

## Gender and Education for All THE LEAP TO EQUALITY



### Regional Overview

# Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>1</sup>

The region made notable progress at all levels of education during the 1990s, especially primary, where enrolment is now almost universal. But gender disparities and inequalities remain at higher levels.

#### Early childhood care and education (ECCE): also a priority

Most countries in the region have understood the positive influence of ECCE in preparing children for school and have made it a priority. GER steadily increased between 1990 and 2000 as pre-primary education, already well-established by the early 1990s, continued to grow. GER was below 42% in half the countries in 1990 but the median level had risen to 63% by 2000. Pre-primary education is well developed in Aruba, Barbados, Chile, Cuba, Costa Rica, Guyana, Jamaica, the Netherlands Antilles, Mexico, Paraguay, and Suriname. But few children have access to it in the Bahamas, Honduras and Nicaragua, where GERs are below 30%.

Parity has been achieved in nearly 80% of countries with data. Observed disparities are in favour of girls in the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Saint Lucia. In most countries, pre-primary education is provided by the state.

#### Universal primary education (UPE): almost a reality

Gender parity is closely tied to universalising primary education, now almost achieved in the region, where

enrolment rose from 57.1 to 70.3 million (+23%) between 1990 and 2000, boosting average net enrolment 10 percentage points, from 86.9% to 96.6%. But UPE is still a concern in several countries – the Bahamas, Chile, Colombia, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela – where NER is below 90%.

Nearly all countries have reached gender parity in primary education. But fewer girls are enrolled in some countries (Brazil, Guatemala, the Netherlands Antilles and Saint Lucia) and most (56%) of the region's almost two million out-of-school children are girls.

In almost all countries, boys repeat more than girls. Gender gaps in this respect are especially large in Aruba, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Uruguay and Venezuela. Most countries with data show higher survival rates to grade 5 for girls than for boys.

#### Participation in secondary and tertiary education: great progress in the last decade

Demand for secondary education has increased as more pupils graduate from primary school. The median gross enrolment ratio (GER) at secondary level rose from 53% in 1990 to almost 81% ten years later. GER exceeds 70% in most countries but ranges from only 37% in Guatemala to 128% in the Bahamas.

1. This is the EFA classification of regions. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are listed in the Table.

Far more girls than boys are enrolled in nearly all countries. Large disparities in favour of girls (GPI above 1.10) are found especially in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, the Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. Girls are less enrolled elsewhere, notably Guatemala and Peru. Such disparities are linked to under-performance by boys, who have higher repetition rates and are more likely to drop out, often to earn a living. Participation in tertiary education varies greatly, from only 6% in Trinidad and Tobago to 48% in Argentina. As in secondary education, female students significantly outnumber males. But most girls are enrolled in general courses and over-represented in so-called "feminine" fields, such as education, social sciences, humanities, services and health-related courses, that do not boost their chances of equal job opportunities with men.

Gender parity does not always translate into greater equality. In this region, as elsewhere, girls are still unable to convert their academic edge over boys into greater equality in other spheres of life. Boys' educational under-achievement has not yet resulted in their falling behind economically and politically and women may need higher qualifications to compete successfully for jobs, equal pay and managerial positions.

### Adult literacy: need for continuing efforts

The average adult literacy rate has steadily improved, from 85% in 1990 to 89% in 2000 according to UIS estimates. But efforts must continue if the Dakar goal of achieving fifty percent of improvement in adult literacy level is to be attained by 2015, especially in countries where illiteracy is relatively high (El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua).

Most adult illiterates are women but parity in literacy is expected to be achieved by 2015. Gender disparities are significant in Bolivia and Guatemala, where fewer than 80 women are literate for every 100 men.

### Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education

Achieving this goal involves understanding what holds girls and boys back so that policies can be designed to overcome these obstacles and improve access to and participation in education.

Urgent action is needed in countries where the gender gap is still large in primary and secondary education. An overriding priority is to tackle poverty constraints by reducing the direct and indirect cost of schooling to families and addressing the incidence of child labour. The school environment requires equal attention. Sexual violence and harassment within schools, particularly where HIV/AIDS is prevalent, needs to be confronted vigorously. Revising biases in teaching materials, training teachers to be gender aware and working with them and parents to break taboos are essential ingredients of an "engendered" strategy.

Latin America and the Caribbean: Selected education indicators, 2000.

Countries	Total population (thousands)	Compulsory education (age group)	Legal guarantee for free education	Adult literacy rate (%)		Pre-primary education		Primary education			Secondary education		Tertiary education		Total public expenditure on education as % of GNP	EFA Development Index (EDI)
				Total	GPI	GER (%) Total	GPI	NER (%) Total	GPI in GER	% of female teachers	GER (%) Total	GPI	GER (%) Total	GPI		
<b>Latin America</b>																
Argentina	37032	6-15	Yes	96.8	1.00	60.4	1.02	99.7	1.00	89.1	96.7	1.07	48.0	1.64	4.7	0.96
Bolivia <sup>1, 2</sup>	8329	6-13	Yes	85.4	0.86	46.4	1.01	96.9	0.99	61.2	79.6	0.96	35.7	...	5.7	0.90
Brazil <sup>1</sup>	170406	7-14	Yes	86.9	1.00	63.0	1.00	96.7	0.94	92.6	108.5	1.10	16.5	1.29	4.0	...
Chile	15211	6-14	Yes	95.8	1.00	77.5	1.00	88.8	0.98	77.6	85.5	1.02	37.5	0.92	4.3	0.96
Colombia	42105	5-15	No	91.6	1.00	37.0	1.02	88.5	1.00	77.3	69.8	1.10	23.3	1.09	5.2	0.86
Costa Rica	4024	6-15	Yes	95.6	1.00	87.4	1.00	91.1	0.97	80.4	60.2	1.09	16.0	1.21	4.8	0.91
Cuba	11199	6-14	Yes	96.7	1.00	108.8	1.02	97.3	0.96	83.3	84.5	1.05	24.7	1.14	8.7	0.97
Dominican Republic <sup>1</sup>	8373	6-14	Yes	83.7	1.00	38.1	1.01	92.5	0.97	75.2	59.5	1.26	...	...	...	0.86
Ecuador	12646	6-14	Yes	91.6	0.96	68.7	1.03	99.3	1.00	67.9	57.4	1.02	...	...	1.7	0.92
El Salvador	6278	7-15	Yes	78.7	0.93	43.6	1.03	...	0.96	...	54.2	...	17.5	1.24	2.4	...
Guatemala <sup>1</sup>	11385	6-15	Yes	68.5	0.80	51.2	1.01	84.3	0.92	...	37.0	0.92	...	...	1.7	0.74
Honduras <sup>2</sup>	6417	6-13	Yes	75.0	1.00	21.4	1.05	87.6	1.02	...	...	...	14.7	1.31	...	...
Mexico <sup>1</sup>	98872	6-15	Yes	91.2	0.96	77.0	1.03	99.4	0.99	63.3	75.3	1.05	20.7	0.96	4.5	0.94
Nicaragua <sup>1, 2</sup>	5071	7-12	Yes	66.5	1.01	26.8	1.04	80.7	1.01	82.4	54.0	1.18	...	...	...	0.73
Panama	2856	6-11	Yes	91.9	0.99	47.1	1.02	99.9	0.97	75.0	69.2	1.06	34.9	1.67	6.2	0.95
Paraguay <sup>1</sup>	5496	6-14	Yes	93.3	0.98	83.0	1.03	92.1	0.96	...	59.8	1.03	16.5	1.36	5.0	0.90
Peru <sup>1</sup>	25662	6-16	Yes	89.9	0.90	64.1	1.02	99.9	0.99	62.1	85.6	0.93	...	...	3.5	0.93
Uruguay	3337	6-15	Yes	97.6	1.01	62.5	1.02	90.4	0.98	...	98.1	1.14	36.1	1.83	2.8	0.93
Venezuela	24170	6-14	Yes	92.5	0.99	48.1	1.02	88.0	0.98	...	59.3	1.20	29.1	1.46	...	0.91
<b>The Caribbean</b>																
Anguilla	11	5-17	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	89.9	...	...	...	...	...	...
Antigua and Barbuda	65	5-16	Yes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3.5	...
Aruba	101	...	...	...	...	98.3	1.00	97.0	0.97	78.7	97.5	1.05	29.5	1.49	...	...
Bahamas	304	5-16	No	95.4	1.02	15.3	1.09	82.8	0.97	...	128.5	0.96	...	...	...	...
Barbados	267	5-16	Yes	99.7	1.00	80.3	1.07	99.7	1.00	76.9	101.6	1.01	38.2	...	7.3	...
Belize	226	5-14	Yes	93.2	1.00	31.2	1.06	98.2	0.97	64.7	74.0	1.08	...	...	6.8	0.92
Bermuda	63	5-16	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	89.2	...	...	...	...	...	...
British Virgin Islands	24	5-16	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	89.2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cayman Islands	38	5-16	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	85.0	...	...	...	...	...	...
Dominica	71	5-16	No	...	...	...	...	...	...	80.6	...	...	...	...	5.6	...
Grenada	94	5-16	No	...	...	...	...	84.2	...	76.2	62.6	...	...	...	4.5	...
Guyana <sup>1, 2</sup>	761	6-15	Yes	98.5	0.99	117.5	0.99	97.9	0.97	...	116.1	0.99	...	...	4.5	0.97
Haiti	8142	6-15	No	49.8	0.92	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.1	...
Jamaica	2576	6-12	No	86.9	1.09	82.5	1.02	94.9	0.99	86.7	83.3	1.04	16.4	1.89	6.6	0.92
Montserrat	4	5-13	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	90.0	...	...	...	...	...	...
Netherlands Antilles	215	6-15	...	96.5	1.00	89.3	1.01	91.2	0.87	81.8	83.6	1.13	14.8	1.38	...	...
Saint Kitts and Nevis	38	5-16	No	...	...	...	...	...	...	88.2	...	...	...	...	3.3	...
Saint Lucia	148	5-16	No	...	...	61.5	1.05	99.7	0.95	84.1	88.8	1.31	...	...	6.1	...
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	113	5-15	No	...	...	...	...	...	...	65.7	...	...	...	...	9.9	...
Suriname <sup>1</sup>	417	7-12	Yes	...	...	96.6	0.99	98.4	1.00	82.3	87.0	1.18	...	...	...	...
Trinidad and Tobago <sup>1</sup>	1294	6-12	Yes	98.3	0.99	62.7	...	92.4	0.98	74.5	80.8	1.07	6.5	1.53	4.3	0.96
Turks and Caicos Islands	17	4-16	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	87.8	...	...	...	...	...	...
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	<b>513858</b>	...	...	<b>88.9</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>62.7</b>	...	<b>96.6</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>80.8</b>	<b>1.07</b>	...	...	<b>4.5</b>	...
<b>Developing countries</b>	<b>4700496</b>	...	...	<b>73.6</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>82.1</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>4.1</b>	...
<b>World</b>	<b>6041386</b>	...	...	<b>79.7</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>46.7</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>83.8</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>77.5</b>	<b>1.06</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>4.5</b>	...

Source: EFA GMR 2003, Statistical annex.

Data in italics are for 1999.

1. Primary school fees continue to be charged despite legally-guaranteed free education, according to a World Bank survey (2002).

2. Countries invited to participate in the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI).

Note: EDI is a new composite index that incorporates indicators for the four most quantifiable EFA goals – UPE, adult literacy, gender parity and quality of education. It aims to give a broader picture of progress toward EFA and identify countries doing well on all fronts, those succeeding in only some areas and those with all-round difficulties (for further explanation, see Appendix 2 of the full Report). The EDI for a country is the arithmetical mean of the observed values of indicators selected for each of the EFA goals. Since these are percentages, the value can vary from 0 to 1. The higher it is, the closer a country is to the goal and the greater its EFA achievement.

Eliminating gender disparity mainly concerns secondary education, where far more girls are enrolled than boys. Some countries risk not achieving parity either by 2005 or 2015 unless appropriate policies are put in place. Prospects for countries achieving it are based on past rates of change in the gender parity index in primary and secondary enrolment.

#### Countries that have already achieved gender parity:

- **Primary education (22 out of 29 with data):** Argentina, Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela.
- **Secondary education (5 out of 27 with data):** Barbados, Chile, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay.

#### Gender parity prospects

(14 countries with data in 1990 and 2000 for both primary and secondary education have not yet achieved it):

- **Countries likely to achieve it by 2005 (2):** Bolivia, Jamaica.
- **Countries likely to miss it in 2005 but reach it by 2015 (6):** Belize, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Venezuela.
- **Countries that may not achieve it by 2015 in secondary education or at both levels (6):** Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

These are forecast based on recent trends. While most countries with data (12 out of 14) are likely to miss reaching gender parity at either primary or secondary level or both by 2005, policies (in the region or elsewhere) are available to many of them to achieve it within a few years.

## Resources and aid

Eliminating gender disparities and inequality while achieving all the other EFA goals is costly. Countries will need to allocate more of their own resources and use them more effectively. Half the countries with data were spending less than 4.5% of national income on education in 2000 – higher than average for developing countries but still less than the 5.3% in developed countries.

The least developed among them, with the lowest education indicators, will need more external aid to achieve EFA. Yet overall bilateral and multilateral aid to education fell between 1998/99 and 2000/01, though it increased for basic education. Latin America and the Caribbean receives more education aid (11%) than South and West Asia (which faces a bigger challenge, having a third of the world's out-of-school children), but current problems of turning aid commitments, especially the FTI,<sup>2</sup> into reality do not augur well for international assistance to countries at risk or serious risk of not achieving the EFA goals, particularly the gender targets. ■

2. Of the 18 countries initially invited to participate in the Fast-Track Initiative, four – Bolivia, Guyana, Honduras and Nicaragua – are from Latin America and the Caribbean.

## ACRONYMS

**FTI** **Fast-Track Initiative.** Designed primarily by the World Bank, the FTI was launched in April 2002 as a process that would provide quick and incremental, technical and financial support to countries that have policies but are not on track to attain Universal Primary Education by 2015.

**GER** **Gross enrolment ratio.** Number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the relevant official age group.

**GPI** **Gender parity index.** Ratio of female to male value of a given indicator. A gender parity index equals 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 means a disparity in favour of boys; a GPI > 1 indicates a disparity in favour of girls.

**GNP** **Gross national product.**

**NER** **Net enrolment ratio.** Number of pupils in the official age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age- group.

**UIS** **UNESCO Institute for Statistics.**