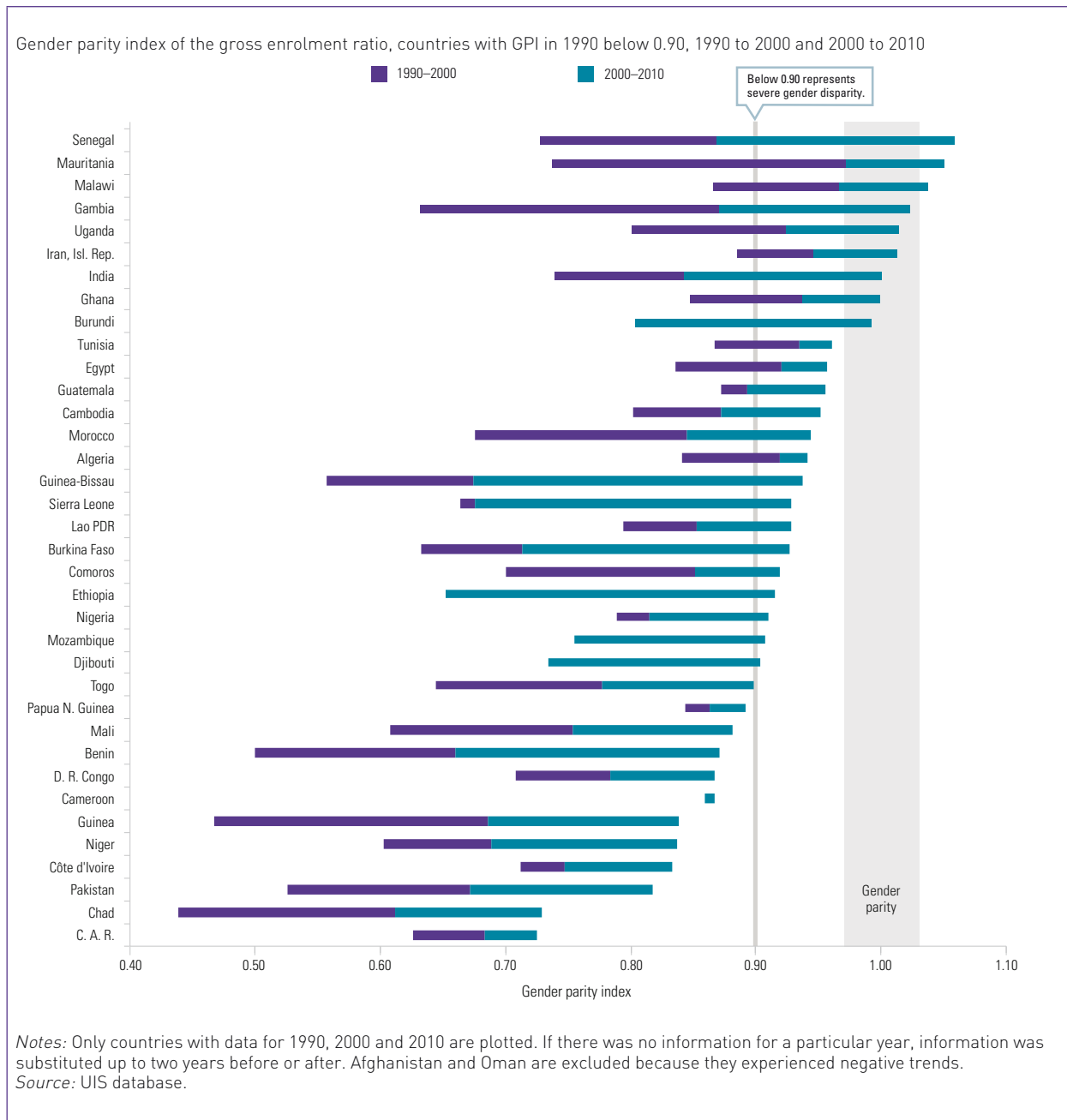
But countries with high enrolment can also experience a wide gender gap, partly because there are more over-age boys in school than girls. This is the case for Angola, Benin, Cameroon, the Dominican Republic and Togo. It cannot be taken for granted, therefore, that increasing enrolment will automatically lead to a narrowing of the gender gap.

In some countries that have not achieved gender parity, the GPI has nonetheless improved rapidly in the last ten years. In Ethiopia, for example, the index rose from 0.65 in 2000 to 0.91 in 2010. This reflects Ethiopia's commitment both to expanding access to primary schooling and to tackling gender disparities. Its speed of progress suggests there is hope of achieving gender parity by 2015, although this will require a concerted effort to address entrenched gender disadvantages in some parts of the country, particularly where early marriage remains pervasive.

By contrast, progress has been very slow in some countries. This includes some where enrolment levels were initially relatively high, such as Cameroon and Papua New Guinea, and some where they were relatively low, such as the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire. The speed at which progress has been made elsewhere indicates that these countries could reach gender parity if they showed the same kind of commitment to addressing girls' disadvantage in coming years.

Comparing countries with data for 1990, 2000 and 2010, out of thirty-eight countries where the gender parity index was below 0.90 in 1990, twenty-five had passed this threshold by 2010. But of these, only six had achieved gender parity: Burundi, the Gambia, Ghana, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Uganda – and Malawi, Mauritania and Senegal made such progress getting more girls into school that there is now a slight gender disparity at the expense of boys (Figure 1). These nine countries show what can be achieved when countries put in place strategies to overcome gender barriers at the same time as increasing primary enrolment overall.

**Figure 1: There has been progress in reducing gender disparity but girls still face major obstacles gaining access to school**



The move towards gender parity has slowed in some countries after good progress over the 1990s. Some are close to the goal, such as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia: such countries need to tackle the problems facing

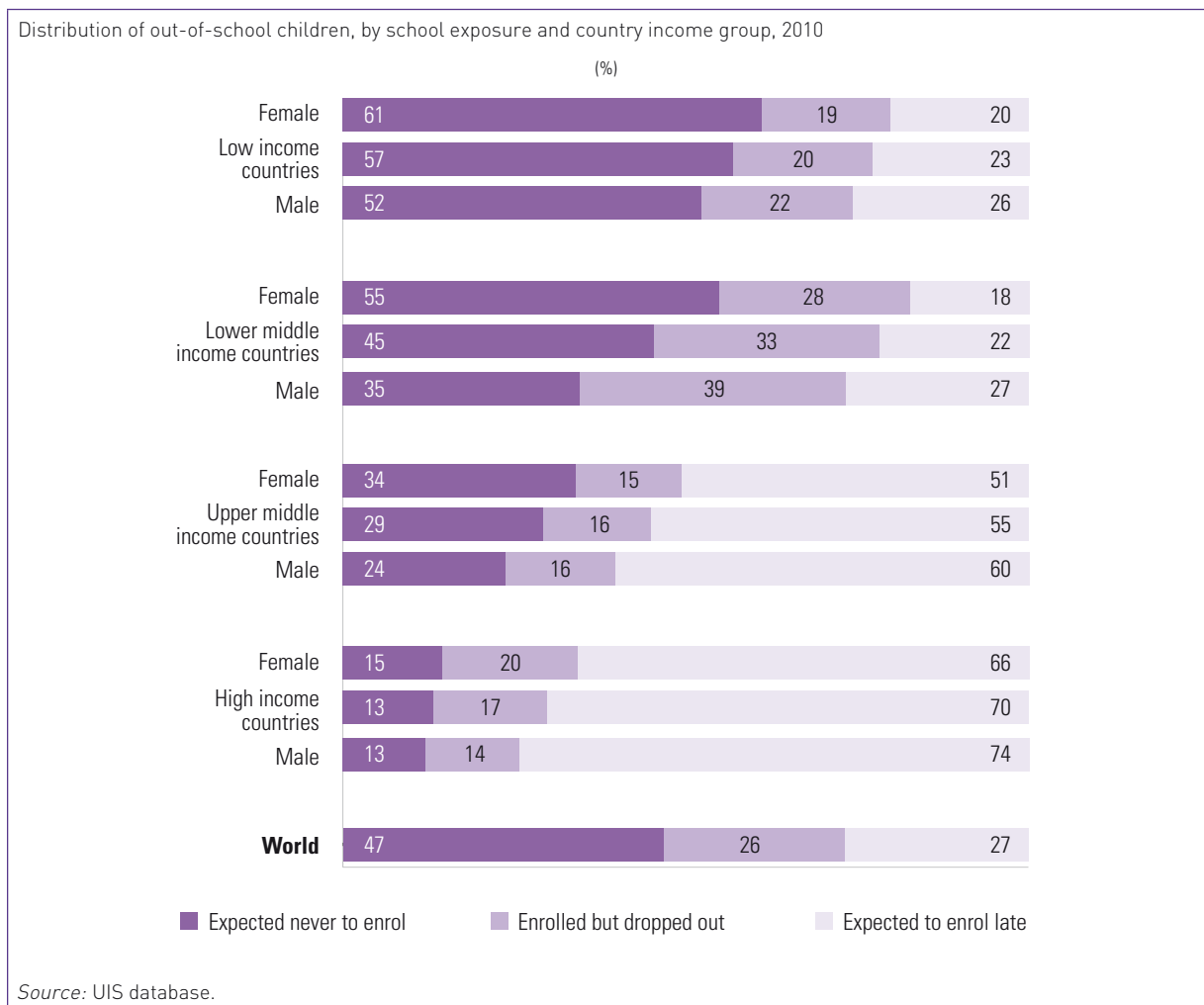
the most marginalized girls who still cannot attend school. Slower progress over the last decade in Chad and Guinea means they are still some distance from the goal.

Angola and Eritrea are of particular concern because they slipped backwards between 1990 and 2010. Each country recorded a GPI over 0.90 in 1990, but Angola now is at 0.81 and Eritrea at 0.84, and therefore both are unlikely to achieve gender parity in primary schooling by 2015. In Eritrea, not only has the gender gap widened, but the female primary gross enrolment ratio fell from 47% in 1999 to 41% in 2010.

Understanding the reasons for girls' lower enrolment is necessary to achieve gender parity. Is it because girls have less chance to enter school? Or is it, rather, that boys and girls have the same opportunity of entering school but girls are more likely to drop out?

Analysis conducted by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics infers the likelihood of children currently out of school entering education, based on past trends (UIS, 2008). Globally, 47% of children out of school in 2010 were likely never to enrol. The proportion is highest in low income countries, where 57% of children are expected never to enrol. A sizeable proportion are also expected never to enrol in lower middle income countries, where the majority of out-of-school children live, suggesting that income alone is insufficient to combat the problem. Within this group of hard-to-reach children, girls are more likely than boys never to enrol, with the difference particularly large in lower middle income countries (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Almost one in two out-of school children are expected never to enrol**



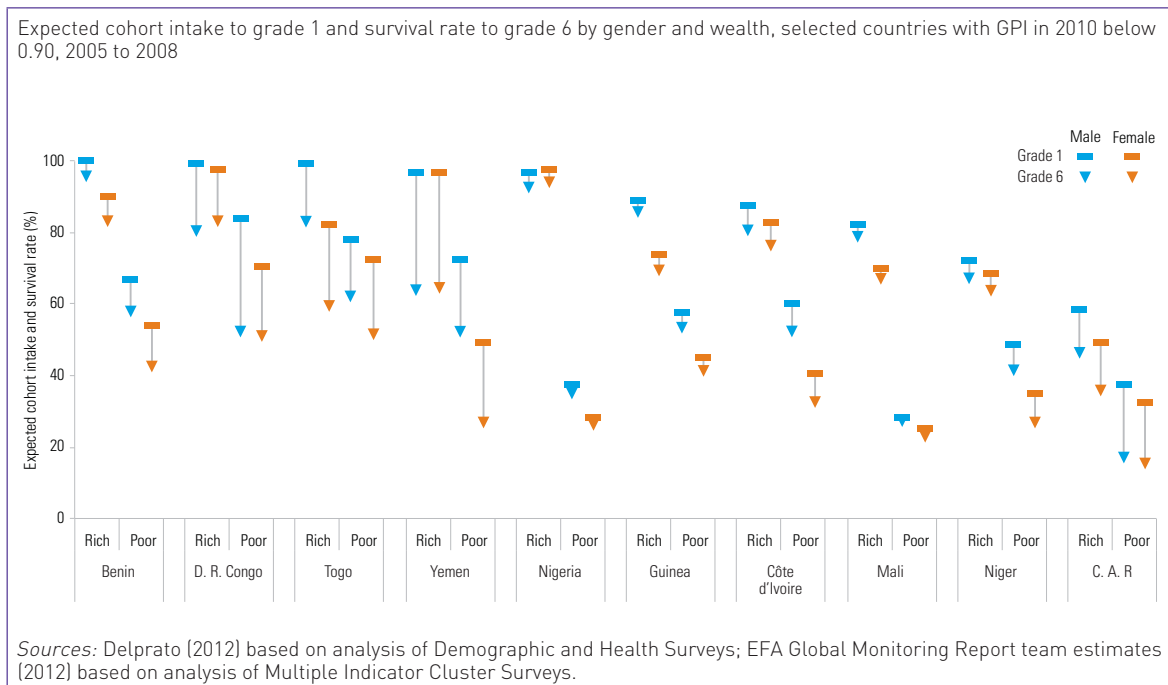
To better understand gender imbalances in entering school and dropping out, household survey data from nine of the sixteen countries with the highest gender disparity were analysed for this Report.

The message that emerges from this research is that girls face larger obstacles to entering primary school. In Guinea, for example, 44 out of 100 girls from the poorest households start school, compared with 57 boys. In most cases, once in school, girls and boys have an equal chance of progressing through the cycle. Therefore, the fact that only 40 out of 100 girls from poor households reach the end of primary school in Guinea, compared with 52 boys, is largely because fewer girls started in the first place (Figure 3).

While children from rich households have a better chance of starting school than those from poor households, more rich boys than rich girls enter school. In Mali, for example, 70 out of 100 girls from the richest households start school, compared with 81 boys.

Within this general pattern, there are exceptions. In Yemen, girls not only have less chance of entering school, but, once in school, are also less likely to reach grade 6. Only 49 out of 100 of poor girls enter school, compared with 72 out of 100 poor boys. And only 27 of poor girls reach grade 6, compared with 52 of poor boys.

**Figure 3: Poor girls have a lower chance of completing primary school**



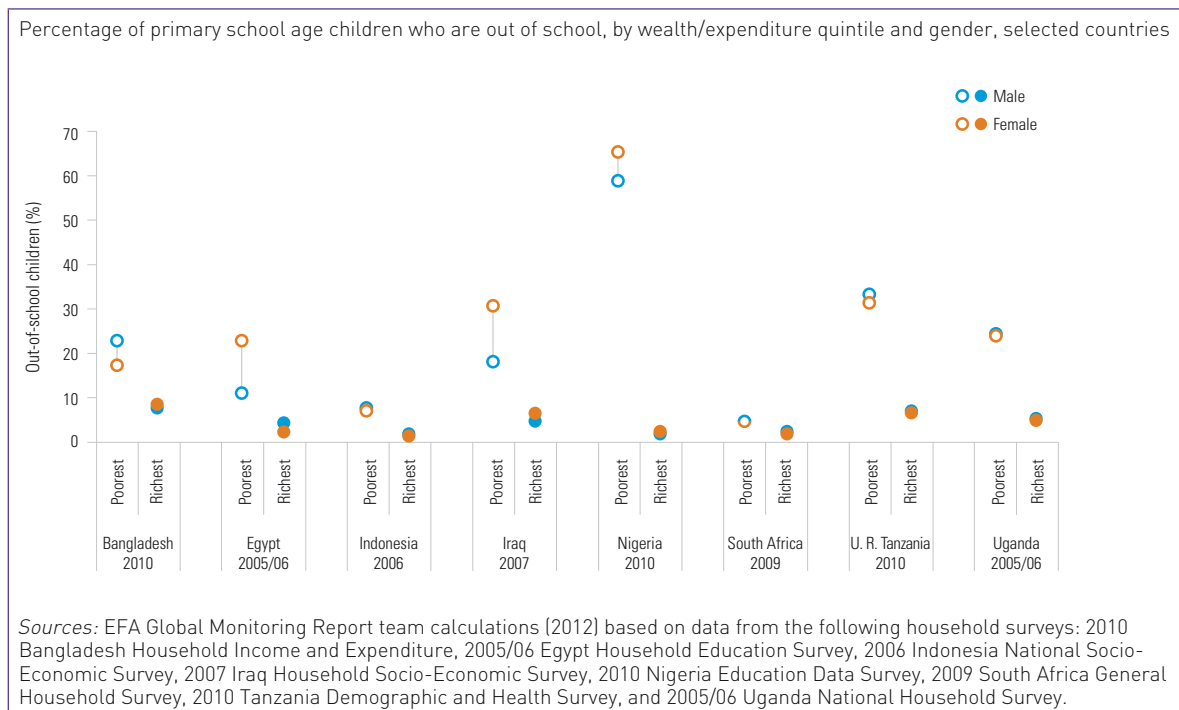
Policy-makers need to tackle the causes of girls being out of school on multiple fronts: mobilizing communities to send girls to school by enlisting the support of media and local leaders; providing targeted financial support; providing gender-sensitive curriculum and textbooks; ensuring that teacher recruitment, deployment and training are gender-sensitive; and ensuring that school environments are healthy, safe and free of gender-based violence (Clarke, 2011). Countries that have adopted an appropriate mix of interventions have witnessed the most progress in narrowing the gender gap in primary enrolment over the past decade.

Even though the cost of schooling is not the only, or necessarily the main, reason for girls being out of school, discrimination within

the household can lead to less being spent on girls than boys. Such discrimination can operate through different channels. In some countries girls are more likely to be out of school and therefore incur zero education expenditure, especially among poorer households, as shown in the cases of Egypt, Iraq and Nigeria (Figure 4).

Once girls are in school, less may also be spent on them. In India, for example, while there is little evidence of discrimination in terms of primary school enrolment decisions, there is evidence of a male bias in terms of education expenditure decisions in states such as Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh (Azam and Kingdon, 2011; Zimmermann, 2012).

**Figure 4: Girls from the poorest families are more likely to be out of school**





## Gender disparities in learning outcomes persist

Achieving gender parity and gender equality in education requires not only that girls and boys have an equal chance to enter and stay in school, but also that they have equal opportunity in learning.

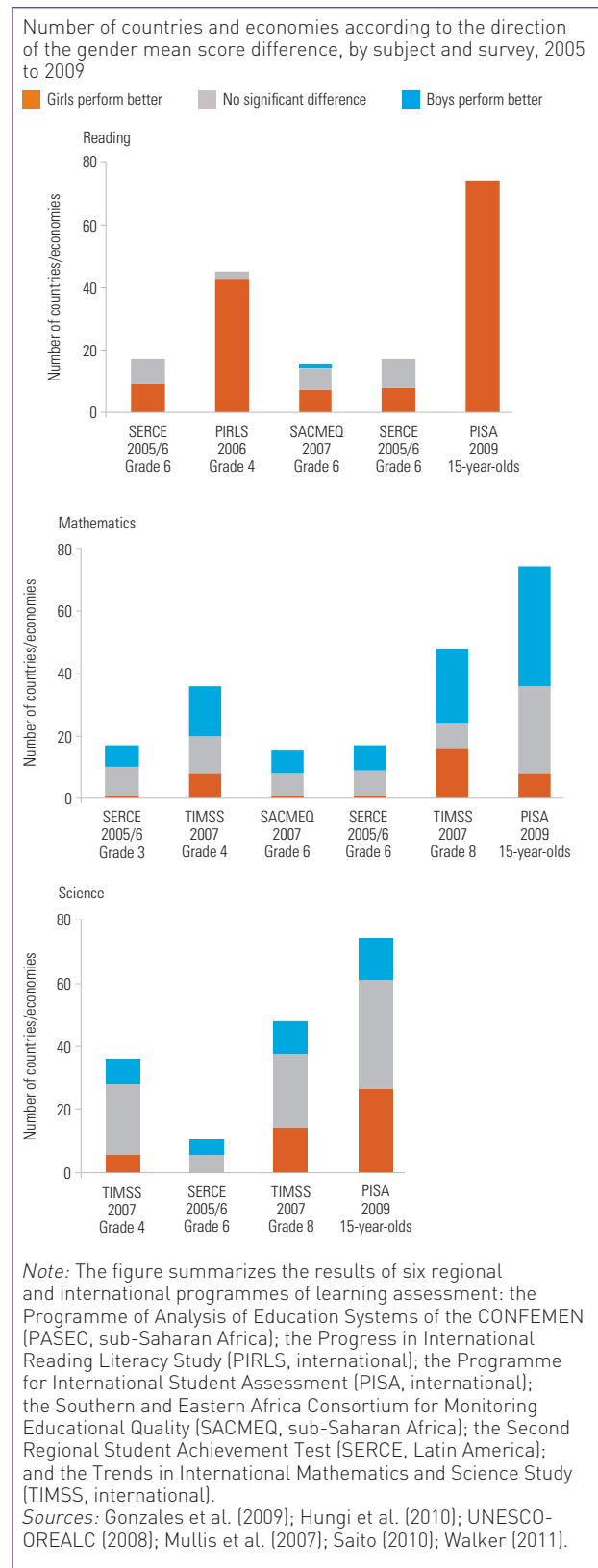
Regional and international learning assessments at primary and secondary level indicate distinct gender patterns that vary by subject. Girls perform better than boys in reading in all but one country, 20 while boys retain an advantage in mathematics in most countries. There is more variation in science, with many countries not showing a significant difference between boys and girls (Figure 5). These patterns are broadly similar across education levels, regions and country income groups.

Results from the 2009 PISA, mainly from OECD countries, show an even stronger pattern in favour of girls in reading than earlier surveys, with girls performing significantly better than boys in all seventy-four countries or economies surveyed. In OECD countries, girls' advantage in reading was equivalent to one school year, on average.

But not all girls performed well in these countries: one in eight girls and one in four boys failed to reach level 2, deemed the level at which students demonstrate reading skills that will enable them to participate effectively and productively in life (OECD, 2010d). Among non-OECD countries participating, such as Malaysia and Romania, one in three girls and one in two boys failed to reach this level, on average.

In mathematics, the difference in performance tends to favour boys, although there are countries where girls perform as well as or better than boys. Boys performed better than girls in thirty-eight countries and in twenty-eight there was no significant difference. Girls performed better than boys in eight countries.

**Figure 5: Girls outperform boys in reading while boys often do better in maths**



While the general pattern for mathematics is the opposite of that for reading, the gender gap in favour of boys is narrower. In addition, there is little difference between boys and girls in those failing to reach the minimum level required to use their skills effectively: in OECD countries, around one in five of both boys and girls failed to reach level 2. Among non-OECD countries, around half of both boys and girls did not reach this level.

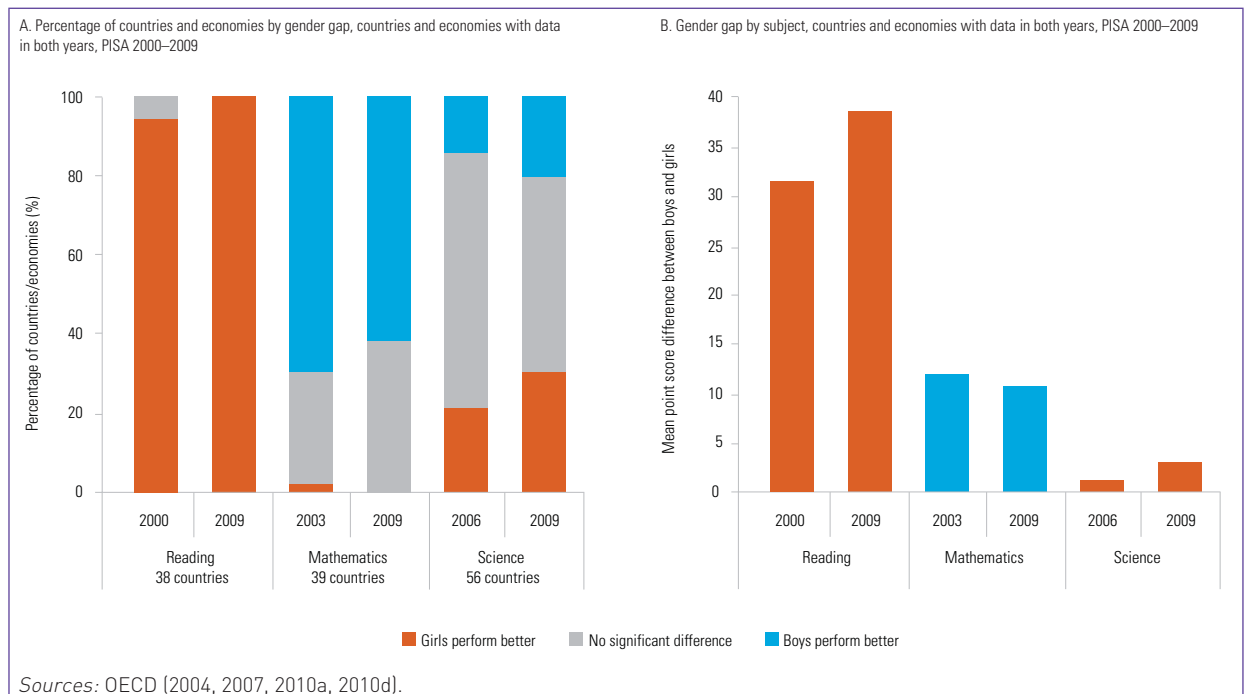
Science presents a more mixed picture than either reading or mathematics, indicating that there are circumstances in which either boys or girls can perform better. Boys performed better than girls in thirteen countries, in thirty-four there was no significant difference, and girls performed better than boys in twenty-seven countries.

These average figures are likely to mask differences between subgroups of the population. For example, in Tunisia there was no gender gap in the mean science

score. However, boys from the lowest socio-economic quartile were more likely to score above level 2 than girls in this group. By contrast, girls from the highest quartile had a better chance than boys of scoring above this level (Altinok, 2012b).

Overall, girls appear to be making greater progress in reading than boys. Comparing the subset of thirty-eight countries that took part in both the 2000 and 2009 PISA surveys, the gender gap in reading has widened in favour of girls by seven points. The increase was significant in Brazil, France, Hong Kong (China), Indonesia, Israel, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania and Sweden. In France, Romania and Sweden, the main reason behind the wider gender gap was a decline in boys' performance (OECD, 2010a). While the gender gap in favour of girls has been widening for reading, there is some evidence that improvements in girls' performance in mathematics have narrowed the gender gap (Figure 6).

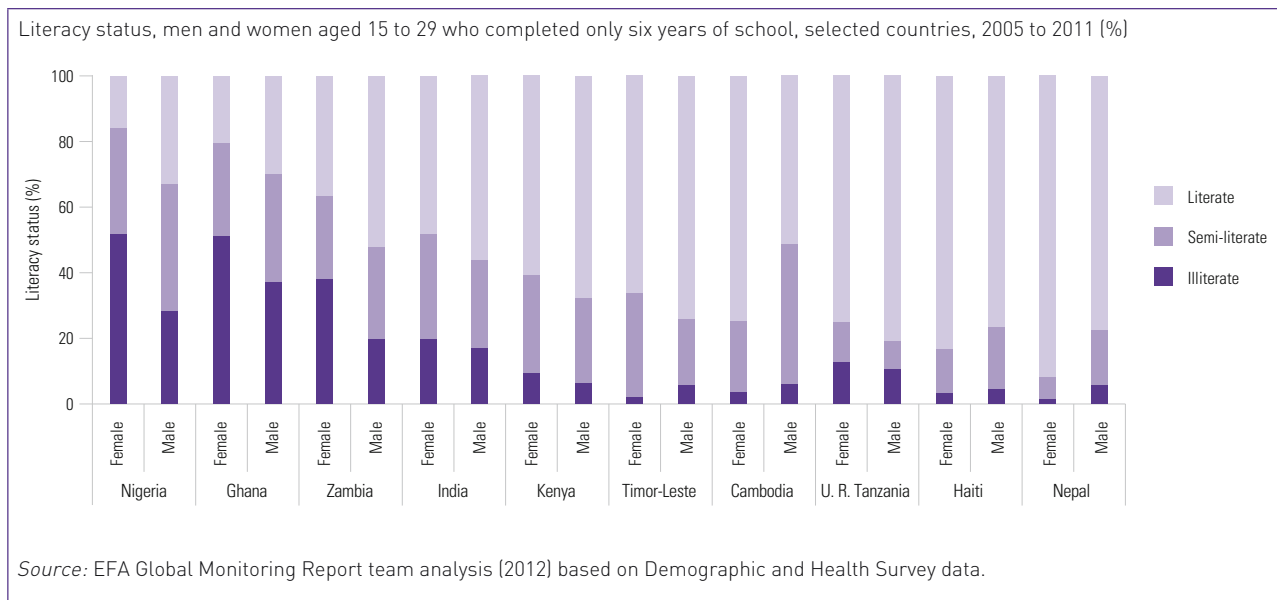
**Figure 6: The gender gap in reading has widened**



Despite this overall picture of girls' advantage in reading in richer countries, women comprise a considerable proportion of adults who are illiterate or semi-literate. Globally, two-thirds of the 775 million adults who were illiterate in 2010 were women. One reason is that some never made it to school or dropped out of school early. But that is not the only reason.

Evidence from surveys in ten low income and lower middle income countries shows that many young people aged 15 to 29 had not become literate even after completing six years of school. In seven of these countries, young women were more likely to be illiterate or semi-literate than young men. To take one example, in Ghana 51% of the young women who had spent six years in school were illiterate in 2008 compared with 37% of young men (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: For many young people, and especially girls, six years in school are Insufficient to build literacy skills**



There is no inherent difference in the capacities of girls or boys in reading, mathematics or science. Girls and boys can perform equally well in these subjects under the right conditions. To close the gap in reading in rich countries, parents, teachers and policy-makers need to find creative ways to entice boys to read more, including by harnessing their interest in digital texts.

To close the gap in mathematics, progress in gender equality outside the classroom, notably in employment opportunities, could play a major role in reducing disparities (Kane and Mertz, 2012). In poorer countries, it is important that girls are not absent from school to carry out household chores, for example, which is one reason that can hold back their learning.

## Challenging disadvantage and disengagement among boys in secondary school



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As more children around the world get the chance to enter secondary school, it is vital to ensure that girls and boys benefit equitably from this progress. At primary level, girls remain much more likely to be disadvantaged in many countries, so it is imperative to maintain the international focus on supporting girls. At secondary level, however, boys are at a disadvantage in some countries.

The 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* shows that the causes of boys' disadvantage in secondary school are different from those of girls, and that different remedies are often required. Boys' lower enrolment or learning achievement may partly result from disadvantage related to poverty, and partly from disengagement, associated with disaffection with school and a sense of not belonging to the school community.

### Disparities in secondary education are sometimes at the expense of boys

Boys are less likely than girls to enrol in secondary school and to do as well once in school, particularly in many upper middle and high income countries. The experiences of these countries offer lessons for poorer countries where enrolment is rising.

Unequal participation: more girls are enrolled than boys in some countries. For more than half of the ninety-seven countries that have not achieved gender parity in secondary education participation, the problem is due to fewer boys than girls being enrolled in school

- There are fifty-four countries where gender disparity in secondary enrolment is at the expense of boys; in fifteen of these

countries, the disparity is so high that fewer than ninety boys are enrolled for every hundred girls.

- At the lower secondary level, boys are disadvantaged in thirty-three countries; in six of these, there are fewer than ninety boys for every hundred girls enrolled.
- At the upper secondary level, boys are disadvantaged in seventy-five countries; in forty-two of these, fewer than ninety boys are enrolled for every hundred girls.

In most countries with fewer boys than girls in lower secondary education, the disparity is due to higher dropout rates for boys rather than higher transition rates of girls from primary to secondary school. In

Nicaragua, for example, similar proportions of girls and boys enter lower secondary education, but fewer boys graduated in 2010: the gross entry ratio was 88% for boys and girls, while the gross graduation ratio for lower secondary general education was 36% for boys and 50% for girls.

The situation is similar in upper secondary education, although data are available for fewer countries. In Paraguay, a two percentage point difference in favour of girls in the gross entry ratio for upper secondary general education extended to ten percentage

points in the gross graduation ratio in 2008 (UIS database).

Lower enrolment for boys is more common in upper middle and high income countries with high levels of enrolment overall. Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico have all achieved secondary gross enrolment ratios of over 80% but have fewer than 95 boys enrolled for every 100 girls. But there are also poorer countries where boys are less likely to be enrolled, including fifteen lower middle income countries and three low income countries – Bangladesh, Myanmar and Rwanda (Box 1).

**Box 1:****Boys' disadvantage in secondary school enrolment in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is one of only three low income countries where more girls are in secondary school than boys. The disparity is largely due to measures supporting girls' enrolment, suggesting a need for similar programmes that take into account the barriers that boys face in obtaining secondary education – especially poverty. The gender gap in enrolment begins as early as the first year of primary school, and continues into grades 6 to 10 of secondary school, with boys' disadvantage having grown over time (Figure 1.43). In grades 11 and 12, there is disparity in favour of boys but overall enrolment rates are extremely low for both boys and girls.

This unique pattern is mainly due to stipends introduced in the early 1990s, which provide fee-free secondary schooling and a payment to all girls in school except in the largest urban

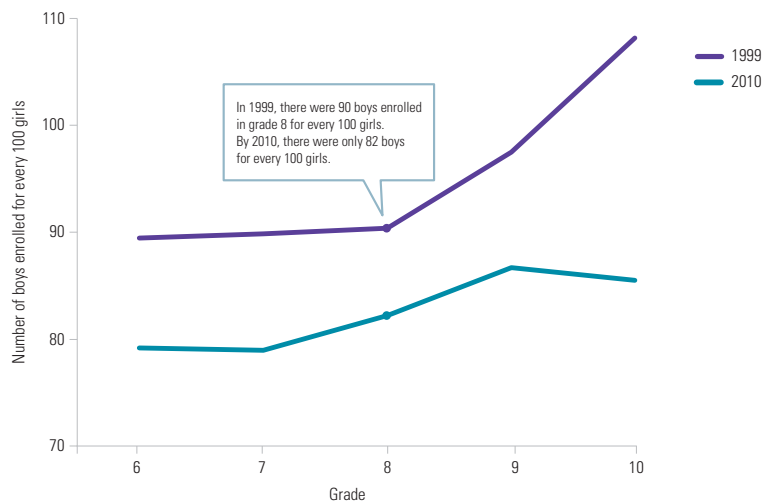
areas. Alongside other policies and projects, the programme has been very successful in raising female secondary enrolment rates, from just 25% in 1992 to 60% in 2005.

The gender gap has not been a result of an absolute decline in the enrolment of boys – at worst, the enrolment rates of poor boys may have stagnated, and it is not clear that this is because of support to girls. As poor boys enter adolescence, they have more opportunities – and more need – to find wage work, which keeps them out of school. In order to enhance the poverty focus of the programme, stipends have been extended to poor boys since 2008 in about a quarter of the country.

Sources: Antoninis and Mia (2011); Asadullah and Chaudhury (2009); World Bank (2008).

**In Bangladesh, there are increasingly more girls than boys in secondary school**

Number of boys enrolled per 100 girls, by grade, 1999 and 2010



Source: UIS database.

Within poor countries where girls' secondary enrolment is lower than boys' on average, there may be locations where boys face greater disadvantage. For example, 2005/06 Demographic and Health Survey data indicated the proportion of those aged 15 to 19 attending school across India was higher for boys (47%, compared with 36% for girls). However, the proportion was higher for girls in the state of Kerala (67%, compared with 62% for boys) and in Delhi (54% for girls and 49% for boys) (UNESCO, 2012c).

Some regions are more likely to show patterns of boys' disadvantage. Of countries with data, boys' enrolment is lower than girls' in 64% of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and 57% of countries in East Asia and the Pacific. For most countries experiencing a reverse gender gap, it is not a new phenomenon. For example, in the Dominican Republic, South Africa and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the pattern

has persisted for a decade.

*Unequal achievement: girls outperform boys in many countries.*

International learning assessments from middle and high income countries show that girls perform better than boys in reading. The 2009 PISA survey, which covered thirty-four OECD countries and forty partner countries and economies, showed that 15-year-old girls achieved significantly higher scores in reading than boys in all countries. The gender gap had widened in some countries since 2000, largely due to a greater improvement in girls' performance.

Boys continue to outperform girls in mathematics in many countries, but the overall extent of their advantage is smaller than girls' advantage in reading. Outcomes in science are more equal, although there are more countries in which girls do significantly better than boys than countries where boys perform better.



South Sudan ©UNESCO/B. Desrus

## Why some boys face disadvantage in secondary school

The common causes of girls' disadvantage in secondary education, related to discrimination, are generally not as applicable to boys. Outside the school, poverty and the nature of the labour market can affect boys more than girls. Inside the school, the classroom environment can lead to boys' disengagement.

*Boys disadvantage is compounded by poverty.* Average indicators mask the fact that disparities at secondary school do not apply to all boys but affect those marginalized by factors such as poverty, social class, ethnicity and location. These boys experience greater economic and social pressure, with disproportionately negative outcomes for their participation and learning (Box 2).

### Box 2:

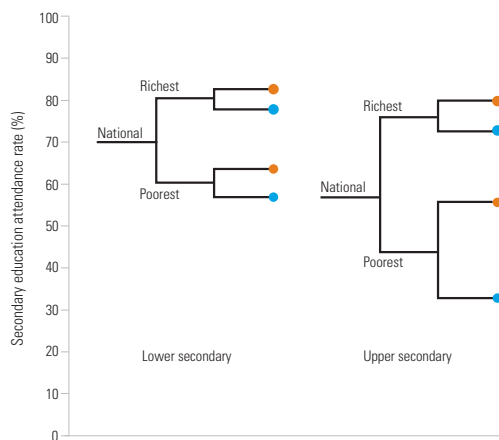
#### In Trinidad and Tobago, boys are at a disadvantage in secondary education

Boys in Caribbean countries are more likely to be disadvantaged in secondary education than girls. Trinidad and Tobago illustrates this pattern for both attendance and achievement in secondary school (Figure 1.44). Gender gaps in attendance are modest at the lower secondary school level, but widen for the poorest boys at the upper secondary level. While there are only small differences in achievement between urban boys and

girls, living in a rural area amplifies boys' disadvantage. A rich girl living in either an urban or rural area achieves a score above the average for Germany, while a poor male living in a rural area scores close to the average for Tamil Nadu, India. A combination of two factors seems to be at work: the labour market is pulling poor rural boys out of school, and high levels of youth violence increase the chance that boys become disengaged.

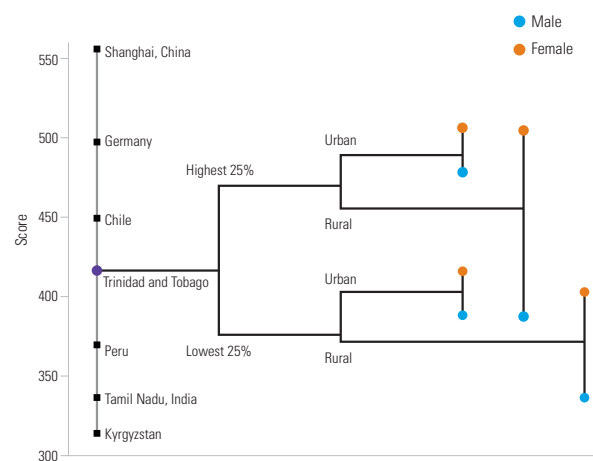
#### In Trinidad and Tobago, boys – especially from poor and rural households – face acute disadvantage in participation and achievement

A. Secondary education attendance rate by wealth and gender, 2006



Source: UNESCO (2012c).

B. Mean reading score by economic, social, and cultural status, residence and gender, 2009



Note: Highest/Lowest 25% refers to the student ranking in terms of the PISA economic, social and cultural status index. Source: Altinok (2012b), based on the 2009 PISA.



In countries where secondary school-aged boys are more likely than girls to work outside the home, this can translate into education disadvantage. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are strong links between gender and children's work. In many countries across the region, more young males enter the workforce early and hold a paying job than young females (Cunningham et al., 2008).

Boys engaged in economic activity are also more likely not to attend school. The differences first appear among children of lower secondary school age but become even stronger among adolescents. For example, in Honduras, one of the countries with the highest gender disparities in secondary school participation, 60% of boys aged 15 to 17 were engaged in economic activity in 2002 compared with 21% of girls. About 82% of the boys engaged in economic activity were not in school, compared with 61% of the girls (Guarcello et al., 2006) Poverty reinforces boys' disadvantage further.

When a poor household's income suddenly drops, the family may respond by withdrawing a boy from secondary school to earn money. In Brazil, adolescent boys are more likely to drop out of school because of the need to join the labour market. A sudden fall in family income has a 46% larger effect on the probability of dropout for boys in poor households compared to boys in non-poor households (Côrtes Neri et al., 2005; Duryea et al., 2007). Similarly, after Hurricane Mitch devastated rural Honduras in 1998, children from poor families were more likely to miss out on school – and boys paid a higher price because they were more likely than girls to get a job (Gitter and Barham, 2007).

Household strategies depend on the type of employment opportunities available. If parents perceive that available jobs for young men do not require secondary school completion, then investment in secondary education will seem less valuable than early entry into work. Boys and their families may consider the type or quality of education available to be irrelevant to the types of jobs on offer. In rural Lesotho, looking after livestock tends to keep poor boys out of school, while girls are able to attend for longer – though girls' enrolment rates at secondary level are also very low. Boys' herding activities may also play a role in keeping boys out of school in other southern African countries, such as Botswana and Namibia (Jha and Kelleher, 2006).

Poverty can also negatively affect boys' participation in secondary education in richer countries, but the main consequences are on learning achievement. Low socio-economic status amplifies boys' disadvantage in reading in many OECD countries (Figure 8). For example, almost all rich girls across seven OECD countries reach level 2 in reading (the level which, according to the OECD, will enable students to 'participate effectively and productively in life'). Within these countries, most rich boys also perform relatively well, with only between 3% and 13% not reaching level 2. There is, however, a striking gender difference among poor students. In Greece, for example, 24% of female students from the bottom quartile had not reached level 2, compared with 50% of male students in that category.

**Figure 8: In several countries, socio-economic status amplifies the gender difference in learning achievement**

*The school environment may lead to boys' disengagement.* In some countries facing a reverse gender gap in enrolment or achievement, female teachers tend to outnumber male teachers in secondary schools. For example, this is the case in Brazil, Jamaica and the Philippines, where there are around six to seven male teachers for every ten female teachers. This fact has caused some to ask whether children relate better to teachers of the same gender and whether male teachers are more likely to teach in ways best suited to boys.

A lack of male role models in education may disadvantage boys. Boys' disengagement could be more likely where there are no adult male role models in the family. While there is no solid evidence of such a link between role models and boys' engagement, teachers and principals often believe one exists, as a survey in Trinidad and Tobago has shown (George et al., 2009).

While wealthier boys in the Caribbean are more likely to see higher education and professional careers as realistic options, a vicious cycle of disengagement from education and involvement in risky behaviour has been observed for poorer boys in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, where school gangs have emerged (UNDP, 2012). Female teachers may be less able to discipline boys in such contexts of high levels of crime and violence.

Teacher expectations about the capacities of male and female students may play a part in performance. One study in Jamaica found that boys were told they were lazy, leading to low self-esteem, streaming into remedial classes, and poor academic achievement and test results (MSI, 2005). Teachers have been noted as having low academic expectations of boys in Malaysia, Samoa, Seychelles, and Trinidad and Tobago (Page and Jha, 2009).

If boys perceive that female teachers discriminate against them, they may use this to justify their negative attitude. A study of more than 200 teachers and 3,000 adolescent students in Finland showed that, while all teachers viewed boys' temperament and educational competence more negatively than girls', male teachers perceived the differences between boys and girls to be smaller than female teachers did (Mullola et al., 2012).

The gender of the teacher, however, accounts for only part of the observed differences in achievement and engagement between boys

and girls. A more important factor is likely to be teacher attitudes towards boys' and girls' learning processes, behaviour and academic success. Some commentators argue that, while there may be differences in learning styles between the genders, they are minor compared with the similarities, and can be shaped through the schooling experience (Eliot, 2011; Hyde, 2005). Teachers need to be aware of differences in learning styles where they exist, and be prepared to adjust their teaching and assessment methods accordingly (Younger et al., 2005).

### Challenging boys' disadvantage and disengagement

Gender disparities and inequality in education are not inevitable. In countries where boys are disadvantaged, there are ways that schools and society can help improve their participation, attainment and learning outcomes.

Policy-makers have begun to show greater awareness of problems associated with boys' disadvantage and disengagement in education. In some contexts, this focus has emerged due

to a perceived relationship between adolescent boys' educational underachievement and rising levels of gang involvement, violence, crime, access to guns and drug-related activity, as in the Caribbean (Figueroa, 2010; Jha et al., 2012). In other situations, a combination of increased media focus on educational league tables and rising levels of youth unemployment has brought the issue to the fore, as in the United Kingdom (Cassen and Kingdon, 2007).



Kosovo©UNESCO/J. Idrizi

Increased awareness is not yet being sufficiently translated into effective action, however. A lack of consensus about the causes of boys' educational disadvantage is one reason; another is the justified focus on the range of challenges girls still face.

Tackling boys' lower enrolment and performance requires a comprehensive approach that addresses their disadvantage due to labour market demands as well as their disengagement due to classroom practices and gender attitudes.

A focus on three areas, each of which can also benefit girls' education, is required:

1. reducing the effects of poverty on education
2. improving the quality and inclusive nature of schools; and
3. offering second chances to those who have dropped out.

*Reducing poverty can boost boys' enrolment and achievement.* Social protection programmes can support school participation for boys and girls, and in some cases improve learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2010b). Such programmes need to take gender into account. In Jamaica, the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) is a government-funded conditional cash transfer programme supporting poor families, which includes waivers for secondary school fees and textbooks. The programme had a significant positive effect on school attendance but the effect on boys aged 13 to 17 was not stronger than that for girls, even though the policy was concerned with the lower attendance rates of teenage boys (Levy and Ohls, 2007). Since 2008, the transfer has been higher for boys than for girls and for secondary school than for primary school students to address the pressure on poor boys to get a job (Fiszbein et al., 2009).

Evaluations of cash transfer programmes show that boys do not always stand to benefit more in countries where they are at a greater disadvantage. In Brazil, the Bolsa Familia programme has sizeable positive effects on school outcomes but girls in lower secondary schools have benefited significantly more, with lower dropout and higher promotion rates (Glewwe and Kassouf, 2012). In Mexico, the grant provided to households by the Progreso programme (later renamed Oportunidades) was larger for girls of secondary school age. It increased school attendance by 7.5% for boys aged 14 to 17, slightly less than for girls (Attanasio et al., 2012; Barrera-Osorio et al., 2011). Such outcomes point to the need to consider the barriers to boys' participation when designing programmes.

*High quality, inclusive schools can create the right environment.* A range of approaches can help raise boys' engagement and achievement by promoting a school ethos of cooperation, respect for students and action against gender stereotypes. Some countries have encouraged individual schools to come

up with their own approaches to improving outcomes for boys.

In England, the Raising Boys' Achievement Project worked with primary and secondary schools that had succeeded in narrowing the gender gap to identify strategies that improve boys' learning and engagement with schooling. Some schools emphasized individual strategies to stimulate boys' interest and engagement, for example through setting realistic targets to bolster their belief in themselves.

Other schools responded to the range of learning styles exhibited by both girls and boys by adapting their pedagogy. For example, they emphasized creative approaches to literacy and interactive classroom activities. There were also school-wide organizational approaches. Some schools developed a team ethic so that underachieving students would feel included (Younger et al., 2005).

A similar programme in Australia, Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools, documented best practice in boys' education from about 350 schools. A compendium of resources based on the programme was developed for teachers. A follow-up project, Success for Boys, provided grants for up to 1,600 schools to improve boys' education. The professional learning programme included a focus on effective literacy teaching and on the use of information technology to improve boys' engagement with active learning (Munns et al., 2006).

This is a rare example where lessons learned have fed into a teacher training programme. Few countries appear to have given sufficient attention to professional development aimed at reducing the gender gap in achievement and male disaffection with school. When it comes to learning outcomes, it is the capacity of teachers to engage and support the learning of both boys and girls that matters. That fact underlines the need for high quality teacher education that includes appropriate training in gender issues.

In some countries, achievement-based streaming is practised in secondary schools with the intention of helping underperforming students. However, findings from a large number of studies in high income countries have failed to demonstrate consistently positive effects of streaming on student performance (Meier and Schütz, 2007; OECD, 2010c). Moreover, where boys are underperforming and perceived as hard to discipline, this practice can result in higher proportions of boys in the lower streams. Streaming students can reinforce negative perceptions of their ability by teachers, peers and themselves.

Single-sex schools are another response to boys' disengagement from education. If such schools sometimes improve the learning outcomes of girls or boys, however, it may be because they tend to be particularly well funded and well managed, with high achieving students who have supportive parents (ACCES, 2011; Halpern et al., 2011). Trinidad and Tobago converted many schools to single-sex environments on the assumption that this would make it easier for teachers to cater to boys' learning styles and reduce peer pressure (Jones-Parry and Green, 2010). However, a recent study showed that most students performed no better at single-sex schools in Trinidad and Tobago, the exception being students (particularly girls) who had expressed a strong preference for attending a single-sex school (Jackson, 2011).

Mentoring programmes can help boys – especially the most disadvantaged – become more self-confident, improve their behaviour and prevent them from disengaging from school (DuBois et al., 2002). In the United States, the century-old Big Brothers Big Sisters programme, which requires volunteer mentors to spend three to five hours per week with a child for at least a year, has been credited with improved behaviour. This result led to the introduction of a school-based variant of the programme. For this type of intervention to succeed,

mentors need to be trained, interactions monitored and parents closely involved (Smith and Stormont, 2011).

One of the most difficult aspects of tackling boys' disadvantage in education is how to foster positive gender attitudes, helping boys respect themselves and take pride in responsible, socially acceptable, non-violent behaviour. While this needs to happen in households and communities, schools are a key place where action can be taken. In the Caribbean, a regional contest among non-government projects highlighted the best ways of helping boys at risk, including developing a sense of achievement by valuing each boy's contributions and creating a non-threatening and non-judgmental environment (Orlando and Lundwall, 2010; World Bank, 2011b).

*Offering second chances can help boys make progress.* In some countries, boys have been the focus of policies and programmes that bring young people who had dropped out back into school. Second-chance programmes, often run outside the formal education system, can offer boys an opportunity to complete their secondary schooling and gain social and economic skills:

- In Jamaica, the Male Awareness Now (MAN) project, managed by the NGO Children First, works with out-of-school males aged 14 to 24 and their parents in Spanish Town, a poor and crime-ridden urban area. The project provides vocational and life skills, health forums, guidance, and cultural and sporting activities to help boys and young men move into school, training or employment and away from drugs and guns. The project has improved self-esteem, behaviour and attitudes among most participants, and two-thirds of participants successfully completed and received certification in a specific basic skill (Christian Aid, 2010; World Bank and Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009).

- In Samoa, the government and religious bodies run second-chance schools offering basic, vocational and life skills for early school leavers, primarily boys (Jha et al., 2012; UIS, 2012).
- In Lesotho, an NGO runs night schools where English, Sesotho and mathematics are taught, and a hot meal is provided, for young male herders who are otherwise unable to go to school because of their livestock rearing responsibilities (Sentebale, 2011).

## Conclusion

Policymakers must not lose sight of the goal of bringing all school-age girls into primary and secondary school. At the same time, it is vital to address the fact that some boys are falling behind in secondary school. Focusing on education quality and inclusiveness,

while tackling the effects of poverty and offering second chances, can reduce boys' disadvantage and disengagement, and so improve participation and outcomes for all children.

## World Inequality Database on Education

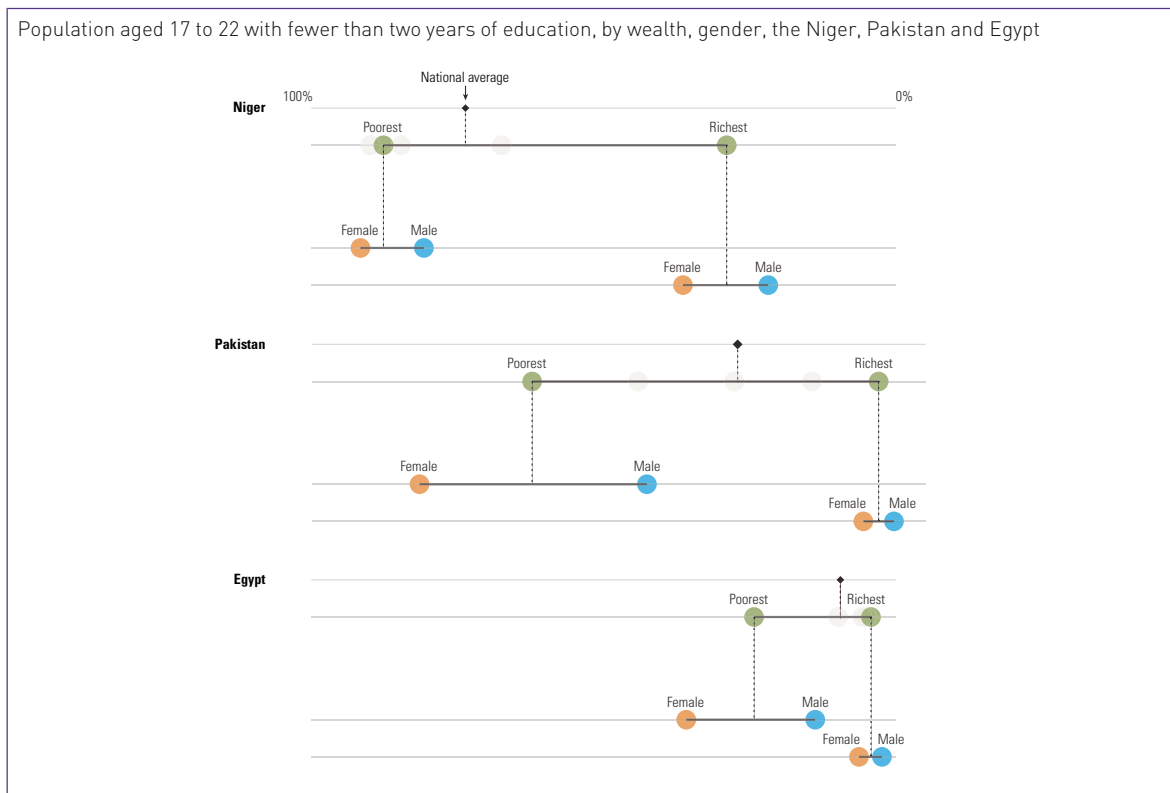
[www.education-inequalities.org](http://www.education-inequalities.org)

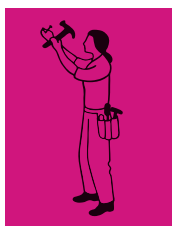


The EFA Global Monitoring Report Team has developed a new interactive website that shows the scale of education inequality within countries. The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) brings together the latest data from Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. Users can create maps, charts and tables from the data, and download, print or share them online. The site was designed by InteractiveThings.

On the WIDE site, the user can look in detail at intersecting patterns of disadvantage within selected countries, such as wealth, gender, and location, to see how they affect access to education. In the Niger, for example, not only are wealth disparities wide, but they are further aggravated by gender (Figure 9). The poorest young women are the worst affected: 92% are likely to have spent less than two years in school, compared with 22% of richest young men. In Pakistan, a vast gender gap among the poorest leaves eight out of ten young women affected, compared with less than five out of ten young men. While the severity of the problem is not as great in Egypt overall, gender gaps are wide: 36% of poor young women are in extreme education poverty compared with just 2% of the richest young men.

**Figure 9: Wealth disparities are further aggravated by gender disparities**





## Part two

### Youth and Skills: Putting education to work

*If someone can give me the skills and the possibility to start work, I know I can achieve my goals.*

– young woman, Ethiopia

The advances many countries have made in closing gender gaps have often taken decades to achieve. The 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* calculates that this slow progress has left 200 million young people aged 15-24 years never having completed primary school and therefore lacking skills needed for work. Young women are affected worst of all: **116 million young women** have been denied the opportunity of completing primary school.

The need to develop these young people's skills has become urgent. Governments around the world are grappling with the long-term economic crisis and the challenges posed by increasingly knowledge based-economies. If countries are to grow and prosper in a rapidly changing world, they need to pay even greater attention to developing a skilled workforce. And all young people, wherever they live, and whatever their background and gender, require skills that prepare them for decent jobs so they can thrive and participate fully in society.

These needs were recognised when the third Education for All goal – focusing on equitable learning needs of young people and adults – was formulated in 2000. But they have not received enough attention from governments, aid donors, the education community or the private sector – and, with the youth population the largest it has ever been, are now even more critical.

Yet all too often, access to skills is unequal, perpetuating and exacerbating the disadvantage that attends being poor, female or a member of a marginalized group. Young women in particular face discrimination that limits their opportunities in both education and the labour market.

Lack of opportunities to develop relevant skills wastes young people's potential to forge better lives for themselves and to contribute to their economies and societies. And those with the worst educational outcomes, notably young women living in poverty in rural areas, are consigned to activities with very low pay or none at all.



## Poor young women are the least likely to have skills to find decent jobs

*Currently, my education and skill level is not sufficient enough, but if I could go to training in the future, I believe I could achieve them [basic skills].*

– young woman, Ethiopia

The 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report shows that young people need foundation skills obtained by having at least a lower secondary education in order to be able to get a job that will pay a decent wage and become

a productive force in the economy. In thirty countries of fifty nine analysed for this report, at least half of 15-19 year olds lack foundation skills. Of these, the majority are young women.

### Gender disparities are aggravated by wealth disparities

In most poor countries, girls are less likely than boys to achieve foundation skills. The interaction between gender and wealth depends in part on how far a country has progressed, on average, in providing foundation skills to those aged 15 to 19.

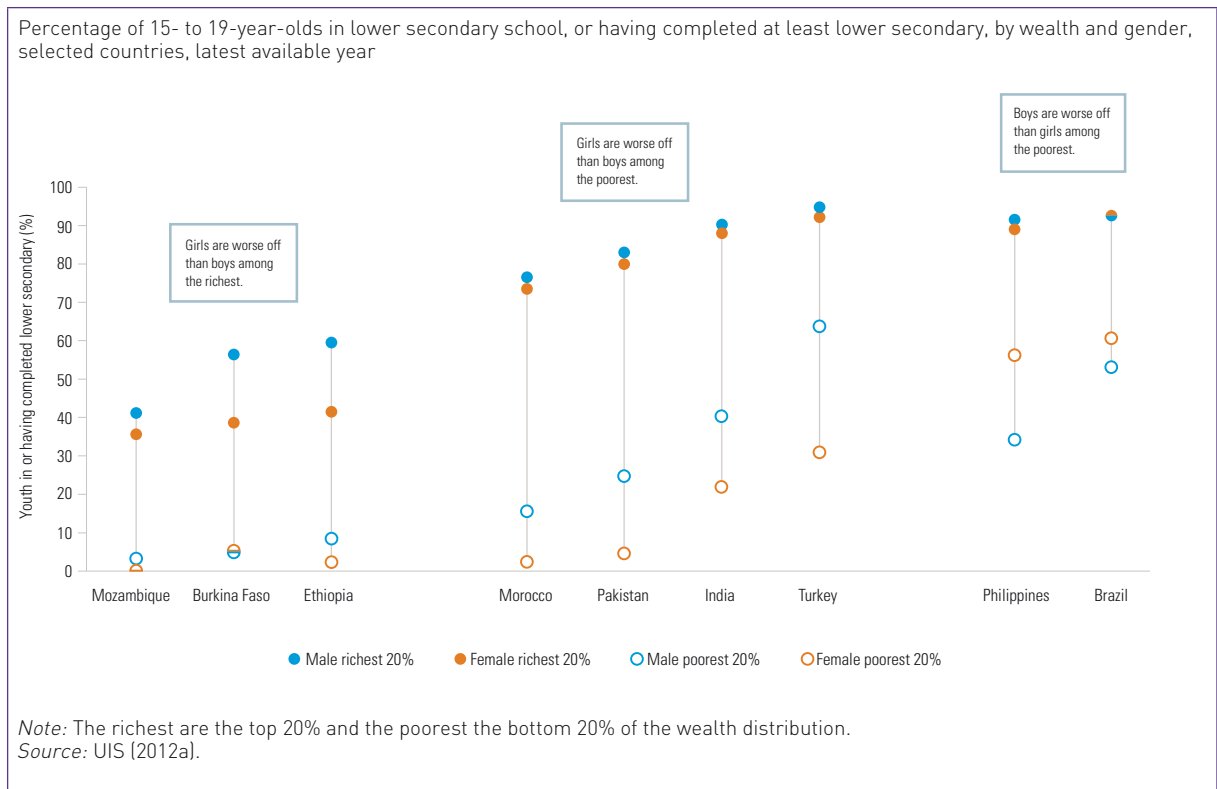
households. In Turkey, almost all young people from rich households, male and female, achieve foundation skills. The proportion of boys from poor households who do so is 64%, compared with only about 30% for the poorest girls.

In Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mozambique, where only around one in six are in or complete lower secondary school, very few of the poorest, male or female, reach this level (Figure 10). In these low income countries, even among richer households decisions have to be made about who to send to school. The decisions are most often in favour of boys. In Burkina Faso, almost 60% of rich boys attain foundation skills, compared with 40% of rich girls, but only 5% of poor girls or boys.

The gender gap is not always at the expense of girls. In a smaller number of middle income countries, such as Brazil and the Philippines, almost all boys and girls from rich households attain foundation skills. But boys from the poorest households are getting left behind. In the Philippines, around 56% of girls acquire foundation skills, compared with just 35% of boys.

In countries that fare better on average, including India, Morocco, Pakistan and Turkey, the opposite is the case. Large proportions of young people from rich households are able to attain foundation skills, regardless of whether they are male or female. Gender discrimination occurs among the poorest

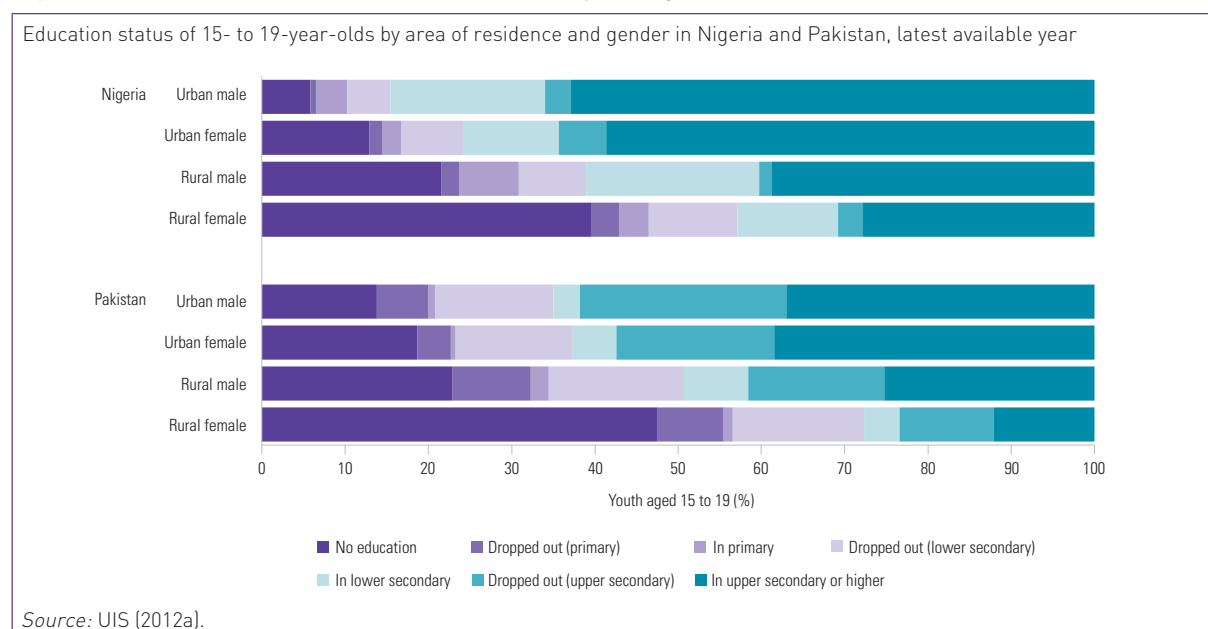
Such variations in gender disadvantage call for different targeted strategies. In countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mozambique, the approach needs to raise the levels for all children. In countries such as India, Morocco, Pakistan and Turkey, strategies need to target young women from the poorest households, while in Brazil and the Philippines, attention has to be paid to poor young men.

**Figure 10: Gender gaps are often larger among the poorest**

## Location affects the acquisition of foundation skills

Where young people live can further determine their education opportunities, with rural/urban or regional divisions reinforced by gender. Young women living in rural areas are least likely to acquire foundation skills. In Pakistan, the share of 15- to 19-year-olds who have

made it to upper secondary is roughly twice as high in urban areas as in rural areas. Nearly half of rural females have never been to school, while this is true for only 14% of urban males (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Youth from urban areas are more likely to acquire foundation skills**

## Young women need a second chance to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills

*Although I haven't completed my education I need a chance. We want to work and give something good to the country.*

– young woman, Egypt

In countries where many young people have never had the chance to go to school, or have dropped out before completing primary school, skills development strategies need to focus first on providing all young people with the most basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, at present, skills development

strategies are not recognising the scale of this crisis, and are failing to incorporate targeted approaches to reach those most in need. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, one in three young women have not completed primary school and need a second chance (Table 2).

**Table 2: Young people aged 15-24 years who have never completed primary school, by gender**

Region	Young men needing a second chance		Young women needing a second chance		Total
	Number (millions)	%	Number (millions)	%	Number (millions)
Arab States	4,3	16	6,2	20	10,5
Central and Eastern Europa	1,2	5	1,9	6	3,1
Central Asia	0,3	4	0,4	4	0,7
East Asia and the Pacific	14,4	8	14,4	8	28,8
Latin America and the Caribbean	4,2	8	4	8	8,2
South and West Asia	35,1	21	56	28	91,1
Sub-Saharan Africa	23,3	29	33,3	35	56,6
<b>Total (world)</b>	<b>82,9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>116,2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>199,1</b>

## A lack of skills will affect the lives of young women and their country's growth forever

While it might be expected that younger people are more likely to be out of work than older people as they wait to get their first step on the ladder, in many countries the barriers to a good job are almost insurmountable for the majority of young people.

Worldwide, one in eight young people are unemployed. These rates are about two to three times higher for young people than for adults, with vast disparities in some regions. Many young people face a long time for work, and waiting times have got longer as a result of the economic downturn. Indeed, the dire economic circumstances is likely to accentuate the difference between those with differing

levels of education, with those who have more education less likely to face such long employment gaps than those with less.

Many young people, however, do not have the luxury of remaining unemployed and are obliged to take poor quality jobs that are insecure, low paid and often require long hours. Globally, an estimated 152 million young people, 28% of all young workers, are paid less than US\$1.25 per day, an amount that is unlikely to lift them and their families out of poverty. Young women in particular find themselves in this trap that is difficult to escape.

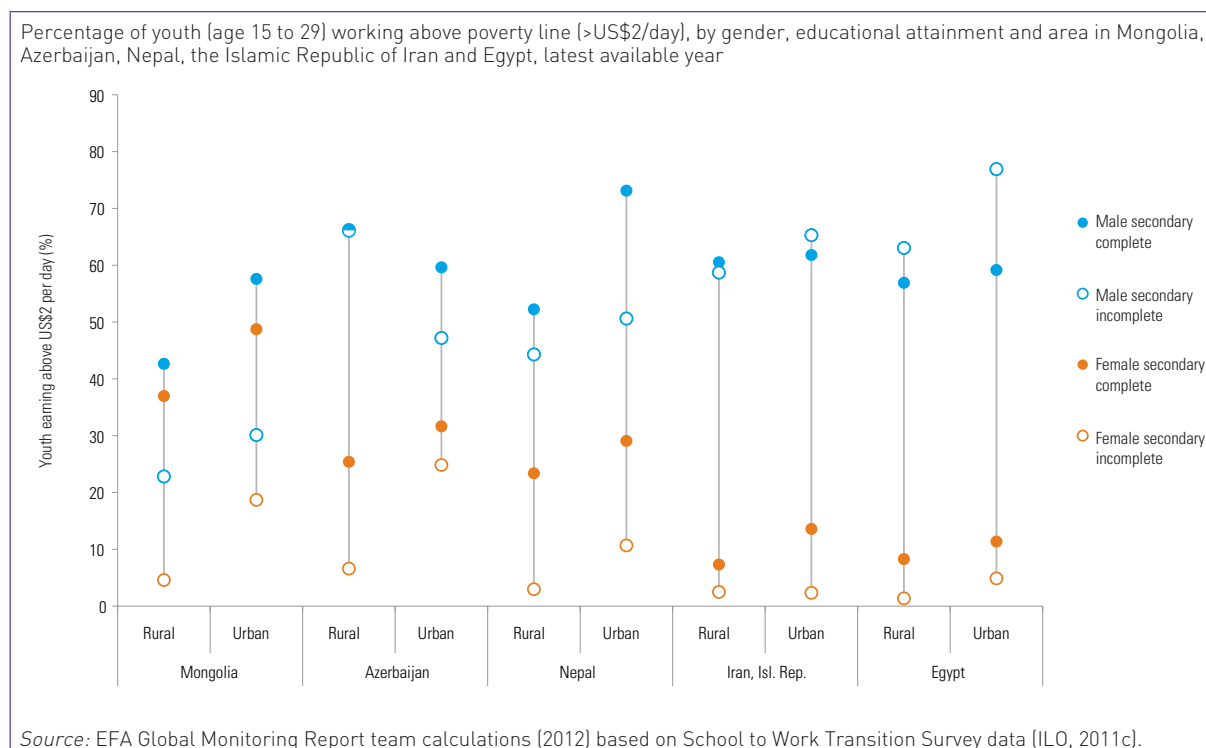
## Gender discrimination in education continues through into the workplace

*[A good job] is one that helps me to live honourably, not the one that would be spent on transportation and lunch at work and that is all.*

– young woman, Egypt

There is a strong relationship between low education and working poverty in many countries. However, the effects of completing secondary education on ensuring that young people have the skills needed to find adequately paid work vary by location and gender. For both rural and urban women in Nepal who have completed secondary education, less than 30% earn above the poverty line. By contrast, young men who have not even completed secondary education are more likely to earn an adequate wage than better educated young women – over 40% earn above the poverty line (Figure 12).

A similarly wide gender gap is evident in Azerbaijan, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mongolia. The reasons are likely to differ by country, and may in part have to do with the fact that young women who do domestic work at home are not paid. But given that young women, like young men, from disadvantaged backgrounds often need resources for their own and their families' survival, and that such gender gaps are likely to persist as they get older, the reasons behind these differences deserve greater attention from policy-makers.

**Figure 12: Young women are often confined to low pay work**

## Many young women are invisible in the labour force

*Usually the work environment [as a daily labourer] is not comfortable for females. Usually it is men who can work at this because a lot of labour is demanded. As a result of this, females usually do not get the type of job they want. And to get hired in an office they always require paper [qualifications] and more skills. Otherwise no one will hire you and it will be very difficult. And youth like us, who have dropped out of school, can never get any papers. So we don't even try.*

– young woman, Ethiopia

Unemployment figures hide the fact that some young people stop looking for work because they do not believe they will find any. People who are neither in education or employment nor actively seeking work are often classified as 'inactive', even though their inactivity reflects the labour market more than their own motivation. If those who are discouraged from participating in the labour force are included, the unemployment rate increases substantially – doubling in Cameroon, for example, and rising by around one-quarter in Jordan, Mexico and Turkey (Understanding Children's Work, 2012).

Women are often a majority of those classified as 'inactive'. Yet the way they see their life chances depends on realistic opportunities in the workplace. In China's urban areas, young women and men have very similar aspirations overall, but in Egypt and Nepal where women's work opportunities are limited, young women stress the importance of family life while young men focus more on jobs and money (Pastore, 2012).

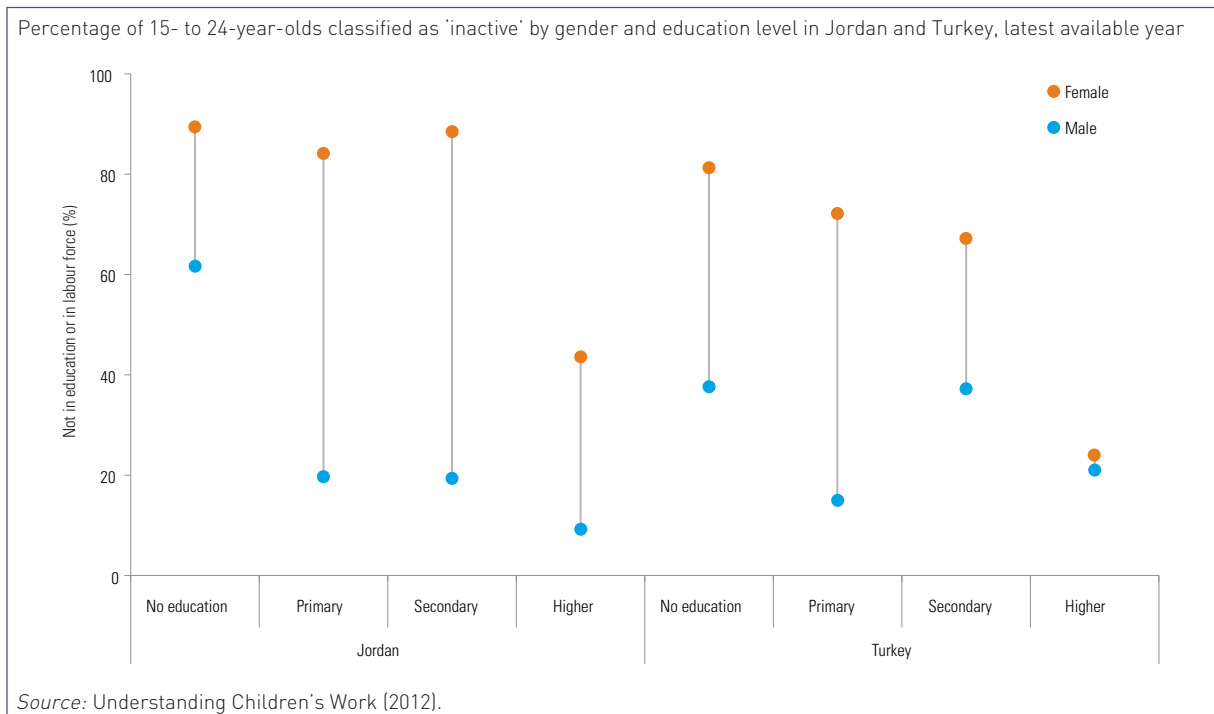
Young women often work long hours in household and informal work that is less visible to policy-makers. Analysis for the 2012

*EFA Global Monitoring Report* of recent labour force surveys in nine countries found that more young women than men were classed as inactive in all nine, often significantly so (Understanding Children's Work, 2012).

In Jordan, 37% of females were identified as inactive, compared with 10% of males. In

Turkey, the figures were 52% and 16%. The gender gap was often very large among young people who dropped out of the education system after completing only primary school. In Jordan, over 80% of young women with only primary education were not actively seeking employment, compared with 20% of young men (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: In Jordan and Turkey, many young women are not seeking work**



By excluding youth not actively seeking work, unemployment statistics reveal nothing about why young women are not in paid work. Is it because of family responsibilities, cultural pressures or discrimination in the job market? In Dar es Salaam, the United Republic of Tanzania, 68% of young women who were not actively looking for a job said it was because they did not think they would find one (Kondylis and Manacorda, 2008). This suggests that the reason is more likely due to discrimination than other factors.

The unequally divided burden of domestic work constrains women's participation in labour markets in many cases. In Ethiopia, women spent six times as much time as

men on household work, and roughly half as much time as men on work for money: 43% of women were unpaid family workers, and female employees were predominantly temporary. Women, particularly younger women, earned less than men. Women were disadvantaged both by the division of labour in the household and within the labour market (Kolev and Robles, 2010; Robles, 2010).

Women who are looking for work are more likely than young men to face a long wait. In Jordan, two-thirds of young women are available for work. Of these, as many as one in three are unemployed. By contrast, of the 90% of young men available for work, 16% were unemployed in 2007 (Understanding Children's

Work, 2012). The increase in female education in Jordan in recent years, to the extent that their enrolment is higher than for males particularly in urban areas, does not therefore appear to be translating into improvements in their opportunities for work (Amer, 2012). In Egypt, less than one-quarter of 15- to 29-year old women are economically active, one-third of the male rate. Those women who do make it into the labour force face a longer wait, with three-quarters still looking for work after five years in 2006 (Assaad and Barsoum, 2007).

These findings suggest that not only do cultural factors keep young women out of the labour market, but discriminatory practices also make it more difficult for them to find work. Those who do work can expect to receive lower pay, although more education can make a difference, as experience in India and Pakistan illustrates (Box 3).

### Box 3:

#### In India and Pakistan, working women with more education reap benefits

In India and Pakistan, as in many developing countries, regular wage employment is a small and even shrinking part of the labour market. In both countries, women are more likely than men to be out of the labour force.

In India, 39% of women are not counted as being in the labour force, compared with 12% of men. For uneducated urban women the share is as much as 70%. Many women, often those with lower levels of education, are obliged to work in undesirable jobs. Uneducated rural Indian women have around a 55% chance of being unpaid family workers, and almost a 25% chance of being in casual work of some kind.

In Pakistan, while men have an 8% chance of being out of the labour force, the figure for women is 69%, and it drops only for the few women with more than ten years of schooling. Such women are rare in Pakistan: only 18% reached that stage in 2007.

For those who do find work in India and Pakistan, men earn 60% more than women, on average. The wage gap is widest for those with low levels of literacy and numeracy. Yet education can make a big difference to women's earnings. In Pakistan, women with a high level of literacy earned 95% more than women with no literacy skills, whereas the differential was only 33% among men.

From these patterns in India and Pakistan it appears that the cultural expectation is for women, including more educated women, to stay in the home to care for the family. Years of education, therefore, have a very limited effect on labour market participation for women in general. Yet education can have a strong effect on their earnings, suggesting that investing in women's education can pay dividends, provided they can participate in the labour force and find work.

*Source: Aslam et al. (2010).*

## Many governments neglect skills and the disadvantaged lose out most

Despite the economic benefits it can bring, skills development has often been neglected in national plans. Even where its importance is recognized, skills development is frequently given low priority, with no clear line of responsibility for action, poor coordination among agencies and providers, and limited attention to the needs of disadvantaged young people. Even where national strategies do refer to skills development, the overarching objective is commonly to improve productivity

and growth, rather than the employment conditions of the poor.

Very few of the forty-six countries analysed for this report have specific strategies to meet the needs of vulnerable groups such as women and those working in the informal sector. While many skills strategies emphasize the importance of equity, particularly gender equality, as an objective in broader discussions of access to skills development,

training and employability, few countries set explicit targets. Exceptions include Bangladesh and Ethiopia. Bangladesh aims to increase female enrolment in technical and vocational education by 60% by 2020, and Ethiopia expects a 50% share of female enrolment in technical and vocational programmes by 2014/15 (Engel, 2012; Ethiopia MoFED, 2010).

India and Malawi have introduced affirmative action programmes aimed at increasing the share of women in training, but in the absence of other strategies addressing the multiple challenges young women face in gaining access to training, they may not achieve the desired outcomes (Engel, 2012).



## Secondary Education: Paving the way to work

Secondary school is an important channel through which young people acquire skills that improve opportunities for good jobs. High quality secondary education that caters for the widest possible range of abilities, interests and backgrounds is vital not just to set young people on the path to the world of work, but also to give countries the educated workforce they need to compete in today's technologically driven world. Beyond the challenge of universal primary education, in the world's poorest countries there are still significant barriers preventing many young people from entering secondary education; worldwide, 71 million adolescents are not in school, of which just under half are female.

If disadvantaged youth are to have similar chances as youth from rich backgrounds to gain access to good jobs on the basis of merit and not privilege, secondary education has to be made more equitable and more inclusive, offering the widest possible range of opportunities in order to meet young people's differing abilities, interests and backgrounds. Achieving equity and inclusiveness is important not only because education is a universal right, but also because countries need an educated workforce to compete in the modern global economy.

### Removing the barriers to a secondary education

*I was engaged to someone and he refused to let me complete my education, so I stopped.*

– young woman, Egypt

approaches to combat inequalities include eliminating the costs of schooling, and putting in place strategies to overcome social and cultural barriers, such as early marriage, that prevent young women from completing their education.

*Eliminating the costs of schooling can be a significant barrier to disadvantaged groups.* Removing these costs can help expand secondary education as shows evidence from some Asian and African countries. In Uganda, abolishing lower secondary school fees in 2007 particularly increased the enrolment of girls from poor households, who had been more likely to be out of school. Girls were about 49% more likely to enrol in secondary education in 2009 than in 2005 (Asankha and Takashi, 2011).

Kenya went a step further, with an ambitious programme abolishing fees for all secondary school grades. Enrolment rose immediately, but not for everyone; the government needs to make sure its increased investment is geared



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In many poor countries, the predominant concern is that there are still many children not completing primary school. However, for those who are making it to this stage, it is vital to make the transition from primary through to secondary school as smooth as possible. Linking primary to lower secondary school is one way to smooth the transition. Other

to give poor rural children and girls just as much chance as others.

Rwanda is also taking this path from 2012, aiming to achieve twelve years of free education for all within seven years (Mugisha, 2012; Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2012).

Instead of abolishing tuition fees for all, some countries have opted to reduce or eliminate fees only for specific groups, such as girls. In Bangladesh, stipends for secondary school girls have been so successful that there are now more girls than boys in secondary school.

Conditional cash transfer programmes have become popular following early successes in some Latin American countries. On average, such programmes have been found to raise enrolment at secondary level by three to twelve percentage points in developing countries (Slavin, 2009).

The success of these Latin American programmes is encouraging some sub-Saharan African countries to emulate it, sometimes with strong positive effects. In Malawi, cash transfers to teenage girls and young women reduced dropout rates from 11% to 6% and multiplied by 2.5 the share of re-enrolment of girls who had dropped out before the launch of the programme (Baird et al., 2009). Scholarships granted to poor girls at the end of primary school in Cambodia were also found to lower the barrier to secondary education, increasing attendance by 30% (Caillods, 2010).

The most disadvantaged youth are not always aware that they may be eligible for such programmes and application processes may present barriers for poor households. In Kenya, for example, the need to photocopy an application form has sometimes prevented poor families in rural areas from applying for government scholarships (Ohba, 2009). Where properly implemented, however, grants and scholarships are powerful ways of giving young disadvantaged people from

poor families a better chance of getting to secondary school.

### *Young mothers need support to return to school.*

For young women in low income countries, it is not only poverty that leads some to drop out. Deeply engrained social, cultural and economic barriers, such as early marriage, may also prevent them from continuing education.

More than one in ten young women aged 15 to 19 are pregnant or mothers in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia, with as many as 30% or more in some countries, such as Bangladesh, Liberia and Mozambique (World Bank, 2010c).

In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua and Peru, teenage mothers have an average of 1.8 to 2.8 fewer years of education than other girls and are fourteen times as likely to drop out of school. Even if they had attended school before they became pregnant, up to 89% are out of school, compared with 35% of girls who did not have children in their teenage years (Näslund-Hadley and Binstock, 2010).

Education itself is good protection against early marriage for teenage girls. The median age for marriage among women with a secondary education, compared with those who have no education or only a primary school education, is over two years higher in Bangladesh and Nigeria, three years higher in Ethiopia and Mali, and four years higher in Chad (Brown, 2012).

Including basic life skills for sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention has proved effective in preventing early pregnancy and reducing the risk of sexually transmissible diseases. The Better Life Options Programme for adolescent girls in India offers a combination of skills: literacy and vocational training, support to enter and stay in formal school, family life education and

leadership training. An impact assessment found significant benefits. The share of those married at age 18 or above was 37% among graduates but only 26% in a control group, and more graduates were reported to use contraception. Among unmarried girls, graduates were 65% more likely to be aware of AIDS and 17% more likely to know how to prevent HIV and AIDS. These differences were even greater among married respondents (CEDPA, 2001).

In some developing countries, including Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia, pregnant girls are excluded from school after giving birth, for a period that ranges from at least six months to eighteen months. These girls are often not allowed to return to the same school after giving birth. In countries where schools are legally obliged to readmit young mothers, such as Cameroon, South Africa and most countries in Latin America, social stigma and the absence of educational, financial and psychological support make it difficult to return (Hubbard, 2008).

Even where the law has changed to assure the right to education of young mothers, more has to be done to empower them to take advantage of that right. Recognizing this need, since 1978 the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation has provided all-round support to help mostly poor pregnant girls and mothers under age 16, including food and transport costs, so they can re-enter school after giving birth. The programme has been partly funded by the government since 1991, although recent budgetary cuts have forced the foundation to

reduce its activities. Over 1,000 young mothers take part in life skills and school re-entry programmes each year. Evaluations in the late 1990s showed that the programmes increased the likelihood of young mothers completing high school from 20% to 32% (Advocates for Youth, 2012; Barnett et al., 1996; Drayton et al., 2000; ECLAC, 2007; Tomlinson, 2011).

A survey conducted by the Forum for African Women Educationalists in Zambia shows how a combination of communication activities, legislative change and local training for teachers and students can change attitudes towards school re-entry. While 69% of teachers were against school re-entry for pregnant girls in 2001, 84% expressed a positive attitude after receiving training in 2004. Opposition also decreased among parents, from 53% to 25% (FAWE, 2004).

Early school leaving of young women due to pregnancy is a problem in developed countries too. On average, 14% of young people in European Union countries have lower secondary education, at most. In most EU countries, boys are more at risk of leaving school early than girls. In Greece, for example, 15% of boys do not complete secondary school, compared with 10% of girls. In some circumstances, however, girls are more likely to drop out. Teenage mothers are particularly vulnerable. Most already have a history of poor educational achievement and come from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the United Kingdom, for instance, around 3.6% of those aged 15 to 17 become pregnant. Pregnancy decreases the probability of post-16 schooling by as much as 24%.

## **Making secondary education relevant to the world of work: Addressing discrimination in internships and apprenticeships**

Secondary education should build on foundation skills and provide equal opportunities for all youth to develop transferable and technical and vocational skills to find a good job or for further education. A common curriculum in lower

secondary school helps give all children an equal chance of consolidating foundation skills. At upper secondary school, young people need to learn transferable skills to smooth the transition from school to work, and technical and vocational skills for specific

trades or sectors off work. Combining all these skills equally and tailoring them to the needs of the local market provides a good curriculum balance that can benefit all.

After lower secondary education, some students enter general secondary school and follow an academic or vocational route, while others enter technical and vocational institutions. Gender disparities are often wider in technical and vocational education than in general education, however. In Bangladesh, for example, girls accounted for only 21% of technical and vocational enrolment, compared with 51% of general secondary enrolment. Girls who are enrolled in technical and vocational education tend by and large to be in areas that lead to traditionally female occupations, often characterized by low pay, such as hairdressing, sewing and tailoring, sales and service occupations, and care professions (European Commission, 2006; Gaidzanwa, 2008; Solotaroff et al., 2009).

School leavers often face a conundrum: they cannot get a job because they lack work experience, but they cannot get work experience unless they get a job. For those who are able to remain in upper secondary education, connecting schools to the workplace is a way to solve the conundrum, smoothing the transition to work. Internships and apprenticeships are ways young people can acquire transferable and vocational skills through direct work experience.

*Internships and apprenticeships are not reaching the disadvantaged.*

While formal apprenticeships can last several years, internships sometimes last only weeks or months. Internships are not structured on the basis of a curriculum and the learning outcomes are seldom assessed. By contrast, formal apprenticeships are geared towards learning a trade, with the workplace as the site for acquiring the skills recognized in a qualification.

Internships are generally either unpaid or offer a small stipend, while apprentices are usually paid a minimum wage or stipend during their training. In both cases, companies bear the costs of training and governments pay the costs of schooling.

In poorer countries, where small, informal enterprises often dominate and youth populations are large, internships may be available only to a minority. Even in rich countries, the availability of internships often replicates discrimination in the labour market, making it difficult for disadvantaged youth to secure contracts because of gender, disabilities or ethnic background (ECOTEC, 2009).

Experience in most regions of the world shows that formal apprenticeships can be beneficial in building bridges between school and the workplace. Formal apprenticeships linked with the school system are most common in developed countries. They can increase the attractiveness of staying in education while benefiting employers by ensuring that young people enter the labour market with relevant skills and experience.

Apprentices are often more likely to be men, however, because of discrimination in the labour market and the types of occupations for which apprenticeships are available. In 2010 only 13% of graduates of Egypt's dual system, for instance, were women because of the focus on traditional industrial occupations (Adams, 2010).

Young women who have taken apprenticeships get paid less in them, find it harder to get a job and receive lower pay once they are in work (Adams, 2007). In the United Kingdom, female apprentices earn 21% less, on average, while undertaking their training. The wage benefit of a woman who has undertaken an apprenticeship was just 4%, compared with 20% for a man undertaking the same apprenticeship (TUC and YWCA, 2010).

Combining work experience and schooling can help address inequality, but a large modern sector is necessary for this approach to work well. In many low income countries, including those in sub-Saharan Africa where employment in the informal sector is prevalent, it is difficult to provide

youth in school with well-structured work experience in small enterprises that are often household based. In such countries, the limited opportunities for work-based learning are likely to be rationed to the privileged few who make it to upper secondary school, thus widening inequality.

## Career counselling should aim to help disadvantaged youth secure apprenticeships

*I think it would make a big difference if I could find someone well-educated to guide and give me a better understanding of my vocation of interest. If someone can give me the skills and the possibility to start work, I know I can achieve my goals.*

– young woman, Ethiopia

Although some schools offer career counselling, it tends to focus more on education decisions than on occupation choices (Watts and Fretwell, 2004). In Japan, however, teachers take a more active role in counselling apprenticeship-bound students

about the appropriateness of specific companies and jobs. This tends to ensure that students are fully informed and that the jobs match their interests, hence reducing dropout from the apprenticeships (Brinton, 1998; Hori, 2010).

## Conclusion

Secondary education offers the best hope for young women to develop skills that would put them in a strong position to get good jobs. Many countries have made good progress in improving access to primary education for girls, but in the developing world many are still not making the transition to secondary education that would enable them to consolidate and build on basic skills.

Promoting the kind of skills that employers repeatedly ask to see in new recruits from school will be more successful if there are more opportunities for working through apprenticeships and other innovative approaches to learning. However, for women to see the benefits of such opportunities, the barriers they face in completing secondary school and the discrimination they face in the labour market must first be addressed.

## Many urban poor young women lack foundation skills

The urban population is growing rapidly in many parts of the world, most notably in developing countries. Large numbers of young people are migrating away from rural deprivation towards towns and cities that hold the promise of greater freedom, better living conditions and improved work opportunities. Population growth is also contributing to rapid urbanization. Today's urban youth population, the largest in history, is better educated than previous generations and represents a powerful force for political and social change as well as for economic growth.

Urbanization has been accompanied by a rise in urban poverty, however. Young people tend to make up a disproportionate share of those living in squalid conditions in unplanned urban settlements. Many are trapped in insecure, subsistence activities. Women are at particular disadvantage in urban labour markets. Many of these young people left school before mastering basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

Urbanization can broaden opportunities if policies not only promote economic development and job creation but also allow disadvantaged youth such as young women to take advantage of opportunities by acquiring relevant skills. Unless they are offered a

second chance at education, young people are unlikely to be able to develop skills through workplace training, including traditional apprenticeships.

### *Employment for poor urban young women is mostly informal.*

In urban areas of developing countries, a large share of employment is in medium-sized, small and micro enterprises that operate informally – that is, they do not keep formal business records, have no legal status and are not regulated. Many young people around the world are employed in the informal sector. In sub-Saharan African countries including Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Zambia, the informal sector accounts for around 70% of non-agricultural employment. In some countries in the region, women are much more likely than men to be working in the informal sector.

The decline in public sector jobs and the persistence of the informal sector has increased job insecurity for disadvantaged youth. While over 80% of employed men and over 90% of employed women aged 15 to 24 worked in the informal private sector in West African capitals in the early 2000s, for example, employment in the public sector was rare (Nordman and Pasquier-Doumer, 2012).

## Discrimination excludes many women from good jobs

*Employers prefer boys to work for them. They don't want girls to work for them. They turn girls away and feel there could be problems by employing girls.*

– young woman, India

Even if the challenges facing young people living in poor urban areas can be solved, discrimination both in education and in labour markets denies opportunities to certain groups, notably young women and people with disabilities. This requires special attention in policy. Discriminatory social norms (such as early marriage) and institutional practices limit young women's mobility and access to education and training, as well as to paid work, while imposing a heavy burden of unpaid, domestic work.

More women than men are employed either in the informal sector or informally in the formal sector in twenty-five of thirty-nine countries in a recent ILO survey. The range of activities

women engage in is constrained: many are confined to home-based work, and women are overrepresented in the most informal and insecure activities, such as waste-picking and street vending.

In urban Bolivia, where female labour force participation is high by Latin American standards, women are much more likely than men to be self-employed in the informal sector, and have much lower earnings (World Bank, 2009b). Women also face discrimination in pay in informal work. In greater Buenos Aires, controlling for education, qualifications, industry and personal characteristics, wages were 20% higher for men working in informal firms than women (Esquivel, 2010).

## Expanding skills training opportunities for disadvantaged youth

*National skills strategies need to include disadvantaged urban youth*

Given their share in the employment and output of urban areas, informal enterprises should be a key concern in national skills development strategies, yet this is not the case (Fluitman, 2009, 2010; Walther and Filipiak, 2007b). A review of forty-six developing countries in the Arab States, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa conducted for this Report shows that most do not have a national skills development strategy that explicitly addresses the urban informal sector (Engel, 2012).

India, however, is an exception, and has embarked on an ambitious strategy to raise the number of skilled workers to 500 million by 2022. A non-profit partnership between the government and the private sector, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), is in charge of implementation, for which a National Skill Development Fund has been created. NGOs, trade unions and

other social movements are often more active than governments or donors in improving conditions for subsistence workers.

NGOs, trade unions and other social movements are often more active than governments or donors in improving conditions for subsistence workers. India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), for example, a trade union registered in 1972, provides a variety of services: banking, insurance, legal aid, health care and child care, together with training in literacy, vocational skills and political mobilization (Chen et al., 2006; Jhabvala et al., n.d.). Negative perceptions about women's skills and capabilities among male builders, engineers, supervisors and clients have made it difficult for women to access new work opportunities. SEWA's answer has been the promotion of a cooperative of women that provides technical training and links up with employers to facilitate placement (Sudarshan, 2012).

SEWA inspired the creation of the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU) in South Africa. It has helped training providers adapt their courses to the needs of its members and has subsidized members' participation. This has allowed women to receive training in vocational skills such as baking, fashion design and sewing as well as in more general management skills and in English. SEWU has encouraged its members to receive training in male-dominated areas such as construction and wire fencing (Devenish and Skinner, 2004).

### *Programmes targeting unemployed youth are successful, but need resources*

Programmes that combine basic literacy and numeracy, vocational skills training and other forms of support to enhance employability have been successful in some parts of the world, notably in Latin America and the Caribbean. These programmes have benefited young women in particular, as was the case in Peru (Box 4).

#### **Box 4:**

#### **Peru's PROJoven programme helps young people find better jobs**

In Peru, as in other Latin American countries, large numbers of young people work in the informal sector. While access to primary schooling is high, many still leave school lacking foundation skills. In 2009, around one-quarter of young people were neither in employment nor education or training, and 76% of women and 66% of men were working in the informal sector.

When PROJoven (Programa de Capacitación Laboral Juvenil/Youth Labour Training Programme) was introduced in 1996 following the Jóvenes model, poor youth in particular were less likely to receive any training and only had access to institutions of lower quality. The programme was funded by a variety of national and donor sources, including the Inter-American Development Bank, and run by the Ministry of Labour. It targeted youth aged 16 to 24 who had low educational attainment, lacked work experience and were unemployed, underemployed

or inactive. Almost all belonged to poor households. The focus was on basic or semi-skilled training to improve employability in the short term. Between 1996 and 2003, about 42,000 youths participated. Courses, financed by PROJoven, were offered in training centres for three months, followed by a three-month internship in private firms that had to pay trainees at least the minimum wage.

Participation in the programme significantly improved young people's chances of securing a paid job, and increased their monthly earnings. The impact was larger for younger participants (aged 16 to 20) and for women. For instance, the likelihood of gaining access to formal employment increased by between seven and thirteen percentage points among men and by seventeen to twenty-one percentage points for females. Close links between training centres and participating companies may have contributed to the positive outcomes.

*Sources:* Cárdenas et al. (2011); Díaz and Jaramillo (2006); ILO (2011d).

In Colombia, between 2001 and 2005, Jóvenes en Acción targeted poor youth aged 18 to 25 who were unemployed or working informally. Participants received three months of classroom training and three months of on-the-job training in the country's seven largest cities. Courses covered a wide range of activities aimed at the needs of the formal sector. Random selection of participants from a larger group of applicants found a strong positive impact on women: their probability of being in paid employment rose by 7% and

their wages by almost 20%. The likelihood of being in formal employment also increased significantly, by 7% for women and 5% for men (Attanasio et al., 2011).

The drawback is that these programmes tend to be expensive. The cost per participant ranges from US\$700 to US\$2,000 – clearly unaffordable for many of the low income countries (Betcherman et al., 2007). In addition, for the programmes to be successful, a country has to have enough companies able



to participate, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa may not meet this criterion.

### *Addressing gender discrimination in traditional apprenticeships*

In many countries, more youth are trained in the urban informal sector through traditional apprenticeships than in formal training institutions: costs for their families are usually lower, as are educational entry requirements. The poorest may still be disadvantaged, however, especially where apprentices are recruited through family or community networks, and young women are largely excluded from male-dominated activities.

Making access to traditional apprenticeships more equitable and improving their quality are key priorities for skills development policy.

Traditional apprenticeship systems may also reflect gender segregation in the local labour market. A survey in the towns of Lindi and Mtwara in the United Republic of Tanzania found that 95% of apprentices in tailoring were women, but that there were hardly any female apprentices in the other trades surveyed, including carpentry, car mechanics, electrical service, food processing, local arts and plumbing (Nübler et al., 2009). Since most apprenticeships are in trades that women are less likely to take up, this limits their opportunity for training.

When appropriately implemented, traditional apprenticeships have a lot to offer young people. Given their potential benefits, attention is needed to ensure that they extend access to disadvantaged groups, including young women.

## Young Women in rural areas need skills the most



Democratic Republic of the Congo UNESCO/Tim Dirven/Panos

Despite widespread urbanization, around 70% of the world's 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty inhabit rural areas (IFAD, 2010). The 1 billion rural poor are heavily concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where small-scale farming and casual agricultural wage labour are their major sources of income and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Deprivation is particularly concentrated in rural areas. The likelihood of being poor is at least twice as high for the rural population in countries as

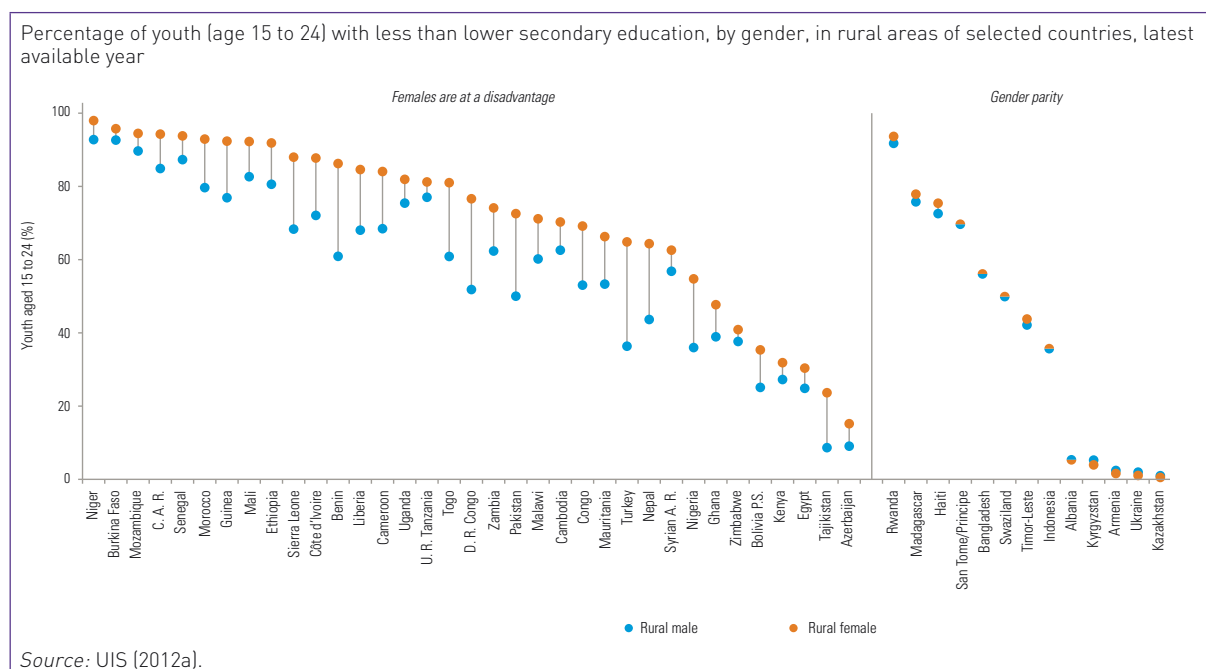
diverse as Brazil, Morocco, Nepal and Uganda (United Nations, 2011a).

While young women living in urban poverty can suffer from low levels of education, those lacking foundation skills are far more numerous in rural areas. Even for young people who make it to lower secondary school, curricula are generally not attuned to the needs of the rural economy, and the quality of education is affected by poor infrastructure and a lack of qualified teachers.

### In rural areas, young women are more disadvantaged than young men

While young people living in urban poverty can suffer from low levels of education, those lacking foundation skills are far more numerous in rural areas. The gender gap is most pronounced in countries where the majority of rural people do not make it to the end of lower secondary school. Some women who lack foundation skills have never entered school at all, and many others have not completed primary school. In Benin, Cameroon, Liberia and Sierra Leone, about

85% of young rural women lack foundation skills, compared with less than 70% of young men (Figure 14). Even in Turkey, a middle income country, the rural gender gap is wide – 65% of young women do not complete lower secondary school, compared with 36% of young men. In some countries, young men in rural areas are more likely to lack foundation skills, but in these countries overall levels of education tend to be higher, and gender gaps narrower.

**Figure 14: Young women in rural areas are the most likely to lack foundation skills**

Young women living in rural poverty face disadvantage in education starting in the early years of schooling, even in countries that have made strong progress in expanding access to primary education. In Kenya, for example, young people from rich households, whether urban or rural, male or female, are very likely to get at least four years of schooling. But for those from poor households living in a rural area it is a very different story, and even more so for females. Of poor rural young women in Kenya, 32% have less than four years in school, compared with 16% of poor rural males (UNESCO, 2012b). Ethnic minority and indigenous young women also fare particularly badly in rural areas.

Gender-specific social norms and practices and the gendered division of labour shape young women's expectations in ways that influence decisions over their engagement in education and training programmes. Such

barriers tend to be particularly pronounced in rural areas, for several reasons. Customary rules, threats to personal safety and lack of transport often limit women's ability to leave their villages to attend training programmes (Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2008). In Ethiopia, India and Viet Nam, the timing and location of training were identified as crucial to women's ability to participate (Barwa, 2003; Danida, 2004; Women in Development, 2003).

Women's weaker bargaining position within the household can also prevent them from joining training programmes. In Uganda, for example, the rules, norms and practices that structure the division of labour and the distribution of resources in the household are crucial to rural women's access to the time and money necessary for participation in rural agricultural training programmes (Wedig, 2012).

Young rural women are more likely not only to lack foundation skills, but also to be in the most arduous jobs, often working long hours for limited pay. In sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, South-East Asia and the Arab States, women are overrepresented in smallholder farming and agricultural labour, indicating limited economic opportunities for rural girls and women (FAO et al., 2010).

Even if young women have the necessary skills, they face discrimination that limits the types of work they can do and their access to capital, posing significant challenges in starting businesses (World Bank,

2006b). In Uganda, women are disproportionately represented in lower paid jobs and small-scale agriculture. Within the agricultural sector, women are more likely to be engaged in marketing and selling food crops while men dominate the sales of export cash crops, such as coffee – even though women contribute a large

### Addressing rural training needs

Many rural youth, particularly women, need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills as a first step to ensuring that they can benefit from other agricultural and non-farm skills development programmes. Many second-chance programmes are provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in ways that are flexible and oriented towards practical skills. Designed by small, locally based organizations, these programmes often adapt training content and delivery methods to local needs.

#### *Giving young rural people a second chance*

Many rural youth, particularly women, need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills as a first step to ensuring that they can benefit from other agricultural and non-farm skills development programmes. Many second-chance programmes are provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in ways that are flexible and oriented towards practical skills. Designed by small, locally based organizations, these

share of the labour for coffee production (Wedig, 2012).

Skills training programmes that do not take the challenges facing young women into account are likely to fail. For example, a USAID Integrated Agriculture Training Programme in Papua New Guinea had only limited success because it did not consider women's family responsibilities. The training courses were arranged away from the village for three full days and women found it difficult to travel and arrange for child care (Cahn and Liu, 2008).

Enhancing the education and skills of young people in rural areas, and young women in particular, would not only expand their opportunities, but could also increase their productivity, with gains for their families as well as the wider economy. In rural China, wages are significantly higher for those involved in non-farm work who attended at least some post-primary education (Qiang et al., 2005).

programmes often adapt training content and delivery methods to local needs.

Part-time programmes using local facilities help improve participation by accommodating local constraints on time, mobility and finances. The flexibility of locally designed programmes can be particularly beneficial for young rural women, who often have to balance training with other commitments that result in long working hours.

Young women are likely to require more targeted forms of support to address discrimination and other challenges. The Ishraq programme in Egypt provides a positive example of increasing young women's possibilities for skills development in a particularly conservative setting. Assuring strong local participation and adapting learning approaches to the local context contributed to the programme's success (Box 5).

**Box 5:****Bringing skills to adolescent girls in rural Egypt**

Egypt's current adolescent population is the country's largest ever: more than 13 million boys and girls aged 11 to 19. Despite major progress in primary schooling, many young people, particularly rural girls and women, have almost entirely missed out. In 2008, 20% of rural women aged 17 to 22 had less than two years of schooling. Many are likely to get married young.

The Ishraq programme was launched in 2001 by a coalition of international NGOs to provide skills training through a pilot project involving 277 out-of-school girls aged 13 to 15. The programme designers realized that, in this very conservative setting, parents would have to agree to the types of skills their daughters would be taught. Literacy and numeracy were among the most accepted and sought-after. A 'safe place' was provided in every community where the girls met four times a week over the thirty months of the project to receive training to become active members of their communities and to become earners.

The programme also educated boys, parents and community leaders to allow girls greater freedom to seek education and enter the world of work. In addition, Ishraq worked at the governorate and national ministry levels to gain support.

Participation in the pilot programme increased literacy and numeracy skills significantly. Of participants who took the government literacy examination, 92% passed, and 69% of participants who completed the programme entered or re-entered the formal school system. Ingrained negative beliefs among the girls themselves and their families significantly decreased and girls were allowed greater freedom. The proportion of girls saying they wanted to be married before 18 fell from 26% before the programme to 2% among those who completed it. All in all, the girls were found to be more empowered and ready for roles as productive family and society members.

Only 18% of the initial 277 participants pursued vocational skills courses, and an evaluation of the programme acknowledged that this area would need strengthening. Some wanted training in electrical appliance repair, but most were interested in more traditionally female occupations such as hairdressing.

Overall success led to the programme being extended, and it currently reaches at least 2,500 girls in fifty villages. The challenge is ensuring that even more girls are reached, given the large numbers who still do not complete primary school in rural Egypt.

Sources: Brady et al. (2007); Ishraq (2010); UNESCO (2012b).

### *Combining skills training with other support to address multiple disadvantages*

Combining microfinance or social protection with skills development programmes, including basic literacy and numeracy as well as livelihood skills training, is an important strategy for tackling the multiple forms of disadvantage that lock rural populations in poverty. Successful programmes have been able to transform lives by improving the asset base of the poor while providing them with skills to diversify their use of assets and improve access to markets.

The combination of skills training with microfinance services or social protection can also strengthen the capacities of rural youth for non-agricultural employment and entrepreneurship. A pioneer in this area is BRAC, the Bangladesh-based NGO. Its programmes have been successful in including support for immediate needs, skills training together with small grants and asset transfers to get small enterprises off the ground (Box 6).

**Box 6:****BRAC tackles multiple faces of poverty with training**

BRAC has pioneered innovative approaches to reduce rural poverty through a variety of programmes that tackle simultaneously the multiple constraints that prevent young people from escaping rural poverty. Because of the particular disadvantage young women face, their needs have been a focus of these programmes. Building on the success of its programmes in Bangladesh, BRAC is expanding them to other parts of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa.

About 20% of rural households in Bangladesh live in extreme poverty. They suffer from persistent food insecurity, own no cultivable land or assets, and are often illiterate and prone to illness. Women often suffer from gender discrimination, limiting their opportunities for income-generating activities. A disproportionate number of the poorest households are headed by women.

A programme called Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction was born of BRAC's experience that the poorest households find it difficult to participate in and benefit from microfinance. People living on less than US\$1 a day account for less than half of those obtaining microfinance, and need training to gain any benefits from assets or credit obtained through microfinance. The programme provides an income-earning asset to the poorest people (those living on less than US\$0.35 per day) in rural Bangladesh, usually giving it to women in the household, and provides them with training so they can get the most out of the asset. For example, an extremely poor woman might receive a cow, and would be supported by a small weekly stipend for a short period, or until the asset starts to yield income. Training in how to market the produce and how to use microfinance is also provided. The programme has been implemented on a large scale: it was piloted in 3 districts with 5,000 households starting in 2002, increasing to 15 districts and 100,000 households over the next 4 years.

Evaluations of the programme between 2002 and 2008 found it had effected lasting change in the economic condition of beneficiary households. Initial targeting of beneficiaries has been successful, and income gains are substantial and have not eroded with time. Income per

household member nearly tripled between 2002 and 2008.

Training is central to these results, ensuring that beneficiaries realize the potential of such high quality assets as Jersey cows with higher milk yields than the traditional South Asian breed to which beneficiaries are accustomed. It has also been found that entrepreneurial and marketing training helps beneficiaries maximize gains. This support is offered for up to two years to ensure that lessons are absorbed.

Another BRAC approach provides adolescent girls, particularly those who are out of school, with a range of support, including skills training. Initiated in Bangladesh, it has been adapted to poor rural contexts in sub-Saharan Africa. In Uganda, the Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents programme was designed to reinforce or reintroduce literacy and numeracy, and to provide girls with a safe space. Girls received life and livelihood skills training, along with training to help them earn and manage money in occupations such as hairdressing, tailoring, information technology, agriculture, poultry rearing and small trading. There were 690 adolescents' clubs accessible to all girls and women aged 13 to 22 in the target areas.

Over the two years of the programme, the number of participants who became involved in income-earning activities doubled, compared with an increase of just 4% among non-participants. Girls took up poultry rearing, food processing and small trade. Their financial literacy increased. Their borrowing for earning activities rose considerably, as did their savings. For example, before participating in the programme, 23% of the girls reported having savings, compared with 34% after their involvement. The programme appears to have had a broadly positive effect on participants' entrepreneurialism, and some were able to lend money to their own families.

*Sources:* Abed (2009); Bandiera et al. (2011); BRAC (2011a, 2011b); Improving Institutions for Pro-Poor Growth (2011); Krishna et al. (2010); Rural Poverty Portal (2012a, 2012b).

Combining Training with microfinance can have particular benefits for women, giving them more control over resources. In Nepal, the Project for Agriculture Commercialization and Trade was initiated in the 1990s with funding from the World Bank. One of its subprojects, the Women's Empowerment Program, aimed to provide literacy training and financial literacy education to enable women in rural communities to become independent of male relatives. The project facilitated the formation of women's savings and loans groups and provided the training necessary to allow the women to operate these profitably for the members. Literacy classes formed an integral part of the support and training given. The programme was highly successful in terms of saving and borrowing for members, with only 4% of groups making loans that defaulted. The programme lasted three years; the goal was for the groups then to be self-sustaining. More than 74,000 out of 130,000 women became literate through the programme (Ashe and Parrott, 2001).

In rural Uganda, married women have been given the chance to borrow via a commercial village microfinance banking model promoted by the government that has become widespread. An in-depth study was carried out of one microfinance model: a small 'village bank' that was owned, used and controlled by members but still commercially oriented. The programme provided training in credit norms and procedures, savings discipline, and business management. As a result women were able to start their own businesses, were found to be less dependent on their husbands, and sometimes were even able to offer their husbands employment. Many women not only became familiar with micro-credit borrowing and saving, but also developed diverse saving strategies, such as buying livestock that would prove a productive asset. They also chose to invest in the education of their children, possibly as a result of their increased financial and management knowledge (Lakwo, 2006).

### *Entrepreneurial and microbusiness skills for non-farm rural work*

Most smallholders require non-farm income to survive, especially where the size of holdings is declining. Young people who already have basic literacy and numeracy are likely to benefit most from entrepreneurship skills, as is shown by an innovative programme run by Camfed, an NGO working to support education of girls and women in Africa (Box 7).

Helping rural youth acquire entrepreneurial skills puts them in a stronger position to benefit from non-farm activities. Several innovative programmes aimed at providing entrepreneurship and microbusiness skills for disadvantaged young people such as women, including indigenous youth, have been developed on a large scale in rural areas of Latin America. Many of these have shown impressive results.

Given that young rural women are often particularly disadvantaged both in education and work, initiatives to improve their livelihoods are needed. In rural Mexico, women involved in activities such as selling food and making crafts received six weeks of practical training to improve their business and financial skills. The women already knew how to make basic calculations, but did not know how to determine profit or set prices. After the training, the women's business accounting improved and their daily profit increased by as much as 80% (Calderon et al., 2011).

**Box 7:****Camfed provides business skills to poor young rural women**

Camfed, a major international NGO, has been working for many years to help girls get into education and finish secondary school. More recently it started the Seed Money Programme for alumnae who were poor, rural and economically inactive. The goal is to help them create livelihood opportunities in villages where opportunities are scarce. By providing initial training and funds, the programme aims to make women financially independent and raise their status within their households and communities.

The Seed Money Programme provides rural young women with training in business management skills (including record keeping, market competition and marketing), a grant to help set up an enterprise, peer mentoring to support the new business, and access to micro loans at low interest once the business is up and running. The programme started in Zimbabwe in 1998 and has been replicated in Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

In 2007 in Zimbabwe, 13,614 people took part at a cost of US\$6.20 each. The Zimbabwe programme was successful even in the extremely difficult circumstances of the economic crisis that started in 2008. Women have opened businesses in gardening and livestock, sales of produce and cooked food, and sewing and hairdressing. By 2010, 93% of the businesses that were started via the grants had made a profit. Nearly all the

women reinvested some of the profit into the business. Women interviewed said they felt it had made a major difference to their lives, improving their standard of living and the respect they received within their households and communities.

From 2009 to 2011, Camfed also ran Financial Education for Young Women in Rural Areas of Zambia, a very different kind of project. It provided an intense one-day course to 10,701 girls – many more than are reached through the Seed Money Programme. The training covered money management, budgeting, saving, credit risk and banking services. Trust, honesty and personal integrity were also discussed.

The programme used a cascade training model, with 20 core trainers trained intensively over two weeks, while 160 peer trainers were then trained by them. Participants raised their annual income significantly, from an average of US\$74 to US\$93. The training also dramatically increased participants' appreciation of their ability to save money and they became more financially independent. An evaluation found, however, that it would be preferable to extend training to two days, and that providing grants to trainees would allow them to use their new skills, as practical experience with money management was lacking.

Sources: Kasonka and Mutelo (2011); Mak et al. (2010).

*Enhancing the relevance of training by adapting to the local context.*

Skills development that is tailored to the local context through an assessment of the local market and its needs is more likely to be successful. One example is Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE), a programme designed by the International Labour Organization that promotes local development and income generation, targeting disadvantaged groups. It provides vocational, entrepreneurial and management skills for income generation, as well as basic literacy and numeracy, which are lacking in many poor rural contexts.

Between 2002 and 2007, TREE was carried out in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of

Pakistan and the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines, with positive results. These areas are among the poorest in the two countries, both having been affected by conflict. In Pakistan, over 3,072 people received training, exceeding the target of 2,400; in the Philippines, 1,897 were trained, exceeding the target of 1,220 (ILO, 2005). Women, disenfranchised young men and those living with disability were targeted, along with former combatants in central Mindanao. In both countries, nearly all trainees used their new skills productively by either finding work or setting up a microenterprise three to five months after the end of the programme. Just over a third of Pakistani trainees, the vast majority of whom were women, began earning cash income for the first time and learned



new skills, allowing them to raise their self-confidence and social status (ILO, 2005).

The programme has been adopted successfully in other African and Asian countries. TREE in Bangladesh has helped women enter non-traditional trades such as appliance and computer repair. The approach combines technical and business training with training in gender issues and gender sensitization sessions for trainees' families, communities and partner organizations (ILO, 2009b).

The programme has been successful because it builds on partnerships involving the government, local communities, and employer and worker groups. It works towards empowering community target groups and promotes strong ownership by beneficiaries and partners, which contributes to its sustainability. With this type of foundation, the programme is in touch with local needs, providing highly relevant training, as the high rate of success for trainees shows (ILO, 2009b).

## Recommendations

*Although I haven't completed my education I need a chance. We want to work and give something good to the country.*

– young woman, Egypt

The need to take action in support of skills development for young people has become urgent. The 2012 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* identifies a number of ways in which governments, aid donors and the private sector need to ensure all young people, regardless of the gender, wealth or where they live, acquire skills needed to find work that pays enough to feed themselves and their families:

- To ensure the fifth education goal is truly achieved, Governments and policy makers must address the discrimination faced by girls and young women in education as well as in the workplace.
- Countries must start by examining the barriers that exclude girls and young women from participating and progressing in education to at least lower secondary level. They need to tackle the gender-specific norms and practices and the gendered division of labour that shape young women's expectations and opportunities. Legislative change together with strategies to change attitudes towards school re-entry for pregnant and mothers are needed. Scholarships and cash transfers can eliminate the costs of schooling that entrench the disadvantages faced by girls and young women. Flexible opportunities such as distance and open education can reduce the risks of female students dropping out due to family or work commitments.
- To rally global action, a global target should be set to ensure all young people benefit from lower secondary school, with the aim of achieving universal lower secondary education of acceptable quality by 2030. Long-term education plans should identify strategies and financial resources required to meet this goal, including targeted strategies to reach disadvantaged groups.
- For young women who make it to the end of secondary school, they need help making the transition through to employment; equal opportunities for apprenticeships and career counselling must be made available at a larger scale to avoid discrimination in education following young women through to the workplace.

- The 116 million young women of working age who never completed primary school urgently need governments to provide well-coordinated and adequately funded second chance programmes on a much greater scale. With the support of aid donors, governments should make this a policy priority, including it in education sector strategic planning with concrete targets, and corresponding budgetary allocations.
- This report shows that targeted programmes that address the multiple causes of disadvantage that young women face have proved effective in giving them the skills they need for work. Providing young women with microfinance and livelihood assets, and stipends until assets start to yield income, together with the skills needed to make the most out of these assets, gives them greater control over their own resources in ways that benefit them and their families.
- These changes cannot be made without additional funds. There is an urgent need, especially in poor countries, for resources to ensure all young people, regardless of their gender, have a good foundation in education, extending at least through to lower secondary school.

Please refer to the full 2012 Global Monitoring Report for references.  
See [www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org)

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the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* is an authoritative reference that aims to inform,  
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