



Introduction

Kiribati is one of the countries which progress toward EFA since 2000 was not fully reflected in the 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) due to lack of sufficient enrolment data. The country has not reported any number of children enrolled in primary school to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) beyond 2009, and even beyond 2003 for pre-primary education. In order to monitor progress made by Kiribati across some of the EFA goals since 2000, the GMR Team used data coming from the Kiribati EFA 2015 review report that covers the period between 2005 and 2013.

It is important to note that the use of data from a national source meant using school age-groups that are different from the ones agreed upon in the International standard classification of education system (ISCED) framework. This is particularly the case of primary education, with the age-group 6-12 used in the national source instead of 6-11 in the ISCED framework.

Pre-primary education

In Kiribati, early childhood education remains out of reach for many children and the situation has worsened over time. The pre-primary gross enrolment ratio (GER) decreased considerably, from 51% in 2005 to 33% in 2013. Obviously there is need to revitalize the sector if the benefits of preschool as a preparation for the basic education system in Kiribati are to be realized.¹

Primary education

In terms of universal primary enrolment, the trend is also downward with Kiribati moving away from the target that was achieved in 2005. The net enrolment ratio (NER) decreased from 97% in 2005 to 91% in 2012, bringing the country from having reached the target to an intermediate position. It is hope that the introduction of the new language policy and curriculum along with the associated teacher development and School Improvement Program (SIP), with the later targeting families with out of school children, will halt and reverse this negative trend.²

Access to school is an important step to universal primary education, but it is equally important to ensure that all children, who enrol in primary education, complete it. However, dropouts remain an important issue in Kiribati, with many children who enter primary school not reaching the last grade and thus not completing school. In 2013, the average survival rate to the last grade of primary was about 66%. In other words, more than one-third of pupils were leaving school too early, making universal primary education still a distance goal.

¹ Kiribati EFA 2015 Review Report, 2014, p.15.

² Ibid., P.21.

Gender Parity

In Kiribati, the overall downward trend in primary school enrolment has affected more girls, with increase in gender disparities at their expense over the years. While gender parity was achieved in primary education in 2005, with the gender parity index (GPI) of 1.01, the country has moved away from the target as indicated by a GPI of 0.94 in 2013. However, when enrolled, girls stand equal or better chance than boys of completing primary school. This also the case in Kiribati where much more girls reached the last grade in 2013 as indicated by their survival rate of 70% compared with 62% for boys.

Conclusion

The analysis of the education data of Kiribati shows an alarming situation. Indeed, the country has been moving away from the EFA goals discussed in this profile. Much less children were taking part in pre-primary education programmes, while primary school participation and retention, in particular of girls, were decreasing. Consequently, EFA remains an unfinished business in Kiribati, and much will have to be done to improve strategies that focus on making early childhood and primary education available for all children of Kiribati. Furthermore, the country needs to improve school retention in order to ensure that all children who have access to primary school do complete it.