

Gender and Education for All THE LEAP TO EQUALITY



Regional Overview

Sub-Saharan Africa¹

EFA remains a great challenge in this region. Despite commitment to international treaties and declarations² by most of its countries, all education indicators are below world and developing country averages. Most children, more often girls, are still deprived of the right to education.

Early childhood care and education (ECCE): still a luxury for nearly all children

More than a third of the world's countries with available data (56 out of 152) have very low pre-primary enrolment (GERs of below 30%). Nearly half of them are in sub-Saharan Africa, where GER ranges from less than 1% in the Democratic Republic of Congo to 90% in Mauritius (see table).

ECCE is often provided by private institutions and is concentrated in urban and wealthy areas where parents tend to be more aware of its benefits and sensitive to the gender issue than rural ones. As a result, girls' access to ECCE is much better than to other levels of education. In some countries (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and Zimbabwe) more girls are enrolled than boys.

Universal primary education: still a long way to go, especially for girls

Gender parity is closely tied to universalising primary education. But only 58% of children of the official primary school age were enrolled in 2000. This NER was the lowest of all regions and far below the 84%

world average. It meant 44 million children were not enrolled (more than 40% of the world total of out-of-school children), more than half of them girls.

Sub-Saharan Africa has low enrolments rates and strong gender disparities and inequalities. A third of the countries have GPIs of under 0.76 – Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, the Central African Republic, Mozambique and Liberia.

Gender disparities concern not only access to school but also participation in the learning process. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest repetition rate – more than 15% in half the countries with data. Unlike elsewhere, girls repeat more often than boys and the region is home to almost all the world's countries where this happens.

Survival rates to grade 5 in sub-Saharan Africa are lower than elsewhere, and it is the only region where they are higher for boys than girls, notably in Guinea-Bissau, Malawi and Mozambique.

An education pyramid much narrower at higher levels with bigger gender disparities

Access to secondary and tertiary education is still limited to a minority and half the countries show gross enrolment rates of no more than 26% for secondary and 2.5% for tertiary. Participation is often the privilege of boys and young men. Gender disparities in primary

¹ This is the EFA classification of regions. The countries in sub-Saharan Africa are listed in the Table.

² The first was the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which acknowledged the right of all to education and stated that elementary education would be free and compulsory and higher levels of education accessible to all on the basis of merit.

education increase with the level of education although girls' participation in secondary rose during the 1990s, as in all developing countries, with strong gains in Malawi, Niger, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

In tertiary education, girls are not only much less represented (fewer than five girls to 10 boys) but often confined to so-called "feminine" fields, such as social sciences, humanities, services and health-related courses, that do not boost their chances of equal job opportunities with men. What men and women choose to study is a key issue in the debate about gender equality. In this region the first step towards it is to guarantee gender parity in access to and participation at all levels of education.

The right to education: also a concern for adult women

Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the world's lowest adult literacy rates, with only 60% of the population of 15 and over able to read and to write in 2000, well below the world average of 80%. The figure was below 40% in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger and Senegal. Women account for nearly two-thirds of the illiterates, a figure not expected to change much by 2015. Most countries show substantial gender gaps, with female literacy no more than half that of males in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mozambique and Niger.

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.

As elsewhere, girls' enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa increased during the 1990s and with it gender parity – from 0.83 to 0.88 in 2000 in primary education and from 0.65 to 0.82 at secondary level. The gender parity index at primary level increased by at least 30% in Benin, Gambia and Guinea. Despite this general progress, a number of 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.

Sub-Saharan Africa: selected education indicators, 2000.

	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		
Angola ¹	13134	6-14	Yes	...	...	...	...	36.9	0.88	40.8	17.6	0.83	0.7	0.63	3.4	...
Benin	6272	6-11	No	37.4	0.45	6.1	0.95	70.3	0.68	19.9	21.8	0.45	3.6	0.24	3.2	0.62
Botswana	1541	6-15	Yes	77.2	1.07	...	...	84.3	1.00	80.6	79.1	1.06	4.6	0.89	8.1	0.86
Burkina Faso ²	11535	6-16	No	23.9	0.42	1.1	1.07	35.5	0.71	22.9	10.2	0.64	...	...	...	0.47
Burundi	6356	...	No	48.0	0.72	1.2	0.95	53.7	0.80	54.0	10.3	0.77	1.2	0.36	3.5	0.59
Cameroon	14876	6-12	No	71.3	0.81	14.0	1.01	...	0.87	35.5	...	...	4.9	...	3.4	...
Cape Verde	427	6-16	No	73.8	0.78	56.4	1.06	99.8	0.98	64.5	75.9	1.02	...	...	...	0.89
Central African Republic	3717	6-15	No	46.7	0.59	...	...	54.7	0.69	18.3	...	...	1.9	0.19	...	...
Chad ¹	7885	6-14	Yes	42.6	0.66	...	...	58.2	0.63	10.1	11.5	0.28	0.9	0.17	2.0	0.52
Comoros	706	6-14	No	55.9	0.77	1.7	1.08	56.2	0.87	16.5	20.6	0.82	1.1	0.73	...	0.68
Congo ¹	3018	6-16	Yes	80.7	0.85	3.1	1.06	...	0.92	41.1	41.9	0.83	5.0	0.13	5.5	...
Côte d'Ivoire	16013	6-16	No	48.6	0.62	3.1	0.98	62.2	0.76	20.5	23.2	0.55	...	...	4.9	0.63
Democratic Rep. of the Congo ¹	50948	6-15	Yes	61.4	0.69	0.7	0.99	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Equatorial Guinea	457	7-11	Yes	83.2	0.80	29.2	...	71.7	0.91	25.7	31.0	0.43	2.7	0.43	1.9	0.61
Eritrea	3659	7-13	No	55.7	0.66	5.6	0.91	41.0	0.82	40.6	28.3	0.71	1.7	0.15	...	0.58
Ethiopia ²	62908	...	No	39.1	0.66	1.8	0.97	46.7	0.69	30.3	18.0	0.66	1.6	0.27	4.8	0.54
Gabon	1230	6-16	No	...	...	14.4	1.01	87.6	0.99	47.8	59.6	0.94	...	...	4.6	...
Gambia ^{1, 2}	1303	...	Yes	36.6	0.68	20.1	0.90	68.7	0.91	28.8	37.4	0.70	...	...	2.7	0.63
Ghana ^{1, 2}	19306	6-14	Yes	71.6	0.79	59.3	0.99	58.2	0.91	34.8	36.2	0.81	3.3	0.40	4.2	0.70
Guinea ²	8154	7-14	No	...	...	...	...	47.0	0.72	25.0	...	...	...	...	2.0	...
Guinea-Bissau ¹	1199	7-12	Yes	38.4	0.43	3.9	1.05	53.5	0.67	...	20.4	0.54	0.4	0.18	2.3	0.46
Kenya	30669	6-13	No	82.4	0.86	41.6	0.98	68.5	0.99	42.0	30.6	0.91	2.9	0.77	6.4	0.78
Lesotho	2035	...	No	83.4	1.29	18.1	1.03	78.4	1.05	80.2	32.8	1.20	2.6	1.76	7.9	0.80
Liberia	2913	6-16	No	53.5	0.52	69.5	0.89	...	...	...	22.5	0.69	...	...	...	0.59
Madagascar ¹	15970	6-14	Yes	66.5	0.81	3.4	1.02	67.7	0.96	53.5	...	...	2.2	0.84	3.2	0.69
Malawi	11308	...	Yes	60.1	0.62	...	...	...	0.98	37.9	35.7	0.76	...	...	4.1	...
Mali ¹	11351	7-15	Yes	25.6	0.45	1.4	0.99	...	0.72	23.0	...	...	...	...	3.0	...
Mauritius	1161	6-12	Yes	84.5	0.93	90.3	1.03	94.7	1.00	55.1	77.1	0.94	11.4	1.36	3.7	0.94
Mozambique ²	18292	...	No	44.0	0.48	...	...	54.4	0.76	25.9	11.9	0.64	0.6	0.79	2.5	0.51
Namibia ¹	1757	6-16	Yes	82.0	0.98	21.4	1.15	81.6	1.01	66.8	61.7	1.13	5.9	1.24	...	0.88
Niger ^{1, 2}	10832	7-12	Yes	16.0	0.36	1.1	0.98	30.4	0.68	33.1	6.4	0.66	1.5	0.34	2.8	0.44
Nigeria	113862	6-12	Yes	64.0	0.78	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Rwanda	7609	7-15	Yes	66.8	0.82	2.7	0.99	...	0.99	51.1	14.1	0.98	1.7	0.50	2.8	0.74
Sao Tome and Principe	138	7-13	Yes	...	...	...	...	...	...	61.8	...	...	...	...	...	...
Senegal ¹	9421	7-12	Yes	37.4	0.59	3.6	...	63.1	0.89	22.1	17.8	0.66	...	...	3.2	0.61
Seychelles	80	6-15	Yes	...	...	...	...	...	...	86.1	...	...	-	-	7.9	...
Sierra Leone	4405	...	No	...	...	4.0	...	...	...	38.4	26.5	0.82	2.2	0.40	...	...
Somalia	8778	6-14	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
South Africa	43309	7-15	No	85.2	0.98	33.6	1.00	88.9	0.95	75.2	87.3	1.09	15.2	1.23	5.8	0.83
Swaziland	925	...	No	79.6	0.97	...	...	92.8	0.95	75.4	59.9	1.00	5.2	0.87	...	0.88
Togo	4527	6-15	No	57.1	0.59	2.4	1.00	91.2	0.80	12.5	39.1	0.45	3.7	0.20	4.9	0.71
Uganda ²	23300	...	No	67.0	0.73	4.2	1.00	...	0.90	32.6	15.2	0.64	3.0	0.52	2.3	...
United Republic of Tanzania ²	35119	7-13	Yes	75.0	0.79	...	...	46.7	1.00	45.3	5.8	0.81	...	...	...	0.73
Zambia ²	10421	...	No	78.2	0.84	...	...	65.5	0.95	50.4	23.5	0.81	2.5	0.47	...	0.78
Zimbabwe	12627	6-12	No	88.7	0.91	36.3	1.03	79.6	0.97	48.3	44.5	0.88	3.9	0.60	11.1	0.83
Sub-Saharan Africa	615453	...	...	60.3	0.75	4.2	1.00	58.2	0.88	39.5	26.5	0.82	2.5	0.48	3.4	...
Developing countries	4700496	...	...	73.6	0.82	30.9	0.99	82.1	0.92	61.5	59.9	1.01	10.4	0.73	4.1	...
World	6041386	...	...	79.7	0.87	46.7	1.01	83.8	0.93	72.3	77.5	1.06	22.9	1.04	4.5	...

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.

Countries that have already achieved gender parity:

- **Primary education (10 out of 40 with data):** Botswana, Cape Verde, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe.
- **Secondary education (3 out of 36 with data):** Cape Verde, Rwanda, Swaziland.

Gender parity prospects

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

- **Countries likely to achieve parity in 2005 (2):** Kenya, Malawi.
- **Countries likely to miss parity in 2005 but achieve it by 2015 (9):** Botswana, Comoros, Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania.
- **Countries that may not achieve it in 2015 either at primary, secondary or both levels (16):** Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Zimbabwe.

These are forecasts based on recent trends. While more than 90% of the countries (25 out of 27) 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 3.4% of national income on education in 2000 – lower than the 4.1% average for developing 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. Even if high priority is given to sub-Saharan Africa, which receives 27% of all bilateral aid to education, current problems of turning aid commitments, especially the FTI,³ 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. ■

3. Of the 18 countries initially invited to participate in the Fast-Track Initiative, 10 are from sub-Saharan Africa – Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mozambique, Niger, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

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.