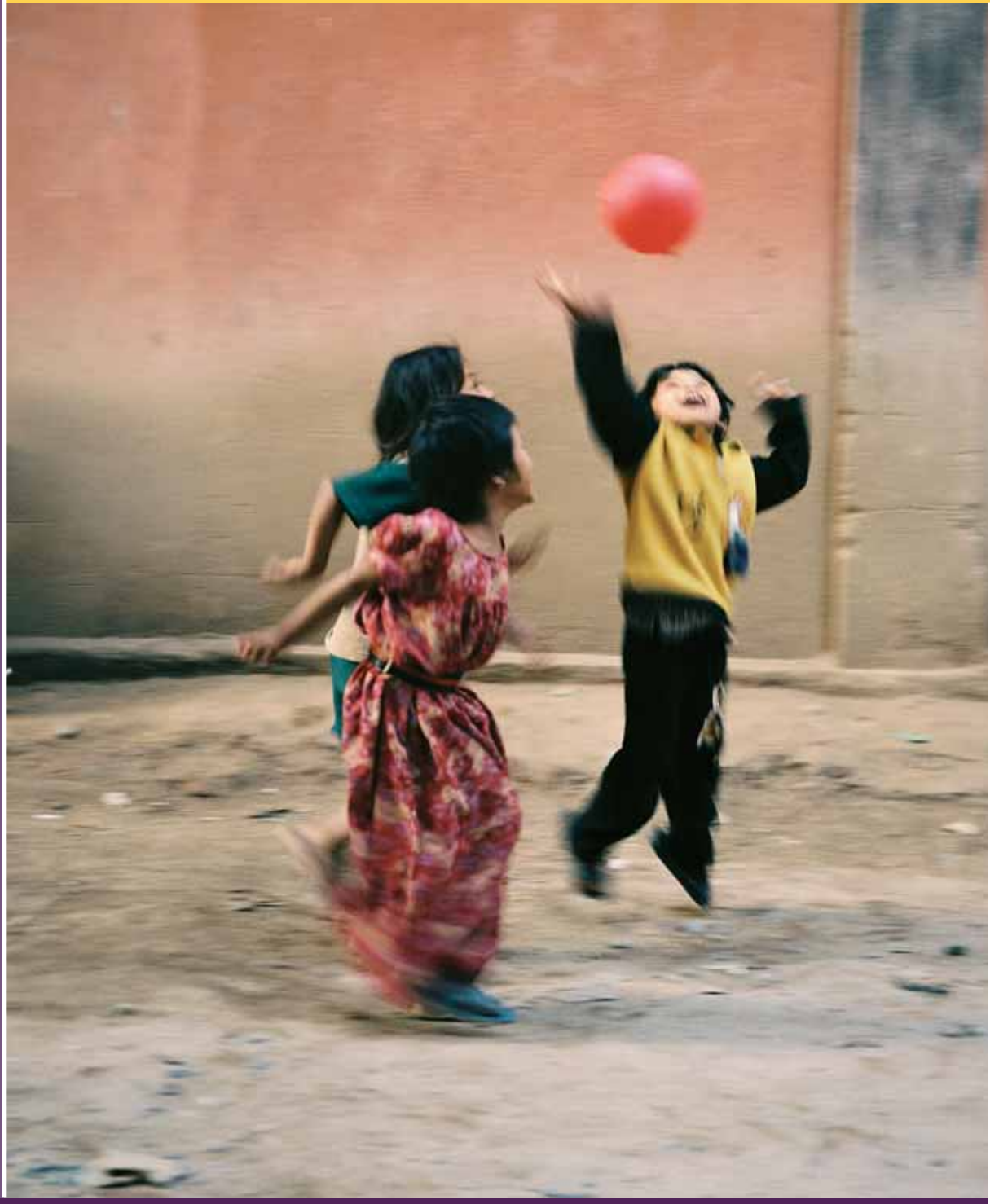
Summary



Strong foundations

Early childhood care and education

EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007

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Early childhood care and education

Summary

UNESCO Publishing

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Highlights of the EFA Report 2007

Time is running out to meet the EFA goals set in 2000. Despite continued overall global progress at the primary level, including for girls, too many children are not in school, drop out early or do not reach minimal learning standards. By neglecting the connections among early childhood, primary and secondary education, and adult literacy, countries are missing opportunities to improve basic education across the board – and, in the process, the prospects of children, youth and adults everywhere.

Progress toward the goals

Primary education continues to expand

Primary school enrolments increased most rapidly between 1999 and 2004 in two of the three regions furthest from universal primary education: they grew by 27% in sub-Saharan Africa and by 19% in South and West Asia, but by only 6% in the Arab States. The world net enrolment ratio stands at 86%. While grade 1 enrolments rose sharply, too many children who start school still do not reach the last primary grade: fewer than 83% in half the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean with data available, fewer than two-thirds in half the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Out-of-school children: how many and who are they?

Progress is being made in reducing the number of primary school-age children who are not enrolled in school. Between 1999 and 2004 the number fell by around 21 million to 77 million. This is still very high, unacceptably so. Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia are home to more than three-quarters of these children, although the latter region halved its number between 1999 and 2004, mainly due to reductions in India. The global estimate, high though it is, understates the problem: data from household surveys show that many children enrolled in school do not attend regularly.

The children most likely to be out of school and to drop out live in rural areas and come from the poorest households. On average, a child whose mother has no education is twice as likely to be out of school as one whose mother has some education.

Government policies to tackle exclusion

Governments urgently need to identify the groups of children most likely never to enrol in school, in addition to those who drop out. This is the first step in implementing policies that reach out to the excluded and improve the quality, flexibility and relevance of education.

Among measures to foster inclusion: abolishing school fees, providing income support to poor and rural households to reduce reliance on child labour, teaching in children's mother tongue, offering education opportunities for disabled children and those affected by HIV/AIDS, and ensuring that youth and adults get a second chance at education.

Improving teacher recruitment, training and working conditions

There are not enough qualified and motivated teachers to reach the EFA goals. Sub-Saharan Africa needs 1.6 million new teachers by 2015. In this region and in South and West Asia, there are too few women teachers to attract girls to school and retain them. Teacher absenteeism is also a serious problem in many developing countries.

Shorter pre-service training with more on-the-job practice and professional development, and incentives to work in remote and rural areas, are effective strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly in difficult contexts.

Secondary education: growing demand and not enough places

The pressure to expand secondary education is rising dramatically. Gross enrolment ratios rose in all developing regions but remain low in sub-Saharan Africa (30%), South and West Asia (51%) and the Arab States (66%).

Low numbers of secondary places slow the achievement of universal primary education because they reduce the incentive to complete primary school. At the same time, increasing demand for secondary education results in competition with other levels for public expenditure.

Gender parity: still not a reality

There are now 94 girls in primary school for every 100 boys, up from 92 in 1999. Of the 181 countries with 2004 data available, about two-thirds have achieved gender parity in primary education. The primary education gender gap in favour of boys has closed in only four of the twenty-six countries that had gross enrolment ratios below 90% in 2000.

Only one-third of the 177 countries with data available on secondary education have achieved parity. At this level disparities are in favour of girls as often as boys. At tertiary level, gender parity exists in only five countries out of 148 with data in 2004. Gender equality also remains an issue, with stereotypes persisting in learning materials and, too often, teachers' expectations of girls and boys differing.

Literacy: an elusive target

Some 781 million adults (one in five worldwide) lack minimum literacy skills. Two-thirds are women. Literacy rates remain low in South and West Asia (59%), sub-Saharan Africa (61%), the Arab States (66%) and the Caribbean (70%). Without concerted efforts to expand adult literacy programmes, by 2015 the global number of adult illiterates will have dropped by only 100 million. Governments must also focus on building literate environments.

Countries in conflict: often missing from the analysis

Data are unavailable for several countries, mostly in conflict or post-conflict situations, and therefore these countries are not fully reflected in the Report's analyses. Their EFA situations remain serious and need to be remembered when considering the global EFA picture. Children living in such circumstances require custom-tailored education opportunities to restore some stability to their lives.

Finance and Aid

Domestic spending on education as a share of GNP decreased between 1999 and 2004 in 41 of the 106 countries with data, though it increased in most of the others. Public spending needs to focus on key requirements for achieving EFA: teachers, adult literacy, early childhood care and education (ECCE) and inclusive policies at all levels.

School fees were reduced or abolished in several more countries but are still far too common, a major obstacle to the enrolment and continued participation of the poor in primary school.

Total aid to basic education in low-income countries almost doubled between 2000 and 2004 (from US$1.8 billion to US$3.4 billion at 2003 prices), having previously declined. As a share of aid to the whole education sector in low-income countries, however, it remained constant at 54%. Half of all bilateral donors allocate at least half of their education aid to middle-income developing countries, and almost half allocate less than one-quarter directly to basic education.

The Fast Track Initiative provides an important coordinating mechanism for donor agencies but has not yet led to a global compact for achieving universal primary education. Since 2002, disbursements have totalled only US$96 million, reaching only eleven countries, though donors increased their pledges significantly over the past year.

Funding gap: External funding requirements for EFA, including some provision for adult literacy and ECCE, are now estimated at US$11 billion a year, over three times the current level and twice what recently promised increases in overall aid are likely to bring by 2010.

Early Childhood Care and Education

What is it?

- Formal definitions of ECCE vary. This Report adopts a holistic approach: ECCE supports children's survival, growth, development and learning – including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development – from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings.
- ECCE programmes encompass very diverse arrangements, from parenting programmes to community-based child care, centre-based provision and formal pre-primary education, often in schools.
- Programmes typically aim at two age groups: children under 3 and those from age 3 to primary school entry (usually by age 6, always by age 8).

Why does it matter?

- ECCE is a right, recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has won near-universal ratification.
- ECCE can improve the well-being of young children, especially in the developing world, where a child has a four in ten chance of living in extreme poverty and 10.5 million children a year die from preventable diseases before age 5.
- Early childhood is a time of remarkable brain development that lays the foundation for later learning.
- ECCE contributes to the other EFA goals (e.g. it improves performance in the first years of primary school) and to the Millennium Development Goals, especially the overarching goal of reducing poverty, as well as the education and health goals.
- It is more cost-effective to institute preventive measures and support for children early on than to compensate for disadvantage as they grow older.
- Affordable, reliable child care provides essential support for working parents, particularly mothers.
- Investment in ECCE yields very high economic returns, offsetting disadvantage and inequality, especially for children from poor families.

What is the situation?

- About 80% of developing countries have some sort of formally established maternity leave, although enforcement varies.
- The youngest children have been neglected. Almost half the world's countries have no formal programmes for children under 3.
- Enrolment in pre-primary education has tripled since 1970, though coverage remains very low in most of the developing world.
- Most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries have at least two years of free pre-primary education.
- Among developing country regions, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific have the highest pre-primary gross enrolment ratios; far behind come East Asia, South and West Asia, the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa.
- After sharp declines in the 1990s, pre-primary enrolments in transition countries are slowly recovering in Central and Eastern Europe but still lag in Central Asia.
- Among developed and transition countries, and in Latin America, most ECCE provision is by the public sector.
- The private sector is prominent in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, the Caribbean and East Asia.
- Most regions are near gender parity in pre-primary education.
- There are large disparities within countries. With a few notable exceptions, children from poorer and rural households and those socially excluded (e.g. lacking birth certificates) have significantly less access to ECCE than those from richer and urban households.
- The children most likely to benefit from ECCE programmes – those most exposed to malnutrition and preventable diseases – are the least likely to be enrolled.
- ECCE staff in developing countries typically have minimal education and pre-service training, and are often relatively poorly remunerated.
- Governments accord relatively low priority to pre-primary education in their spending. The broad mix of public and private providers and a lack of data make it difficult to calculate total national expenditure on ECCE. Countries can estimate the cost of reaching the goal by developing scenarios that differ in terms of coverage, quality and nature of provision.

- ECCE is not a priority for most donor agencies. Almost all allocate to pre-primary less than 10% of what they give for primary education, and over half allocate less than 2%.

What programmes work?

- An approach that combines nutrition, health, care and education is more effective in improving young children's current welfare and their development than limiting interventions to one aspect.
- Inclusive programmes build on traditional child care practices, respect children's linguistic and cultural diversity, and mainstream children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Mother tongue programmes are more effective than those in the official language, which remain the norm around the world.
- Well-designed programmes can challenge gender stereotypes.
- The single most important determinant of ECCE quality is interaction between children and staff, with a focus on the needs of the child. This requires reasonable working conditions, such as low child/staff ratios and adequate materials.
- Continuity in staffing, curriculum and parental involvement ease the transition to primary school. Quality improvements in the early years of schooling are needed to better accommodate young children from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

What would it take to reach the ECCE goal?

- High-level political support, an essential element.
- A consultative process to develop a national policy for children from birth to age 8, specifying the administrative responsibilities and budgetary commitments across relevant sectors and levels of government.
- Ongoing national and international data collection and monitoring efforts to assess needs and outcomes in meeting the EFA goals.
- The designation of a lead ministry or agency for policy on young children and ECCE, and an interagency coordinating mechanism with decision-making power.
- Well-enforced national quality standards covering public and private provision for all age groups.
- Stronger and more partnerships between government and the private sector, an important ECCE stakeholder in many regions.
- Upgrading of ECCE staff, particularly through flexible recruitment strategies, appropriate training, quality standards and remuneration that retains trained staff.
- Increased and better-targeted public funding of ECCE, with particular attention to poor children, children living in rural areas and those with disabilities.
- The specific inclusion of ECCE in key government resource documents, such as national budgets, sector plans and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.
- More attention – and more funding – from donor agencies.

Introduction

Learning begins well before a child walks through the classroom door for the first time. The paramount importance of the child's early years is expressed in the first of the six Education for All (EFA) goals adopted by 164 countries in Dakar in 2000. They are years of extreme vulnerability and tremendous potential, during which adequate protection, care and stimulation are essential to provide the foundations for the child's well-being and development.

The first EFA goal calls on governments to expand and improve 'comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children' – those who have the least access to such opportunities and who stand to benefit most from them.

The call for comprehensive programmes refers to a holistic approach that encompasses both care and education for children from birth to age 8. Such programmes focus on a range of needs, from health and nutrition to cognitive, social and emotional development. Holistic early childhood programmes have a leading role to play in any strategy to attain basic education for all and to reduce poverty, the overarching objective of the Millennium Development Goals. Programmes of good quality improve health and nutrition, combat HIV/AIDS and prepare children for a smooth transition to primary school.

Commitment to early childhood has increased in recent years. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and now endorsed by 192 nations, is a unique instrument to protect children's rights to survival, development and protection. Rapid economic and social change is increasing the need for more early childhood policies and programmes. Access to good early childhood programmes is not widespread in developing countries. In contrast, most children in developed countries have access to at least two years of free pre-school before beginning primary school.

In addition to early childhood, this Report monitors progress towards the five other EFA goals, with more analysis than in the past on out-of-school children and strategies to reach them and other at-risk groups. It records the activities of governments in implementing policies to achieve EFA and the extent to which donors support these efforts. The Report then turns to its special theme. After setting out the rationale for strengthening early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes, it evaluates countries' provision of such services, especially for children from disadvantaged or vulnerable groups. Serving children from birth to age 8 in diverse settings with different purposes, programmes are by nature extremely varied, yet many features of good practice can be singled out. Key aspects of national strategies for expanding provision are then analysed. The Report concludes with a short agenda for action for the global community.

The Report's findings are based on cross-national education statistics, household surveys, consultations, literature reviews and specially commissioned papers available on the website (www.efareport.unesco.org), which also includes this summary report, the full report, statistical tables and regional overviews.

The Education for All goals

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.
4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

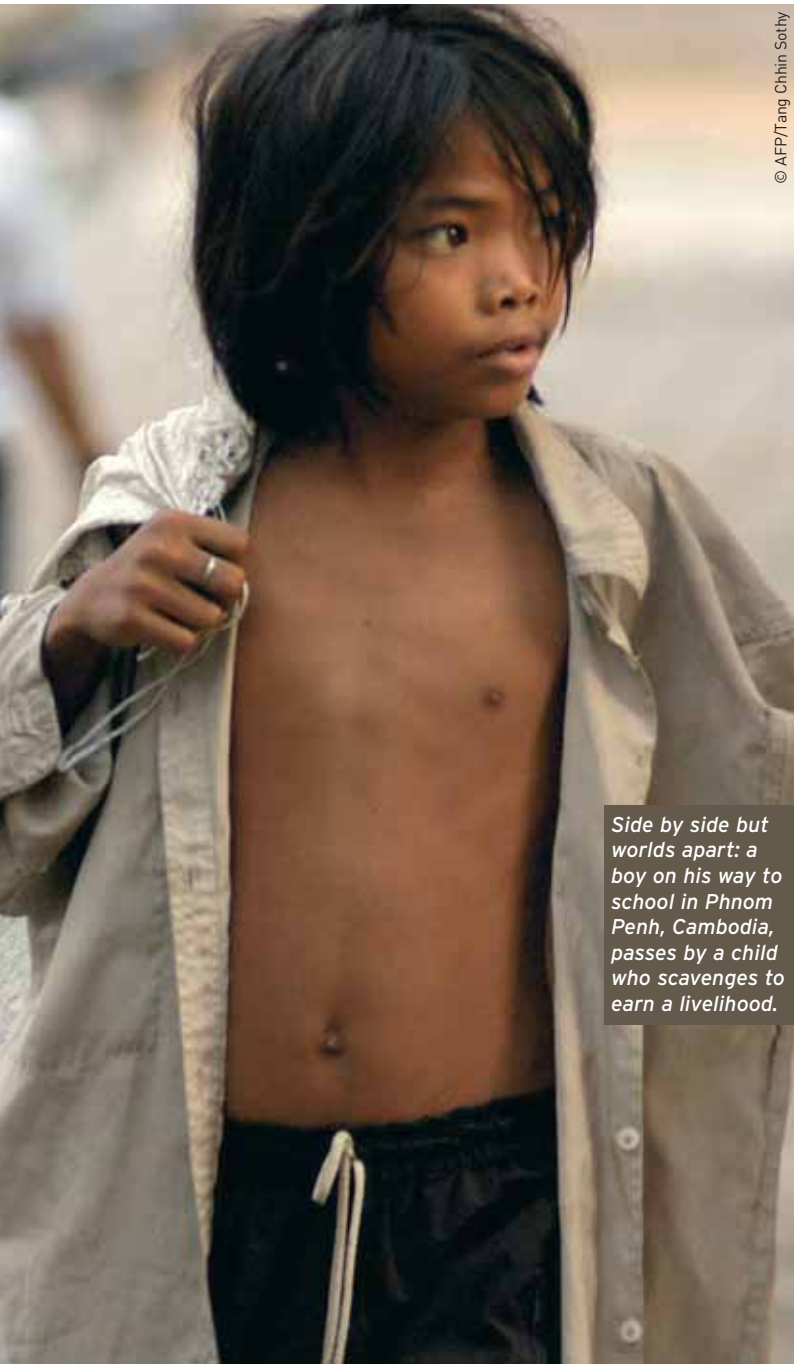
Part I. Progress towards EFA: confronting exclusion

primary education expanding
number of out-of-school children declining
why children are not in school
pressure on secondary school
narrowing the gender gap
the teacher shortage challenge
elusive literacy targets
measures to tackle exclusion
insufficient domestic spending

The EFA goals span a broad learning spectrum, from the care and cognitive development of young children through to literacy and life skills for youth and adults. This section, based largely on data reported to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) for the school year ending in 2004, charts the progress of countries towards expanding and strengthening their education systems, improving quality and providing learning opportunities to children, youth and adults. The situation of out-of-school children receives special attention. Only if governments understand the obstacles that keep children from going to school can they design and implement effective policies to guarantee every child the right to a basic education. This section identifies policies and programmes aimed at improving education access and completion, especially for hard-to-reach groups. Progress in providing early childhood programmes receives separate coverage in Part IV.

The EFA Development Index: the poorest countries make the most progress

The EFA Development Index (EDI), introduced in the 2003/4 Report, provides a summary measure of a country's situation vis-à-vis four EFA goals: universal primary education (UPE), adult literacy, gender and quality of education. The data are insufficiently standardized to include early childhood care and education (goal 1) and the learning needs of youth and adults (goal 3). Each of the four goals is represented by a proxy indicator.[1] The EDI is a simple average of the four indicators; it varies between 0 and 1, with 1 representing EFA achievement. The index has been computed for 125 countries for 2004:



© AFP/Tang Chhin Sothy

Side by side but worlds apart: a boy on his way to school in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, passes by a child who scavenges to earn a livelihood.

- Forty-seven countries have an EDI of 0.95 or above and are categorized as having achieved or being close to achieving the EFA goals. In addition to almost all countries in North America and Europe, this category includes six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and four in Central Asia.

- Fifty countries spread across all regions have an EDI value between 0.80 and 0.94. Most of the fifteen Latin American countries in this category are there because of relatively low survival rates through grade 5 (the quality proxy). In the case of the Arab States, low adult literacy rates pull down the overall EDI. Most of the eight sub-Saharan African countries in this category are in southern Africa or are small island states.

- Twenty-eight countries have an EDI score under 0.80. Two-thirds are in sub-Saharan Africa, but some Arab States and countries in South and in East Asia are also represented. Five countries in this category, all in French-speaking West Africa, have scores below 0.60.

From 2003 to 2004, the index increased by 1.6%, on average. Encouragingly, the increase was highest – 4.5% – in countries belonging to the lowest EDI category (Figure 1.1). It should be noted, however, that at least a dozen countries potentially in this lowest EDI category are in conflict or post-conflict situations and are excluded from all analysis for lack of data.

Primary education: expanding, but still not for all

The target date for achieving the EFA goals and the Millennium Development Goals is 2015. If all children are to complete a good-quality primary education by then, those of the appropriate age must be enrolled in grade 1 by 2009. For this to happen, both domestic and external spending on basic education must increase to provide more places and more teachers. Governments must also acquire a better understanding of why certain children never enrol in school, or drop out early, so as to design programmes that effectively tackle these barriers.

In 2004, some 682 million children were enrolled in primary school, a 6% increase since 1999. Their numbers increased steeply in sub-Saharan Africa (27%) and South and West Asia (19%), and more slowly in the Arab States (6%). Worldwide, the primary net

1. UPE: total primary net enrolment ratio; adult literacy: literacy rate for persons aged 15 and over; gender parity and equality: the gender-specific EFA index; quality of education: survival rate to grade 5.

Girls are benefiting from the global upward trend in enrolments

enrolment ratio (NER)[2] increased from 83% in 1999 to 86% in 2004 (Figure 1.2). The regions with the lowest coverage made spectacular advances. In sub-Saharan Africa, the NER increased from 55% to 65%, and that of South and West Asia rose from 77% to 86%. Almost all countries with NERs below 85% in 1999 improved their situation, in some cases significantly (e.g. Ethiopia, Lesotho, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, the Niger and the United Republic of Tanzania). Of some concern is that the NER dropped over the period in twenty-four of the forty-five developing countries where it had been above 85% in 1999.

Girls are benefiting from the global upward trend in enrolments. Countries where enrolment ratios are low and gender disparities high are reaching more girls. Globally, ninety-four girls were enrolled in primary school for every hundred boys in 2004, up from ninety-two in 1999. Of the 181 countries with 2004 data available, two-thirds have achieved gender parity in primary education. Several have achieved parity since 1999, including Malawi, Mauritania, Qatar and Uganda. The gender gap remains particularly large in Afghanistan (44 girls to 100 boys), the Central African Republic, Chad, the Niger, Pakistan and Yemen. However, once in school, girls tend to stay there longer and to do as well as or outperform boys.

2. Enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the population in that age group.

The global growth in primary school participation largely reflects increases in new entrants to grade 1. Between 1999 and 2004, these rose by 30.9% in sub-Saharan Africa. The number of new first-grade pupils increased by 11.5% in South and West Asia and by 9.1% in the Arab States, where Yemen stood out with a sharp 57% increase.

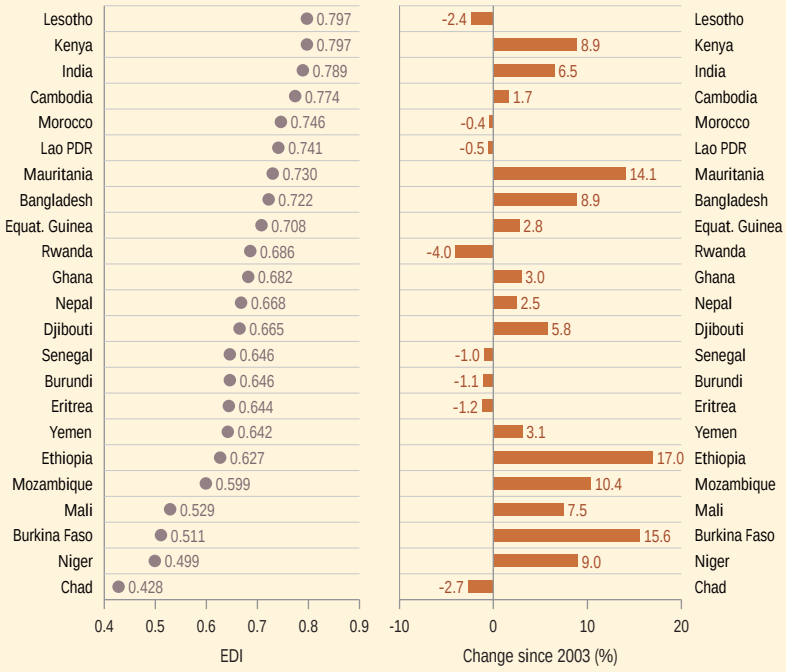
Late entry into grade 1 remains prevalent across sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Some evidence shows that children who are over age when entering primary school are more likely to experience learning difficulties and less likely to go on to the next level of education. Children likely to enrol over age come from poor households and often live in rural areas. The mother's schooling is also influential: in Kenya, 60% of children whose mothers had no education enrolled late, compared to one-third of those whose mothers had completed primary school.

How many children are out of school?

Progress is being made in reducing the number of children out of school.[3] Comparing the estimated number of primary school-age children with administrative data on school enrolment indicates that

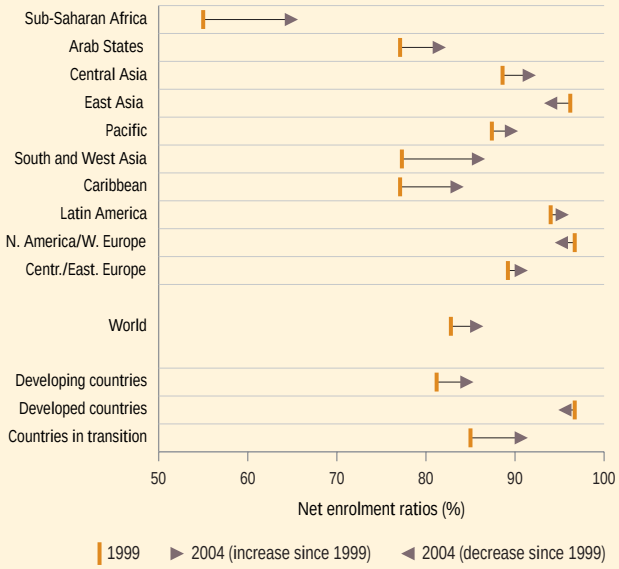
3. This report introduces a more accurate measure of the number of out-of-school children. The calculation was previously based on the number of children of primary school age who were not enrolled in primary school. Some children counted as out-of-school were already enrolled in secondary school. By definition, an out-of-school child should be enrolled neither in primary nor in secondary.

Figure 1.1: The EDI in 2004 and change since 2003



Note: Only countries with an EDI score below 0.800 are included.
Source: See Chapter 2 in the full EFA Report.

Figure 1.2: Net enrolment ratios in primary education, 1999 and 2004



Source: See Chapter 2 in the full EFA Report.

77 million children are not in school

77 million were not in school in 2004 – 21 million less than in 1999. This is a notable achievement. Three-quarters of the decrease occurred between 2002 and 2004. The number fell in all developing country regions between 1999 and 2004, with sharp decreases in South and West Asia (from 31 million to 16 million), mostly due to a large reduction in India. Sub-Saharan Africa still remains home to half the world's out-of-school children, although their number fell from 43 million to 38 million over 1999-2004. Girls account for 57% of all out-of-school children, down from 59% in 1999. The share is much higher in South and West Asia (69%). There are 28 developing countries (out of 112 with available information) with over half a million out-of-school children each. Nigeria, Pakistan, India and Ethiopia (in descending order) are home to the largest number – 23 million for the four countries (Figure 1.3).

Encouraging as the estimated reduction in the number of out-of-school children is, it should not lead to complacency. Using administrative data on enrolment for some countries and attendance information from household surveys for others, a joint study by the UIS and UNICEF estimated the number of out-of-school children at 115 million in 2002, a year for which the administrative data alone suggested a figure of 94 million. In addition, both figures may underestimate the number of children not attending school regularly: a recent survey of primary schools and pupils across India, for example, showed the average absentee rate to be 30% on the days schools were visited.

Who are the children not in school?

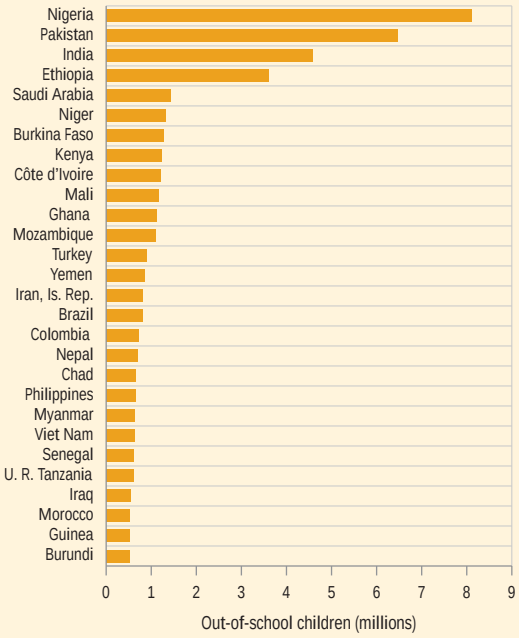
For governments to formulate and implement effective policies to reduce the number of out-of-school children it is necessary to understand better who they are. The UIS/UNICEF study and work undertaken for this Report look at the main background characteristics and educational experiences of out-of-school children. This evidence provides valuable guidance for designing programmes that effectively redress the various dimensions of disadvantage (Box 1.2).

Out of the roughly 77 million out-of-school children in 2004, 7 million had dropped out of school, 23 million were likely to enrol late and 47 million were unlikely ever to enrol without additional incentives. The proportion of children in the third group is highest in the regions with the lowest education indicators, such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In Latin America and the Caribbean, as in East Asia and the Pacific, the share of late entrants is much higher than of children unlikely ever to enrol.

Household surveys provide data for eighty countries on the background of children not in school (Figure 1.4):

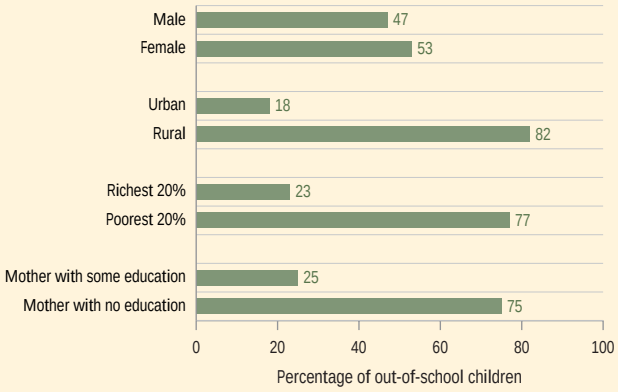
- *Gender* accounts for the smallest variation among the characteristics investigated. Nevertheless, girls' exclusion remains particularly marked in the Arab States (134 girls not in school for every 100 boys), South and West Asia (129), and in individual countries such as Yemen (184), India (136) and Benin (136).

Figure 1.3: Developing countries with over 500,000 out-of-school children, 2004



Source: See Chapter 2 in the full EFA Report.

Figure 1.4: Characteristics of out-of-school children in 80 countries



Source: See discussion in Chapter 2 of the full EFA Report.

In sub-Saharan Africa fewer than two-thirds of pupils reached the last grade

- *Residence:* the share of rural children out of school is at least double that of urban children in twenty-four of the countries. Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Nicaragua had the largest urban-rural gaps. In sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, over 80% of the children out of school live in rural areas.

- *Household wealth:* Children who live in the poorest 20% of households are three times more likely to be out of school than those living in the richest 20%. The effect is particularly large in the Arab States and smallest in Central and Eastern Europe.

- *Mother's education:* On average, a child whose mother has no education is twice as likely to be out of school as one with an educated mother. For South Asia and Latin America, the multiple is close to 2.5.

The combined effects of exclusion are staggering. In Guinea, an urban boy with an educated mother and belonging to the wealthiest quintile is 126 times more likely to attend school than a rural girl from the poorest quintile with an uneducated mother.

How many children reach the last grade of primary school?

Multiple factors influence how long students remain in school. As the analysis of out-of-school children reveals, household poverty can act as a major brake on a child's education. In some countries, households contribute over 40% of total spending on education in the form of costs such as fees, textbooks, uniforms and transport. Children often need to work to supplement family income (Box 1.1) or take care of siblings. Once in school, poor education quality – manifest in overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers and shortages of learning materials – seriously hampers student achievement and increases the risk of dropout.

Box 1.1: Reducing child labour is a key to universalizing primary education

Many children not in school are likely to be engaged in some form of work, due to widespread chronic poverty. While the incidence of child labour has declined in recent years, there are still around 218 million child labourers, three-quarters of them under age 14. Of that total, some 126 million between the ages of 5 and 17 are engaged in what are deemed the worst forms of child exploitation – trafficking, debt bondage, slavery, prostitution and other illicit activities. By 2006, 162 countries had ratified the International Labour Organization convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Several countries have introduced cash subsidy programmes to encourage children's schooling by reducing the need for them to work. Others reach out directly to working children with relevant, flexible education programmes.

In half of the 132 countries with data, about 87% of a cohort of pupils who had access to primary education reached the last grade in 2003. This average rate masks significant regional variations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, despite the overall high level of access and participation in primary education, school completion remains an important UPE challenge, with fewer than 83% of grade 1 students reaching the last grade in the majority of countries. In sub-Saharan Africa fewer than two-thirds of pupils reached the last grade in a majority of countries. School retention is also low in several South and West Asian countries, including Bangladesh and Nepal.

The same factors that influence being out of school also influence dropout. Unsurprisingly, children from rural areas and poor households are most likely to drop out of school early, whatever the child's gender. In Ethiopia, rural children are sixty times more likely to drop out than urban children. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Mozambique, only 10% of children from the poorest 40% of households who entered primary school managed to complete it.

There can be significant gaps (above twenty percentage points) between the proportion of students who reach the last primary grade and that of those who successfully complete it. The reasons may include low learning achievement but also tough selection policies due to a limited number of places being available in lower secondary school. Consequently, improving the quality of education in primary schools and expanding access to lower secondary are both conditions for full achievement of UPE.

Pressure on secondary school

Many governments have committed themselves to provide nine years of universal basic education. A total of 192 countries and territories out of 203 report having compulsory education laws. In about three-quarters of them, compulsory education includes at least lower secondary.

Demand for secondary education is growing. In 2004, 502 million students were enrolled in secondary education, up 14% from 1999. Sharp increases were observed in the Arab States, sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia (each with a 20% rise). Transition rates from primary to secondary were close to 90% in half the countries in each region except sub-Saharan Africa. There, fewer than two-thirds of pupils made the transition to secondary school.

Secondary education is nearly universal in North America and Western Europe, and in the Pacific,

and high in Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In contrast, secondary gross enrolment ratios (GERs)[4] are below 30% in sub-Saharan Africa, 51% in South and West Asia and 66% in the Arab States. While the level of participation has increased in secondary education, it is still much lower than at the primary level: the average GER in secondary was 65% worldwide in 2004.

Globally, participation in lower secondary school is much higher than in upper secondary, with GERs of 78% and 51%, respectively, in 2004 (Figure 1.5). The participation gaps (in percentage points) between the two levels are especially high in East Asia and the Pacific (42) and Latin America and the Caribbean (31), both well above the global average (27).

Amid the growing demand, access to secondary education remains highly inequitable. Marginalized children (the poor, certain ethnic groups, the disabled and, often, girls) are mainly excluded. In sub-Saharan Africa, the excluded are disproportionately poor, rural and female. About 50% of boys from the highest income quintile complete grade 7, but only 4% of girls from the lowest quintile.

Only one-third of countries have achieved gender parity at secondary level, while two-thirds have done so in primary education. This situation reinforces the urgency of designing gender-sensitive programmes at all levels. Sexual violence and harassment at school need to be confronted vigorously. Revising biases in textbooks, training teachers to be gender aware and working to break taboos are essential ingredients of a strategy that promotes equality.

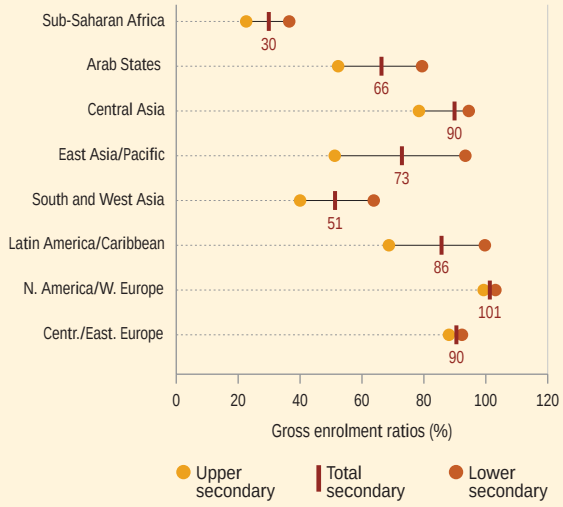
Patterns of gender disparity are more complex in secondary education than in primary. There are as many countries with disparities at the expense of girls as ones where boys are at a disadvantage at secondary level. Those in the first case tend to have low enrolment ratios in secondary (in Afghanistan, Chad, Guinea, Togo and Yemen, fewer than fifty girls per hundred boys are enrolled at secondary level). Gender disparities at the expense of boys are observed in developed countries as well as in several Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Tertiary: rising but far from gender parity

Tertiary education is linked to the EFA goals in at least two ways: directly as a component of the gender equality goal and often as the main provider of school teachers and administrators. Worldwide, some

4. Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education.

Figure 1.5: Secondary gross enrolment ratios by level and region, 2004



Source: See Chapter 2 in the full EFA Report.

132 million students were enrolled in tertiary education in 2004, a 43% increase from 1999. Three-quarters of this growth took place in developing countries, with China alone accounting for 60%. The GER at this level is 24%, but much lower in South and West Asia (10%) and sub-Saharan Africa (5%).

Gender parity at the tertiary level exists only in Andorra, Cyprus, Georgia, Mexico and Peru. In developed and transition countries women outnumber men at this level. Despite some improvement in developing countries between 1999 and 2004, women's participation at this level remains below that of men. In 2004, 87 women were enrolled for every 100 men on average, up from 78 in 1999. Women's disproportionate presence in tertiary disciplines such as education and the social sciences – and their comparatively low participation in science and technology – continues to reinforce gender inequalities in society, in terms of job opportunities, equal pay and access to managerial positions.

Investing in teachers and assessing how well students learn can improve quality

Each edition of this Report attempts to analyse how well education systems serve children. The fact that children drop out of school early or fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills partially reflects poor education quality. Information about teachers and student learning achievement are two dimensions of assessing what is happening in classrooms around the world.

Amid the growing demand, access to secondary education remains highly inequitable

Addressing teacher numbers, training and motivation

The number of students per teacher is frequently used as an indication of education quality. Pupil/teacher ratios (PTRs) declined between 1999 and 2004, except in South and West Asia. In 84% of the 174 countries with 2004 data available, there were fewer than forty primary students per teacher. PTRs were higher than 40:1 in about thirty countries; most were in sub-Saharan Africa but several were in East Asia and the Pacific, and South and West Asia. PTRs tend to be higher in countries where primary enrolments are increasing. There are seventy pupils to a teacher in the Congo, Ethiopia and Malawi.

In most countries, the majority of primary school teachers are women

In most countries, the majority of primary school teachers are women, though there are exceptions. In Afghanistan, Benin, Chad and Togo, countries where large gender disparities in favour of boys persist in primary school, women represent one-fifth or less of the primary teacher workforce. At higher levels of education, women's share among teachers is much lower, particularly in tertiary education, where teaching is predominantly a male occupation.

The percentage of trained primary school teachers increased slightly between 1999 and 2004 in about half the forty-one countries with data. The improvement was remarkable (rises of more than 60%) in Bahamas, Namibia and Rwanda. Still, 2004 data for seventy-six countries at primary level and fifty-nine at secondary show that one-fifth of teachers lack pedagogical training in half the countries. In Lebanon, Nepal and Togo, for example, fewer than half the teachers are trained according to national standards.

Teacher recruitment and training remain key concerns, particularly in regions where the primary school pupil population is still expanding. In Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, a combined total of 65,000 additional teachers per year are needed. Sub-Saharan Africa will need to recruit 1.6 million more teachers by 2015 to achieve UPE while reducing PTRs to 40:1 in many countries.

Recruitment is closely tied to issues surrounding teachers' status and conditions of service. A recent research project on teacher motivation in several countries of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia[5] concluded that most school systems in low-income countries were faced with a teacher motivation crisis. Working in rural areas is more difficult than teaching in an urban school. The study identified key strategies to increase teacher commitment, stating that:

- good housing for teachers with running water and electricity is probably the most cost-effective way to attract and retain teachers in rural schools;
- special allowances for teachers working in rural areas should be adequate to compensate for hardship conditions;
- teachers serving in hard-to-staff rural schools should be given accelerated promotion and/or preferential access to opportunities to improve their qualifications;
- teachers need a greater sense of involvement in decision-making and dialogue with school managers, parents and the wider community.

Incentive strategies exist in several Latin American countries. Bolivia increased salaries for teachers in rural areas. Chile and Mexico introduced performance-based incentive systems; in Chile, preliminary evidence points to higher student achievement in participating schools. In El Salvador and Honduras, teachers obtained a greater say in decisions regarding their schools as a result of decentralization and school-based management policies. In Brazil, a national programme provides incentives to all state governments to hire and train additional teachers.

To increase the number of teachers and link training to the real world of teaching, several countries have introduced shorter training programmes and emphasize on-the-job practice. In Cuba, all pre-service training is school-based. Such a system requires enough schools to serve as training environments and enough teachers to act as mentors. Shorter teacher training is a trend in several sub-Saharan African countries. Guinea reduced its training programme from three to two years in 1998 and has attracted over 1,500 teachers per year since then, compared to 200 before the reform. A key strategy to increase the supply of teachers is to reduce the length of pre-service training. More and more countries are moving towards shorter and more school-based training. In the United Kingdom, trainee teachers may now spend two-thirds of their training time in schools.

The growing trend towards national assessments of learning outcomes

Since the 1990s more and more governments have taken measures to assess student learning and gauge progress in learning outcomes over time. National learning assessments provide governments with potentially useful information on the efficiency and quality of their education systems. They generally assess student learning against nationally defined

5. Ghana, India, Lesotho, Malawi, Sierra Leone, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

standards in selected school subjects. Although the quality of these assessments can vary considerably, they clearly indicate an important new development in national efforts to monitor education quality.

International assessments of learning, which go back to the early 1960s, are becoming increasingly significant for monitoring global progress, with more countries joining in each one. Since 1989, more middle- and low-income countries have taken part in various assessments. This process has spurred the development of regional assessments of pupil achievement in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific islands.

Recent cross-national studies of pupil achievement continue to underscore the fact that students from poorer and culturally excluded families tend to perform less well than those from better-off families belonging to the cultural mainstream. A high-quality literate environment at home (more access to books, newspapers, written materials) significantly improves student achievement. Improving the quality of education matters most for children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Learning and life skills: routes to better monitoring

A wide and diverse range of providers and activities falls under the umbrella of learning and life-skills programmes, rendering monitoring difficult. Essentially, EFA goal 3 is about providing learning opportunities to young people and adults excluded from the formal education system. Some countries are making serious efforts to track learning activities outside the formal system, but reliable data are difficult to obtain. A model for non-formal education management information systems, designed by UNESCO and member institutes, is being piloted in several countries, including Cambodia, India, Jordan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Literacy: the target remains elusive

Literacy received extended coverage in the 2006 Report. As conventional measures do not directly test a person's literacy skills and proficiencies, they provide a picture that does not reflect the real scale of the challenge. According to these conventional measures, about 781 million adults, two-thirds of them women, lack minimal literacy skills. The majority live in South and West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia and the Pacific. The absolute number of illiterates has continued to increase in the first two regions because of high population growth. Without a concerted effort by the international community and national policy-makers to expand adult literacy programmes, the global number of illiterates will drop by only 100 million by 2015 (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Estimated adult literacy rates (age 15+) and gender parity index (GPI) in 2000-2004, and projections to 2015

	2000-2004		2015	
	Literacy rates (%)	GPI	Literacy rates (%)	GPI
	Total	F/M	Total	F/M
World	82	0.89	87	0.92
Sub-Saharan Africa	61	0.77	67	0.84
Arab States	66	0.72	79	0.82
Central Asia	99	0.99	100	1.00
East Asia/Pacific	92	0.93	96	0.96
East Asia	92	0.93	96	0.96
Pacific	93	0.98	93	0.99
South and West Asia	59	0.66	68	0.74
Latin America/Caribbean	90	0.98	94	0.99
Caribbean	70	1.00	97	1.01
Latin America	90	0.98	94	0.99
N. America/W. Europe	99	1.00	100	1.00
Centr./East. Europe	97	0.97	98	0.98

Source: See Chapter 2 in the full EFA Report.

Literacy rates have improved in all regions, but remain relatively low in South and West Asia (59%), sub-Saharan Africa (61%), the Arab States (66%) and the Caribbean (70%). The 2015 literacy target will be particularly difficult to achieve in the twenty-two countries with literacy rates under 60%. In the ten countries with over 10 million illiterate adults each, only half have reduced their absolute number since 1990. The gender dimension of literacy remains unchanged since 1990. In South and West Asia, 66 women are literate for every 100 literate men, in the Arab States 72 and in sub-Saharan Africa 77. Youth literacy rates (ages 15 to 24) have increased in all regions since 1999, resulting in a decline in the number of illiterate youth, except in sub-Saharan Africa.

Education plans: including marginalized groups

EFA, as conceived at the World Education Forum, is an inclusive approach: special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups is explicit in several goals. Low demand, inflexible provision and poor quality create a cycle of exclusion for many. Breaking this cycle requires efforts that significantly improve the quality, flexibility and relevance of education while reducing schooling costs to households.

Students from poorer and culturally excluded families tend to perform less well than those better-off

Globally, public spending on education has increased since 1999

An analysis of national EFA plans from forty-five countries, including the twenty with the highest number of out-of-school children, shows that all give some attention to vulnerable groups. The majority of countries identify girls and populations living in dispersed rural settlements as priority target groups. Latin American countries make specific mention of ethnic and linguistic minorities. On the other hand, orphans, HIV-positive and sexually exploited children are rarely singled out for special attention. Twenty-two countries cite planned measures to address the cost of schooling by reducing or abolishing tuition fees and providing learning materials and uniforms. Eighteen list measures to increase the number of female teachers and ensure that schools are girl-friendly. In fifteen countries, expanding the number of schools – whether mobile schools, village schools or other types – is a priority. Education programmes for excluded youth are increasingly common (twenty-five countries): Senegal and Guatemala, for example, plan to introduce literacy courses coupled with vocational training to give early leavers a chance to catch up. Eight countries, mostly in Latin America, cite plans to introduce local languages into the school curriculum. Information campaigns targeted at parents and the wider community are featured in eight country plans.

The extent to which governments tackle the multiple causes of exclusion and barriers to learning will largely determine how close countries come to reaching EFA. Box 1.2 summarizes some common policies and programmes to address these obstacles.

Domestic spending on education: inadequate in the countries with the largest challenge

Globally, public spending on education has increased since 1999. Out of 106 countries with data, about two-thirds raised public spending on education as a share of gross national product (GNP) between 1999 and

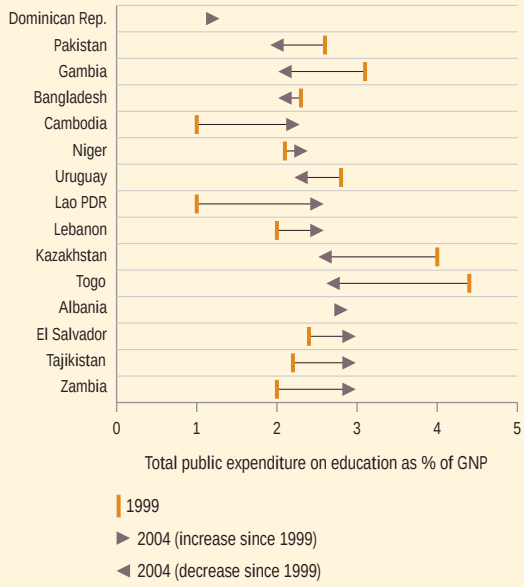
Box 1.2: Policies to promote inclusion

Policy goal	Programme example
Reduce the cost of schooling: direct education costs are a barrier to primary school access in over ninety countries.	Burundi abolished primary school fees in 2005; 500,000 additional children arrived to enrol on the first day of school.
Support orphans and vulnerable children affected by the impact of HIV/AIDS.	In Swaziland, which has the world's highest prevalence of HIV and AIDS, the government allocated US$7.5 million in 2004 to orphans and other vulnerable children attending primary and secondary education. Enrolment has remained steady and dropout decreased.
Reduce demand for child labour through cash incentives.	Brazil's **Bolsa Familia** (formerly Bolsa Escola) programme provides income support to poor families based on conditions such as school attendance. The programme reaches over 5 million children.
Reduce the need for child labour through flexible education arrangements.	The **Baljyothi** programme in Andhra Pradesh, the state with largest number of working children in India, runs 250 schools (31,000 students) located in slums. The programme is a successful example of government-NGO collaboration.
Assure gender equality by increasing girls' attendance in secondary school.	The **Gambia Girls' Scholarship Trust Fund** provides full scholarships for tuition, books and examination fees to one-third of girls in schools with low enrolment and to 10% of girls excelling in science, mathematics and technology. More than 16,000 girls are taking part.
Provide non-formal education opportunities for youth and adults who have missed out on formal schooling.	The **Educatodos** programme in Honduras targets students and adults who have not completed nine years of basic education. Half a million students are enrolled in the primary school programme. Highlights are easily accessible learning centres, relevant content, flexible schedules and strong community support.
Provide inclusive education to meet the education needs of the disabled.	In Uruguay a special inclusive education fund assists regular schools in integrating children with disabilities. Some 39,000 children have benefited.

2004. Increases of 30% or above were registered in some twenty countries. This global trend masks regional differences. Education spending as a percentage of GNP fell in some forty-one countries, particularly in Latin America, and South and West Asia (the latter being one of the three regions with the largest numbers of out-of-school children). Spending on education remains inadequate in countries with huge EFA challenges: the Niger and Pakistan, for example, spend less than 3% of GNP on education (Figure 1.6).

A government's commitment to EFA can also be measured by the share it devotes to education relative to other budget expenditure. Data for 1999 and 2004 are available for thirty-six countries. Encouragingly, in about three-quarters of them, the share of education in total government expenditure increased. The United Republic of Tanzania is an interesting example: in 2001, the government abolished school fees, resulting in a sharp increase in primary school enrolments. Public spending on education grew from 2.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2000 to 4.3% in 2004.

Figure 1.6 Countries spending less than 3% of GNP on education, 2004



Source: See Chapter 3 in the full EFA Report.

Most countries for which data are available spent less than 50% of their total education budget on the primary level in 2004. In GNP percentage terms, three-quarters of the ninety countries with this data available spend under 2% of national income on primary education. This is the case for three countries in South and West Asia and sixteen in sub-Saharan Africa, regions still some distance from achieving UPE.

As secondary education expands, competition for funds between it and primary is likely to increase. Several developing countries are striving to strike the right balance. Without sufficient secondary education opportunities, the EFA and Millennium Development Goals of universal completion of good-quality primary education are unlikely to be met. Most parents send their children to primary school in the hope that they will proceed to secondary school. The shift towards higher spending on secondary education is perceptible in countries that have reached or are close to achieving UPE. However, even in countries where primary education is not yet universal, such as Bangladesh and Nepal, the share of expenditure going to primary education has decreased since 1999.

The Republic of Korea has expanded secondary education without jeopardizing investment at other levels of the system. Sustained government spending, initiatives such as lotteries to support poor children in post-primary education and private sector involvement within a robust regulatory framework are features of the country's educational achievement. Bangladesh and South Africa have developed public-private partnerships to assure greater access to secondary education; in Bangladesh, incentive policies provide food and stipends for disadvantaged families and scholarships for girls from poor backgrounds.

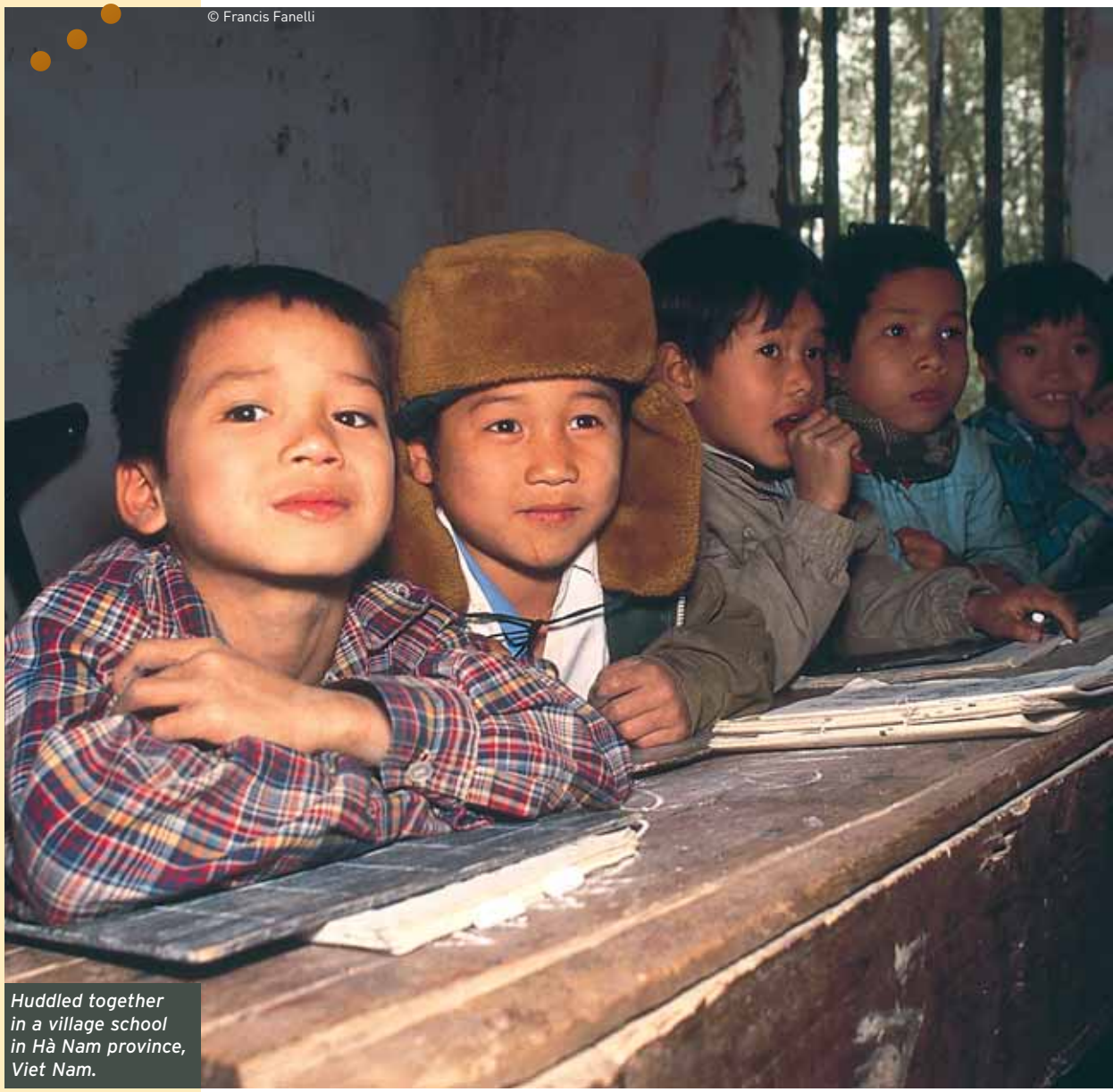
The most effective strategies to tackle disadvantage are multi-pronged: financial incentives, for example, must be accompanied by efforts to improve the quality of education. What matters is that governments take a proactive role in targeting specific groups. Alliances with local communities and civil society hold creative potential. Financial incentives have the power to overcome specific obstacles. Adequate budgetary support is necessary: India, for example, has budgeted for midday meals and girls' education as distinct from the overall cost of primary education. The needs of disadvantaged children, youth and adults must be carefully assessed. With many countries increasing primary enrolments, it is more important than ever to implement good-quality programmes that are monitored for equity, effectiveness and impact. Successful programmes are those that combine targeted interventions with systemic reforms of the education system so that access and quality result in better learning for all children.

The most effective strategies to tackle disadvantage are multi-pronged

Part II. International support for EFA: making good on the promises

- *aid to basic education expands but is far short of needs*
- *five donors account for the lion's share of bilateral aid to education*
- *donor presence across countries is uneven*
- *regional distribution is skewed*
- *aid gap estimates increase*
- *Fast Track Initiative picks up pace but is not yet a global compact*

The Dakar Framework for Action established a compact by affirming that 'no countries seriously committed to Education for All will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources'. Although aid to basic education has increased since 2000 and additional support has been pledged, the amount is far below the annual US$11 billion required to achieve universal primary education and expand early childhood and adult literacy programmes.



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Huddled together in a village school in Hà Nam province, Viet Nam.

Aid to education: moving in the right direction

Total aid: After falling during the first half of the 1990s, real levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) stabilized between 1995 and 2000, and have expanded since. Total aid flows increased from US$57 billion to almost US$72 billion between 2000 and 2004[6], with bilateral donors directly responsible for almost three-quarters of this amount. The share of aid going to the seventy-two countries designated as low-income was stable at around 46%, though the share for the very poorest of them, the fifty-one least developed countries (LDCs), increased from 26% to 32%. Sub-Saharan Africa received one-third of total aid in both years, and South and West Asia benefited from large increases, as did Iraq. Debt relief has risen to around 10% of total aid and the share is increasing; it is particularly important to many LDCs, the majority of which are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Aid to education: Across all developing countries, total direct aid to education expanded by 85%, from US$4.6 billion in 2000 to US$8.5 billion in 2004. Even higher growth occurred in flows to the low-income countries, which more than doubled from US$2.5 billion to US$5.5 billion and now account for almost two-thirds of all education aid (Table 2.1) Education's share of the total amount of aid allocated to specific sectors increased from 10.6% in 2000 to 13.6% in 2004.

Aid to basic education: Basic education benefited from the increase in overall aid to education. The best estimates indicate that aid to basic education (including a portion of the aid to education that is not specified by level) increased from US$2.1 billion in 2000 to US$3.9 billion in 2004 across all developing countries, and from US$1.4 billion to US$3.0 billion for low-income countries. For both sets of countries, the share of basic education in total education aid remained constant – just under half for all developing countries and just over half for low-income countries.

To complete this picture, budget support must also be factored into the aid equation. Rather than benefiting a specific project, programme or sector, such aid is directly channelled to the partner government's national treasury. In 2004, direct budget support to all developing countries amounted to US$4.7 billion. It is estimated that 20% of this support goes to education, and basic education receives around half of that.

Combining all these sources, aid for education in all developing countries is estimated to have increased from US$5.6 billion in 2000 to US$9.5 billion in 2004. In low-income countries, the total rose from US$3.4 billion to US$6.4 billion. In 2004 basic education accounted for US$4.4 billion of the overall total in all developing countries and US$3.4 billion in the low-income countries.

These upward trends reflect the increased focus of both donors and recipient countries on the EFA agenda. Since the late 1990s, major multilateral donors have encouraged governments to develop poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) as a basis for discussion with donors on policies and programmes. Through this process, basic education has received greater attention; meanwhile the focus of many bilateral donors and agencies on the Millennium Development Goals has also reinforced calls for additional spending on basic education.

Although these trends are encouraging, basic education still accounts for only 4.8% of total aid to all developing countries. Moreover, middle-income developing countries receive over one-fifth of this share, and almost 50% of bilateral aid to education is allocated to the tertiary level, of which a large sum is for scholarships in donor country institutions.

Five donors account for the lion's share of bilateral aid to education

Donors are not a homogenous group in their support to education. In 2004, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States together contributed 72% of all bilateral aid to education. For basic education, almost two-thirds was contributed by the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. If aid to basic education is to increase significantly, more donors will need to become more heavily involved or the major donors will need to further increase their contributions – or both.

In spite of repeated calls for a greater concentration of education aid in the poorest countries, half the donor countries of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) allocate more than half their education aid to middle-income countries.

Multilateral donors allocated 11.8% of their total aid to education in 2003-2004. Of this, 52% went to basic education. After the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), the European Commission is the biggest multilateral donor. Provisional data for 2005 suggest that half its disbursements for education went to basic education. Commitments were highest for sub-Saharan Africa (30%) and South and Central Asia (19%).

Although the trends are encouraging, basic education still accounts for only 4.8% of total aid to all developing countries

6. All aid data are in 2003 constant prices.

Table 2.1: Estimates of total ODA for education and basic education by income group, 2000 and 2004 (constant 2003 US$ billions)

Education sector			Basic education		
	Developing countries	Low-income countries		Developing countries	Low-income countries
2000			2000		
Direct	4.60	2.48	Direct	1.40	0.98
			From 'level unspecified'	0.68	0.38
From budget support	1.00	0.93	From budget support	0.50	0.47
Total	5.60	3.41	Total	2.59	1.83
2004			2004		
Direct	8.55	5.53	Direct	3.32	2.70
			From 'level unspecified'	0.56	0.29
From budget support	0.94	0.85	From budget support	0.47	0.43
Total	9.49	6.38	Total	4.35	3.42
Change since 2000	69.3%	87.2%	Change since 2000	68.1%	86.6%

Source: See Chapter 4 in the full EFA Report.

Aid: who benefits

Shifting the focus to countries on the receiving end provides a sharper picture of the aid landscape. Donors distribute their resources very unequally. Of the twenty countries receiving the highest amount of aid commitments for education, only seven are LDCs. There does not yet appear to be any overriding concentration of education aid on the poorest countries.

Donor presence is uneven across the world's seventy-two poorest countries. Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania each has between ten and twelve donors in the education sector. At the other extreme, thirty-six countries have two donors at most. This raises important questions about the targeting of aid by donors to countries where it matters most.

The relative importance given to education in total aid is not the same for all regions. Countries in South and West Asia and the Arab States received a much higher share for the education sector (over 20% of total aid) than countries in other regions. In sub-Saharan Africa, the average share for education across twenty-three countries was just 11% of total aid. Countries in South and West Asia channelled 50% of education aid to the basic level, compared to just over 20% for sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. The share was even lower in the Arab States and in East Asia and the Pacific.

Countries are pursuing efforts to increase the effectiveness of aid, in the spirit of the Declaration on Aid Effectiveness signed by over 100 donors and developing countries in 2005. The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is increasingly seen as the principal education sector vehicle, consistent with the declaration. In addition, joint monitoring reviews on the education sector, now carried out in over twenty countries, generally involve all agencies on the ground and government representatives. The aim is to assess the performance of the education sector (or subsector or large project) against an agreed set of objectives – for instance, access, equity and quality in primary education.

Scaling up aid for education

Many developed country governments have promised to substantially increase their aid flows over the next few years. Several high-profile meetings in 2005 raised expectations. Donors pledged to increase aid as a share of their gross national income and made commitments that could result in a US$50 billion, or 60%, increase in aid by 2010, including a doubling of total aid for African countries. They also said they would pay off all debt owed by a large group of the poorest countries to the International Monetary Fund, the IDA and the African Development Fund. Potentially, forty-six of the poorest countries could benefit from increased resources as a result of debt relief.

More recently, in March 2006, the United Kingdom government promised US$15 billion over the next ten years for education and called upon other governments to follow suit in order to close the financing gap required to meet the EFA goals. G8 countries, at their meeting in Saint Petersburg in July 2006, reaffirmed their commitment to provide funds for the universalization of primary schooling and again endorsed the FTI (Box 2.1), as they had in 2005.

Between 2000 and 2003, lenders promised 50% more than they actually disbursed. Donors need to make greater efforts to provide guarantees of longer-term, predictable financial aid. Countries require this assurance in order to take difficult and often expensive policy decisions aimed at achieving universal basic education.

Donors are more likely to honour their aid promises if they see evidence that countries are using aid effectively. Disbursement rates to developing countries are particularly low in the basic education sector. Governments' capacity for designing and implementing policies must be strengthened. At the same time, the share of aid for basic education devoted to technical cooperation is decreasing. This may partly reflect the trend towards direct budget support, which allows the priority on technical assistance and capacity-building to be reduced.

Several estimates of the amount of additional aid required to meet the EFA goals have been calculated in the past few years:

- The World Bank estimated that, from 2001, the incremental cost of achieving UPE in all low-income countries by 2015 was US$9.7 billion a year, of which US$3.7 billion would need to be provided externally.
- The 2002 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* suggested the real external gap was US$3.1 billion more than that. It argued that the annual growth rate in domestic spending assumed by the World Bank was overly optimistic and that additional resources would be required to reduce the costs of education to families, cope with the full impact of HIV/AIDS and rehabilitate systems in countries affected by conflict, instability and natural disasters.
- So far the amount of aid for basic education in low-income countries has been well below that required. As a result, from 2005 to 2015, there is a need for an average of US$9 billion a year. This estimate is only for reaching UPE; allocating US$1 billion each for the literacy and early childhood goals would increase the external funding requirements to around US$11 billion per year (at 2003 constant prices).

If donors meet their pledges and the total amount of aid available in 2010 increases by 60% from its 2004 level, and the share to basic education remains constant, the total allocated per year will reach US$5.4 billion, less than half the US$11 billion required. The share of basic education in total ODA needs to double in order to accelerate progress towards the EFA goals.

Competition for higher levels of aid is likely to increase, including from secondary and tertiary education and from other sectors, such as health and infrastructure. There is also a trend among donors to reduce the number of countries in which they have aid programmes. Thus it is all the more important to develop mechanisms with a global focus – such as an improved FTI Catalytic Fund – to channel aid to the countries where the need is greatest.

Commitments to education are needed now, since to reach UPE by 2015 all the children who will complete primary education that year must be in school by 2009. The recent United Kingdom commitment is encouraging. Bolder and more persuasive efforts are imperative to encourage donors to increase basic education aid. Governments of low-income countries must be persuaded to place higher priority on education in their discussions with donors and to allocate it a greater share of debt relief savings.

Box 2.1: The Fast Track Initiative: encouraging a global compact

The FTI was established in 2002 with the aim of encouraging a global compact to develop 'credible' education sector plans and increase external financial support to achieve universal primary education. With over thirty donors involved, the FTI has become an important coordinating mechanism for donor agencies. In addition, some financial resources are channelled through its two funds. The Catalytic Fund provides support for up to three years for education sector plans in countries with few donors, on the expectation that good performance will attract additional ones. Thus far, however, that has not happened and consideration is being given to extending the funding period. The Education Programme Development Fund finances technical assistance to assist countries in various ways in the development of their plans.

In the year since the 2006 Report was published, the FTI has provided technical support to seventy-four countries for the development of education sector plans. Donors have endorsed twenty countries' plans, and those of a further twelve countries are expected to be endorsed by the end of 2006.

So far the amounts in the Catalytic Fund remain relatively small and a limited number of countries have benefited. As of August 2006, total donor payments into this fund came to almost US$230 million, though a further US$450 million has been pledged to the end of 2007. The Netherlands, the European Commission and the United Kingdom are responsible for 85% of the pledges. Disbursements so far amount to only US$96 million to eleven countries. The number of donors to the Education Programme Development Fund increased from two to eight over the past year and commitments for 2005-2007 are US$46 million, of which almost half is from Norway.

Ultimately, greater high-level leadership among donors is required if the global compact is to be realized. This would likely include measures to further strengthen the FTI, coupled with a move to make aid more predictable, particularly for the countries most in need.

The external funding requirement is US$11 billion per year

Part III. The case for early childhood care and education

respecting children's rights
connections among nutrition, health and education
preparing children for primary school
economic benefits
offsetting disadvantage

Early childhood is the period when humans are most dependent on relationships for survival, emotional security and cognitive development. A lack of adequate nutrition and proper care can have irreversible consequences. The Convention on the Rights of the Child makes children's best interests and development a central concern. Early childhood programmes are one means of guaranteeing the rights of young children, by improving their well-being and preparing them for primary school. The immediate and long-term benefits make such programmes a cost-effective strategy for reducing poverty and offsetting disadvantage.

Very young children have rights

Several human rights instruments are specific to children. Although not legally binding, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1959, affirms some of the most basic principles of children's rights, including the provision of health care, housing, social security, education, and protection from neglect, cruelty and exploitation. But the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ushered in a new era for children's rights. The CRC puts the best interests of the child at the forefront and is attentive to the views of children. The most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world, the CRC commits countries to translate international standards into domestic law and national practice.

The CRC has few provisions specific to the youngest age group, but its monitoring committee, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, put early childhood on its agenda in 2005, noting in a General Comment that young children had particular needs for nurturing, care and guidance. This working document, which defines early childhood as the period from birth to age 8, reminds parties to the CRC of their obligation to develop comprehensive policies covering health, care and education for young children as well as assistance to parents and carers. Early childhood education, it says, should be directly linked to the rights of children to develop their personalities, talents, and mental and physical abilities from birth.

Recognition that children have rights of their own establishes an international standard that is not always accepted by individual States Parties. Provisions empowering the state to intervene on a child's behalf remain controversial. Still, the CRC, with its near-universal adoption, has a status few other international treaties can match and has contributed greatly to shaping stronger policy agendas for childhood.

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Nutrition makes for better learning: mealtime at a pre-school in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The impact of experiences in the early years

Early childhood is a highly sensitive period marked by rapid transformations in physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Undernutrition, deprivation of care and poor treatment are particularly damaging to young children, with repercussions often felt into the adult years. Exposure to toxic substances and inadequate stimulation in the first years of life can have serious long-term effects. A child who receives extremely poor care or rarely hears language (as in some orphanages) is likely to suffer development deficits that are difficult to redress later.

Good programmes can significantly enhance young children's well-being in these formative years and complement the care received at home.

Adequate health and nutrition required for learning

More than 10 million children under age 5 die every year, over half from five transmittable diseases that can be prevented or treated. Worldwide, about 86 of every 1,000 children born in recent years will not reach age 5. Infant mortality rates are highest in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia (over 100 per 1,000 live births).

Poor nutrition has a negative impact on school participation and achievement. Stunted children (those short for their age) are less likely to enrol in school and more likely to enrol later and to drop out. A severe or chronic lack of essential nutrients in childhood impairs language, motor and socio-emotional development.

A more holistic view of child development is gaining ground, informed by the links between health and nutrition, on the one hand, and education on the other

Extending the provision of safe drinking water and proper sanitation would reduce infant and child mortality dramatically. Access to treatment for HIV/AIDS is crucial for the survival and development of young children (Box 3.1). The limited coverage of organized early childhood programmes in sub-Saharan Africa makes it all the more difficult to detect and treat health problems linked to poor nutrition. In Latin America and the Caribbean, early childhood programmes have reduced the prevalence of malnutrition and stunting and contributed to children's well-being and school readiness.

Measures designed to reduce mortality and morbidity are a first step towards establishing comprehensive care and education programmes for young children. Four types of intervention have a large impact on cognitive outcomes in malnourished children: iron supplements, extra food, deworming and psychosocial stimulation. A more holistic view of child development is gaining ground, informed by the links between health and nutrition, on the one hand, and education on the other. In Delhi, India, a programme providing deworming and iron supplements resulted in higher pre-school attendance. Interventions combining nutrition and education are more likely to succeed than those focusing on nutrition alone. Studies in Guatemala and Viet Nam found that nutrition packages had a longer-lasting impact when children also received sufficient cognitive stimulation. Education should be considered an integral dimension of programmes designed to address young children's health and nutrition problems.

Box 3.1: HIV/AIDS: treatment for young children

Every day 1,800 children are born infected with HIV. Children with HIV suffer common childhood diseases more frequently than other children, with greater intensity and often with less responsiveness to drugs. Illnesses that are rarely fatal in healthy children cause high mortality in those with HIV. Without access to antiretroviral therapy, the disease's progression is rapid: 45% of infected children die before they are 2. To reduce the impact of HIV infection on children, early diagnosis is required. Good nutrition, appropriate immunizations and drug therapy for common childhood infections are vital.

Research in high-income countries has demonstrated that HIV infections are associated with lower academic achievement, weaker language skills in pre-school and poorer visual-motor functioning. Antiretroviral therapy improves cognitive and socio-emotional development in infected children. Early childhood programmes can provide a channel for such treatment and help compensate for the disease's emotional and other consequences.

Children from AIDS-afflicted families suffer from the stigma attached to the disease. Sparse information exists on the impact of orphanhood on participation in early childhood programmes. Given that user fees are more common for these programmes than for primary schooling, the impact of parental death on young children's attendance may be greater.

Improving access to and progress in primary school

ECCE programmes enhance children's physical well-being, cognitive and language skills, and social and emotional development. The impact of such programmes on participation in primary school education and beyond is well documented. Pre-school experience in the United Kingdom, for example, was shown to result in improved intellectual development, independence, concentration and sociability during the first three years of primary school.

Studies of programmes in several developing countries point to links between participation in early childhood programmes, primary school enrolment and better results over at least three to four years, particularly for disadvantaged children. In a poor district of Nepal, 95% of children who attended an early childhood programme went on to primary school, as opposed to 75% who did not. Participants had significantly higher marks on exams at the end of grade 1. The Turkish Early Enrichment Project in low-income areas of Istanbul, comprising pre-school and support to mothers, resulted in 86% of the children still being in school after seven years, compared with 67% for non-participants. Controlling for GDP, the higher an African country's pre-primary enrolment ratio, the higher its primary school completion rate and the lower its primary repetition rate.

The economic case

Given their positive impact on health, nutrition and education outcomes, early childhood programmes represent a good investment in human capital. Although research is limited, especially in developing countries, returns to investing in ECCE programmes are positive, and indeed generally higher than those to other education interventions. Returns to ECCE investments are reaped over a longer period than those targeting older children, youth or adults. Furthermore, the skills acquired in ECCE programmes are a foundation for all further learning.

The most widely cited evidence on early childhood programmes comes from the longitudinal High/Scope Perry Preschool Program in the United States. Between 1962 and 1967, the programme targeted

low-income African-American children assessed to be at high risk of school failure. Participants and a control group were tracked annually from ages 3 to 11, and again several times until age 40. Participation led to increased IQ at age 5, higher rates of graduation from high school and higher earnings at age 40. Detailed analysis suggests that the programme yielded a 17:1 benefit/cost ratio.

Evidence from developing countries is slowly accumulating. A pre-school health programme in Delhi increased average school participation by 7.7 percentage points for girls and 3.2 points for boys. The same programme would increase the net present value of lifetime wages by US$29 per child while costing only US$1.70. In Bolivia, a home-based programme had benefit/cost ratios between 2.4:1 and 3.1:1, with higher ratios for at-risk children; analyses in Colombia and Egypt find similar ratios. In all cases, the impact of ECCE is stronger for children from poor families than for more advantaged children: participation results in lower dropout and repetition rates in primary school.

Reducing social inequality

Advocates of programmes for young children have long argued that they can reduce social inequality. Recent research confirms that ECCE programmes can compensate for disadvantage, regardless of underlying factors such as poverty, gender, ethnicity, caste or religion. Head Start, a public project launched in the United States in 1964 as part of the 'War on Poverty', was driven by the assumption that targeted interventions could compensate for less favourable family and community backgrounds. The High/Scope Perry programme helped level the playing field for disadvantaged children. Research in such diverse places as Cape Verde, Egypt, Guinea, Jamaica and Nepal consistently finds that the most disadvantaged children are the ones who draw the greatest benefit from ECCE programmes.

Early childhood programmes can also reduce gender inequality. Girls who participate in them are more likely to begin school at the right age and to complete the primary cycle. ECCE participation also tends to have a larger impact on girls' health than on that of boys.

The provision of good-quality early childhood care and support is essential for all children, but particularly important for the poor and vulnerable, to compensate for disadvantage. As the Nobel laureate James Heckman observes, 'It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy.'

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A proud father with his son in Baghdad, Iraq.

Part IV. The spread of early childhood care and education

influx of women to the labour market
limited public provision for children under 3
increases in pre-primary enrolment across developing world
nearing achievement of gender parity
household surveys that pinpoint inequalities
a feminized workforce in early childhood services

All societies have arrangements for taking care of and educating young children. Current social and economic trends, however – including migration, urbanization and women's labour market participation – are transforming family structures and spurring demand for more organized early childhood care and education. Today only a minority of countries provide near-universal coverage. In many developing countries, early childhood programmes are accessible to just a fraction of the population, typically affluent urban families. This section looks at the rise of early childhood provision and assesses the extent to which children around the world benefit from ECCE programmes.

Looking back: the rise of support to working mothers and organized child care

Formal arrangements to care for young children essentially date back to the eighteenth century. In Europe a great variety of early childhood institutions gradually took root, some founded by educators well known today, such as Fröbel and Montessori. Some addressed the needs of poor working mothers or neglected children, while others provided an enriched pre-school education for middle-class children. After the Second World War, the growing numbers of women in the labour force began to demand decent-quality and affordable care for their young children. By the end of the twentieth century, the state nursery school predominated throughout Europe.

The formalization of early childhood provision in developing countries is more recent and shows considerable regional variation. The traditional roles of women in agriculture and the informal sector meant greater reliance on kin and informal community arrangements for children's care and upbringing. The massive entry of women into the labour market in developing countries since the 1950s, however, has changed the situation. In 2005 women's labour force participation rates were over 55% in East Asia, South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and about 50% in Latin America and the Caribbean. They were considerably lower in South Asia (35%) and the Arab States (28%), but still up significantly over previous decades. In general, the greater women's relative control over household earnings and spending, the more likely it is that children's welfare will be considered a priority in household decisions and that boys and girls will benefit equally from early childhood provision.

In more developed countries, women's work in the industrial and service sector is strongly associated with higher enrolment in pre-school programmes. The link

between employment patterns and pre-primary education is weak in developing countries. But migration, urbanization and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are weakening ties between extended and nuclear families and creating child care needs that current arrangements do not meet. The number of single-parent households, especially those headed by women and particularly in European Union countries and Latin America, also has implications for child care.

Public policies supporting infant care date back to the late nineteenth century. By the 1970s, almost all OECD countries offered paid maternity leave, and some (particularly among the Nordic countries) have parental leave, allowing the mother or father or, in rare cases, both to take time off work. About 100 developing countries report having established some form of maternity leave, albeit frequently limited to workers in certain sectors and with often lax enforcement.

Monitoring progress towards EFA goal 1

Some 738 million children – 11% of the total world population – are in the 0 to 5 age group. Their number is expected to reach 776 million by 2020, driven by growth in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States.

The wide diversity of provision, organization and funding of ECCE programmes presents formidable challenges for monitoring. Moreover, the early childhood goal contains no quantitative target by which to gauge progress. Monitoring problems include a lack of systematic data on programmes for children under 3; limited information on the extent to which programmes address health, physical development, learning and support to parents; and pre-primary enrolment data reported by education ministries that may undercount children's participation in programmes funded by other ministries, private groups or local communities. Enrolment patterns can also vary significantly within the 3 to 5 or 3 to 6 age group that most countries use when calculating participation in early childhood programmes. This Report draws on multiple sources of information to assess progress.

The education and care of under-3s in developing countries is widely regarded as the responsibility of parents, private associations or non-government agencies. One or more programmes for these very young children can be identified in just over half the world's countries. They typically provide part-time organized custodial care for young children and, in some cases, health services and educational activities. Much more information is needed about programmes for children under 3 if comprehensive monitoring of ECCE is to take place.

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Early days in a state-run kindergarten in Budapest, Hungary, 1948.

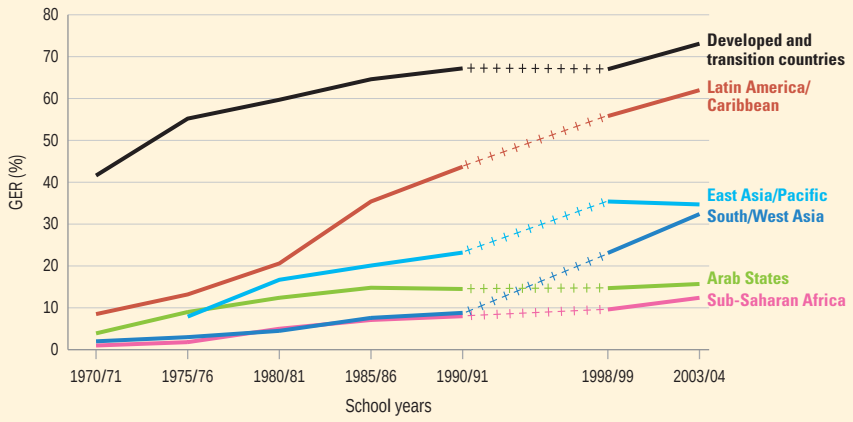
Pre-primary education: sharp enrolment increases

The International Standard Classification of Education defines pre-primary education (ISCED level 0) as including all programmes that, in addition to providing children with care, offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities, either in a formal institution or in a non-formal setting. Governments play a more active role in the provision of programmes for children aged 3 or older, and a relatively limited one for the under-3 group. Age 3 is the official starting age of pre-primary education in 70% of countries.

Worldwide the number of children enrolled in pre-primary education has tripled in the past three decades, rising from 44 million in the mid-1970s to about 124 million by 2004. Pre-primary gross enrolment ratios (GERs) express total enrolment, regardless of age, as a percentage of the population of the official age group in each country (typically 3 to 5). Between 1975 and 2004 the global GER more than doubled, from about 17% to 37%. Among developed and transition countries the ratio was about 40% in 1970, increasing to 73% in 2004. Among developing countries the coverage of pre-primary education was and remains considerably lower: in 1975, on average, less than 1 child in 10 was enrolled in pre-primary institutions; by 2004 coverage had increased to about 1 child in 3 (32%). Over 1991-2004, coverage in pre-primary education increased in four-fifths of the eighty-one countries with comparable data for both years.

Worldwide the number of children enrolled in pre-primary education has tripled in the past three decades

Figure 4.1: Regional trends in pre-primary gross enrolment ratios, 1970/71 to 2003/04



Note: The broken line signifies a break in the data series due to a new classification.
Source: See Chapter 6 in the full EFA Report.

There are marked regional differences in trends dating back to the 1970s. In Latin America and the Caribbean, which has witnessed the strongest increase, three-quarters of countries now have pre-primary GERs above 75%, while in sub-Saharan Africa, despite a steady increase since the 1970s, half the countries have ratios lower than 10%. In the Arab States, coverage has been fairly stagnant since the 1980s. GERs have expanded noticeably across Asia. In South and West Asia most countries now enrol between one-third and one-half of their children in pre-primary education (Figure 4.1).

Most regions are moving towards gender parity in pre-primary education

Since 1999, pre-primary enrolment increases have been particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa (where the number enrolled rose by 43.5%), the Caribbean (43.4%) and South and West Asia (40.5%). Although the number of children enrolled in pre-primary education rose sharply in sub-Saharan Africa, the average GER for the region did not, due to continuing high population growth.

The average GER rose moderately (by four percentage points) from 1999 to 2004 for developed countries and the same amount for developing countries, while the increase was more pronounced for the transition countries (eighteen percentage points). The number of young children enrolled in pre-primary education declined in East Asia by almost 10%, mainly due to trends in China following a period of impressive expansion (enrolment increased from 6.2 million in 1976 to 24 million in 1999 before dropping to the 2004 level of 20 million as the 0-5 population decreased). Forty-eight percent of the world's pre-primary enrolments are girls, a proportion unchanged since 1999.

Considerable disparities exist between countries in the same region; they are generally related to national development levels (e.g. in sub-Saharan Africa, with a regional average of only 10%, Mauritius and Seychelles have GERs close to 100%; in East Asia, the GER is below 10% in Cambodia while the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Thailand register nearly universal enrolment). In Central Asia, despite some recovery from the decline of the 1990s, no country enrols more than half its children. In North America and Western Europe, virtually all countries have GERs above 60%; in half of them the ratio is 100%.

Most of the fifty-two countries with GERs of less than 30% are in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States. In general their recent progress has been slow (typically less than five percentage points). Of the eighty-six countries with GERs above 30% in 2004, the ratio had increased since 1999 in sixty-six. Rapid progress (more than ten percentage points) was reported in Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico and Jamaica; most of the transition countries have begun to regain lost ground.

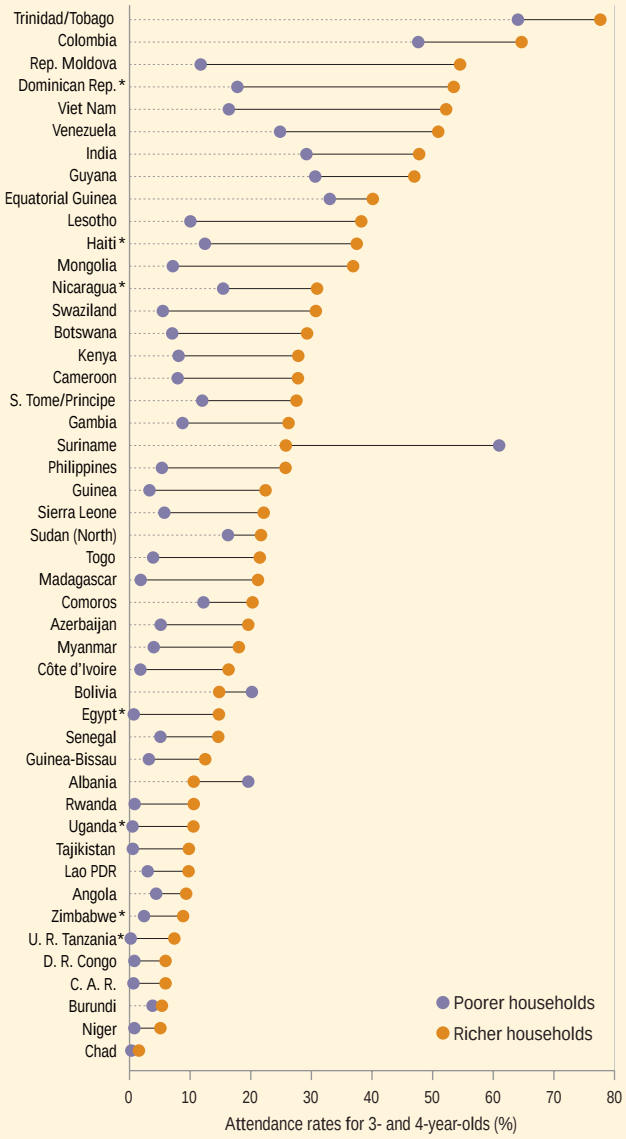
Although goal 1 has no quantitative target, many countries have set their own – at least for children over 3 – in national plans for 2010 or 2015. Countries with relatively high pre-primary GERs have tended to set universal pre-school enrolment by 2015 as the objective. Chile and Mexico, with current GERs above 50%, have done so, for instance, as have India, Kazakhstan, and Paraguay, all with GERs below 40%. Given past growth rates, meeting these national targets may not be feasible without significant additional efforts.

Most regions are moving towards gender parity in pre-primary education – the overall ratio between the female and male GERs is 0.97. Considerable progress has occurred in regions with high disparities, notably the Arab States, where the gender parity index was 0.87 in 2004 compared to 0.76 in 1999. South and West Asia also moved towards parity between 1999 and 2004. Countries in the Caribbean and several Pacific island states show a slight disparity in favour of girls. Many of these countries also have gender disparities favouring girls at the primary and secondary levels. The countries with the lowest GPIs are Afghanistan, Morocco, Pakistan and Yemen.

Household surveys highlight groups with limited access to ECCE

Household surveys, based on direct interviews, provide a more detailed picture of early childhood provision than the administrative data on pre-school reported so far. In most of the fifty-three countries for which survey data are available the gender gap is relatively small

Figure 4.2: Household wealth disparities in attendance rates for ages 3 and 4 in care and learning programmes



Source: See Chapter 6 in the full EFA Report.

(less than 10%). By contrast, urban-rural differences are much larger, and (except in Jamaica) always to rural children's disadvantage. In many countries the proportion of rural children with access to early childhood provision is ten to thirty percentage points lower than that of urban children. Barring a few exceptions, children in richer households have higher ECCE attendance rates than those from poorer families (Figure 4.2). A mother with secondary education substantially increases the likelihood of children attending ECCE programmes. Children without birth certificates and, to a lesser extent, vaccination records have lower attendance in ECCE programmes. Those suffering from stunting (low height for age) have lower ECCE participation rates than other children.

The ECCE workforce

Entry qualifications for pre-primary teachers are highly variable in developing countries and range from lower secondary to tertiary level qualifications. Formal entry requirements are often not respected. Pre-primary school teachers receive little training – almost always less than their primary school counterparts. Some countries, including Lesotho and Uganda, have recently developed training courses for pre-primary teachers.

In most industrialized countries, entry qualifications usually require tertiary education and specific training. The care and education components of early childhood provision are generally separate, leading to distinct staffing policies. Highly trained educators work alongside untrained child care workers, many of them part-time or volunteers.

Almost all pre-primary school teachers are women, reflecting perceptions of ECCE as an extension of the traditional mothering role. In OECD countries, more than 20% of pre-primary teachers are above the age of 50. In low- and middle-income countries, the recent expansion of pre-primary education translates into a higher proportion of younger teachers than at the primary level.

In most countries with data available (mainly middle-income), pre-primary and primary teachers' salaries are generally the same. Pay disparities exist between pre-primary teachers and other staff, and between those in the formal system and those working in less formal programmes, often with the youngest children. Some countries, among them the United Kingdom, are moving to close the gap between education and care workers by introducing a national minimum wage in ECCE.

Many countries are developing, revising or improving the training programmes through which pre-primary teachers become qualified. Several universities in Egypt have developed pre-service and in-service training programmes for kindergarten teachers. Other countries have recently developed their first programmes for pre-school teachers. Many are also strengthening in-service training. Each Moroccan province has a pre-school resource centre providing continuing education and pedagogical methods to teachers. The SERVOL Training Centre in Trinidad and Tobago organizes in-service training for other Caribbean islands.

Some countries are moving to close the gap between education and care workers by introducing a national minimum wage in ECCE

Part V. Designing quality programmes for young children

respecting cultural diversity
working with parents
starting in the mother tongue
gender without stereotypes
inclusive perspectives
school readiness

Early childhood programmes support and complement the efforts of parents and other carers. To be effective, such programmes must be sensitive to culture, respect linguistic diversity and be attuned to children living with special needs or under situations of emergency. This part reviews some of the hallmarks of effective programmes that provide support to children from birth up to their entry into primary school.

A kindergarten teacher holds children's attention in Toubab Dialao, Senegal, a fishing village where most inhabitants live below the poverty line.

Designing programmes for young children is especially complex. They need to integrate educational activities with health, nutrition and social services to assure holistic development. Pedagogy must be adapted to the needs of young children from diverse backgrounds. And in the child's earliest years, it is helpful to provide support to parents too. No single model of early childhood provision can be applied uniformly in all countries. For a start, parenting practices differ around the world. It is important for early childhood programmes to recognize the differences and ensure that programmes are relevant to the country context and the groups for which they are designed.

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Parenting programmes: starting in the home

Parents (or other custodial carers) are the child's first educators, and, for the youngest age group, the home is the prime area of care. The home environment has a major impact on cognitive development and socio-emotional well-being. The availability of reading materials and drawing and art supplies is a predictor of cognitive outcomes such as attention, memory and planning. The best way to support home environments is to work with parents directly.

Parenting programmes are diverse and hence difficult to monitor. Home visiting programmes provide one-on-one support for individual parents. The model is expensive and so best used as a targeted intervention with at-risk families. Target groups for the Community Mothers Programme in Dublin, for instance, include single and/or teenage parents, refugees, asylum-seekers and people living in disadvantaged areas. Community Mothers – volunteers trained by nurses – visit parents once a month and use a specially designed child development programme focusing on health care, nutrition and overall development. Evaluations show significant beneficial effects for both mothers and children in terms of self-esteem, interaction and support for the child's learning experiences. The creation of parent groups, generally by professionals, is another common way to share information on child care and education.

Local communities also play a key role in supporting young children and their families through home- or community-based child care. In Colombia, for example, the Hogares Comunitarios programme has become a major welfare initiative, catering for more than a million children from birth to age 6. Initially designed to improve nutrition in poor households, it now includes child care as well. Eligible households elect a 'community mother' who opens her home to up to fifteen children. The programme reaches the poorest children and boosts their physical growth by providing daily meals. Children aged 13 to 17 who once participated in the programme were more likely to be in school and less likely to have repeated a grade in the past year than those who did not.

Pedagogy and curriculum: setting the groundwork for learning

The most common form of ECCE, particularly for the 3 to 6 age group, is centre-based provision. It is crucial to make this experience a positive one by ensuring that practices are suited to the child's age and cultural environment. Learning is more effective in the mother

tongue. At the same time, this first exposure to organized learning is an opportunity to challenge traditional gender roles. Finally, programmes should be inclusive and take into account circumstances such as armed conflict (Box 5.1).

Research in both developed and developing countries highlights a consistently positive relationship between measures of various aspects of quality and virtually every facet of a child's development. While structural features, such as class size and staff-child ratios, are important elements of a good early childhood environment, research shows that interactions between the staff and the child are the most important predictors of children's enhanced well-being.

Poverty affects language development

The IEA[7] Pre-primary Project looked at how experience at age 4 affected children's development at age 7 in seventeen countries. It found, for example, that when 4-year-olds had participated in programmes where unstructured activities, driven by the child's interests, predominated, they achieved higher language scores at age 7 than counterparts who had experienced more activities aimed at developing skills such as literacy and numeracy. The frequency of child interaction, adult participation in children's activities and the teacher's education level were all positively related to later language performance as well.

Gender: challenging stereotypes

Perceptions of what is masculine and what is feminine take hold in early childhood. Curricula for this age group are often not gender-neutral. Books tend to draw marked distinctions between male and female characters. When playing games, children are often encouraged to follow stereotypes. Teachers tend to respond differently to boys and girls in listening, asking questions and interacting.

Early childhood programmes can be adapted to challenge gender roles. Pedagogy, teaching and play materials can promote different values. Sweden formed a delegation to encourage debate on ways to promote gender equality in pre-schools and channel funding to pre-school staff wishing to develop alternative methods along these lines. Training should compel teachers to reflect on their own practice. Encouraging more men to work in early childhood programmes can also help challenge assumptions of the woman as sole carer and encourage fathers to be more involved in their child's upbringing.

7. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

Box 5.1: Children living in emergencies: healing gently

Five out of six conflicts occur in Africa and Asia, with dramatic consequences for civilian populations. Some 24 million people are displaced within their own countries as a result of conflict. With the nature of conflict shifting to low-intensity civil wars, armies are relying increasingly on private and paramilitary forces – and on child soldiers. Education is essential to restore some stability to children's lives.

In northern Ethiopia, an initiative run by the International Rescue Committee in the Shimelba refugee camp promotes child healing and well-being: the Healing Classrooms Initiative opened a 'children's village' for pre-schoolers in a special compound in the camp. Feeding centres provide daily meals. Classrooms are furnished to welcome young children. The child-centred learning programme includes art, music and pre-literacy classes. At the same time, vocational training and adult education benefit mothers.

In several sub-Saharan African countries, UNICEF's Child Friendly Spaces incorporate several dimensions of care and create a sense of security for mothers and children. In Liberia, these spaces give mothers a comfortable place to breastfeed, while early childhood development classes include such elements as hygiene, nutrition and the importance of play, with other services provided related to health, nutrition, early stimulation and learning, water, hygiene and sanitation, and protection of young children.

Supporting early language development

Research consistently shows the importance of early literacy experiences – reading books to children, the number of books in the home – on language development, reading outcomes and school success. In the United Kingdom the most important influence on children's success in learning to read in primary school was exposure to written materials during the pre-school years. Poverty also affects language development. In the United States the number of words heard by age 4 differed enormously among welfare, working-class and professional families. At age 3, the professional's child had a larger vocabulary than the parent of the welfare child. This underlines the importance of exposing children, especially from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, to language-rich settings at an early age.

Although many children grow up in multilingual societies, learning in the official language is generally the norm in pre-schools and primary schools around the world. Yet children who learn in their mother tongue for six to eight years from pre-school through the early primary grades perform better than those who start in the official language.

Bilingual models, however, remain few and far between. Some claim they are expensive, difficult to implement and risk fostering social and political divisions. But countries including Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam have developed effective bilingual early childhood programmes that have influenced practices in the first years of primary education. In Papua New Guinea, the world's most linguistically diverse nation, parents worked with local government and NGOs in the 1970s to create two-year vernacular-language pre-schools. In 1995, the government encouraged the formal school system to use vernacular languages in the first three years of primary school, followed by gradual transition to English. Today over 350 languages are used in the country's education system.

Bilingual storytelling and activities can also help children develop literacy skills, which can be transferred from one language to another. Recruiting multilingual staff is another promising strategy. Several European countries employ bilingual assistants to work in pre-school settings with new immigrant students and their parents. Parents from language minority backgrounds need to be informed about opportunities for their children to attend early childhood programmes and the value of preserving their home language and culture.

Inclusive approaches: special needs and emergency situations

As many as 85% of all children with special needs live in developing countries where the incidence of sensory problems such as childhood blindness and hearing impairment is disproportionately high. Adequate screening for sensory and non-sensory disabilities can lead to effective interventions for young children with special needs. Early childhood programmes can also foster transition for certain children into mainstream schools. Chile has an inclusive approach to early childhood education in which training courses for nursery school staff, monthly bulletins for teachers and funds for wheelchairs and hearing aids have improved care for young children with special needs in mainstream centres. Most OECD countries also encourage inclusive approaches, in line with international commitments to children's rights.

Facilitating transition to primary school

Good-quality ECCE is not just an end in itself. It is also, as the EFA goals recognize, an important foundation for subsequent education. Thus it is vital not only for children to be made ready for primary school, in terms of physical, social and cognitive development, but also for primary schools themselves to provide decent learning conditions. One route is to integrate ECCE more closely with primary education.

Such integration is motivated by a desire to overcome fragmentation and facilitate transition for children. The approach involves forging stronger links among the health, care and education components of ECCE, and often making one administrative structure, usually the ministry of education, responsible for ECCE and primary education. While such efforts can increase continuity for children, they entail a risk of excessive focus on academic goals in pre-school instead of a broader, holistic approach incorporating welfare, health and care.

A second aspect of integrating ECCE and primary schooling is to assure curricular continuity. Some countries have an integrated pre-school and primary curriculum. In the Step by Step curriculum followed in thirty countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there are no grades for the first four years of primary education so that children can progress at their own pace. Jamaica's Pre-Primary to Primary Transitions follows the same principle. In India's Bodh Shiksha Samiti and Colombia's Escuela Nueva, multigrade classrooms use an active curriculum and lesson plans that respond to students' differing abilities and interests.

Continuity can also be fostered by getting parents more engaged. In Pakistan, parents in poor rural communities help teach local songs and stories. In France, community mediators work with parents in low-income neighbourhoods to improve dialogue with teachers. Where children lack access to pre-school, transition can be eased through, for example, visits to primary schools to familiarize children with their future environment, or structured and free play activities for small groups of children in the months leading up to school entry.

Continuity can be fostered by getting parents more engaged

Part VI. Fostering strong ECCE policies

If children are to benefit from good-quality care and learning opportunities in their early years, governments, in partnership with other stakeholders, must develop and implement sound policies for them. Three key areas deserve attention: governance, quality and financing – including targeting the disadvantaged and partnerships with international aid agencies.

On the road in Chiapas, Mexico.

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creating favourable policy environments
developing national early childhood policies
regulating quality in all settings
involving private actors
reaching the most vulnerable and disadvantaged
developing financing strategies
partnering with international aid agencies

Promising signs

Developing country governments have generally given limited policy attention to early childhood, among the EFA goals, relative to that given to primary education and gender parity. A review of policy documents for forty-five countries reveals that few adopt a holistic approach encompassing education, health and nutrition for children 8 and under. For disadvantaged, vulnerable and disabled children, the lack of a national ECCE policy represents a truly missed opportunity. Where ECCE does get attention, it is usually for age 3 and up, so that opportunities for younger children are also missed.

However, there are some promising signs. The growing body of research on the benefits of ECCE, including as a very important first stage of the education system, and strong international ECCE networks are contributing to a more favourable policy environment. Increasingly governments are beginning to elaborate explicit and comprehensive national ECCE policies covering health, nutrition, education, water, hygiene, sanitation and legal protection for young children. A national vision statement can clarify the responsibilities of each sector, including funding commitments. Legislation is important to define what must be done to enact such policies.

How does ECCE gain political clout?

The increasing attention to ECCE is the result of a number of factors:

- *High-level political endorsement* can get ECCE on the agenda. Leaders in countries including Chile, Jamaica, Jordan, Senegal, Thailand and Viet Nam have made early childhood a national priority in recent years, which has led to new national policies, expanded provision, increased attention to quality and additional financial support.
- *Broad stakeholder involvement* helps promote ownership and consensus (e.g. in Ghana). Engaging parents can encourage local community support for ECCE programmes.
- *Government partnerships* with international organizations, donor agencies and NGOs can generate significant seed money and technical assistance for projects that can then be scaled up.
- *Aligning ECCE policies* with other national and sectoral development policies is a strategic way to leverage resources and promote ECCE integration. Ghana, Uganda and Zambia are integrating early childhood development into their PRSPs.
- *Detailed action plans* facilitate ECCE policy implementation by describing the division of responsibilities and allocation of resources, and setting a time frame.
- *Media campaigns* can draw attention to ECCE, in the process raising awareness of child care practices, e.g. by disseminating knowledge about newborns, the importance of breastfeeding and reading to children, and the role of fathers.

Who takes the lead? ECCE involves multiple sectors, programmes and actors, making coordination a frequent challenge

Governments need to ensure that minimum acceptable standards are met for all children

Governance issues

Who takes the lead? ECCE involves multiple sectors, programmes and actors, making coordination a frequent challenge. Most countries, especially in Europe and Latin America, offer one or two years of pre-primary within the education system, but other forms of ECCE, especially for children under 3, fall under the auspices of ministries in charge of health, social welfare, children and women's affairs, etc. The involvement of multiple players can bring together agencies with different areas of expertise. It can also lead to conflict between ministries. In some countries, no single administrative body bears the main responsibility for ECCE, making neglect more likely.

In about 60% of the 172 countries with available information, ministries – generally the education ministry – oversee or coordinate programmes targeting children over 3. In 30% of the countries this function is shared with another official body, such as a national institute or subnational authorities. In the remaining 10%, non-government bodies are the sole supervisors of early childhood programmes.

Although in a majority of countries administrative responsibility for early childhood is divided by age group, since the late 1980s a growing number of countries (including Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain and Viet Nam) have designated education as the lead ministry for children from birth. Placing early childhood matters under the ministry of education can make it easier to increase attention to young children's learning and their transition to primary school. But since pre-school education is often not compulsory, it may struggle for attention and resources within the education bureaucracy. Another concern is that ECCE will be under pressure to become more formal and school-like.

Regardless of who takes the lead, coordination among the institutions and sectors involved is needed. Coordination mechanisms provide a forum for potentially achieving a common vision encompassing resources, standards, regulations, training and staffing. Too often, coordinating bodies tend to be short-staffed and advisory only, limiting their ability to move the agenda for young children forward. South Africa is unusual in that its National Coordinating Committee includes representatives from several ministries, training institutions, universities and NGOs; it was instrumental in creating pre-primary programmes for all 5- and 6-year-olds.

Arguments for decentralizing ECCE are often made, to the effect that services and resources can thus be better adapted to community needs and circumstances. In practice, though, it can result in uneven policy implementation, access and quality. In many transition countries, decentralization in the 1990s aggravated inequality between wealthier urban and poorer rural communities and led to deterioration in the quality and coverage of kindergartens.

It has since increasingly been recognized that decentralization must be accompanied by effective central government oversight and regulation. Sweden, for example, introduced a maximum fee for pre-schools and a new curriculum framework after deregulation of fees in the 1990s led to widespread disparities.

Private actors as potential partners

Non-government actors – community-based groups, NGOs, faith-based organizations and for-profit entities – play a large role in ECCE in many countries. Faith-based groups are active in parts of Europe, North America, Latin America and the Arab States.

In about half the 154 countries with data, enrolment in private institutions is less than one-third of the total; in one-third of countries, the private sector accounts for two-thirds or more of enrolment. The private sector is particularly prominent in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, the Caribbean and East Asia, while public provision has been integral to ECCE development in most European countries. In many transition countries, private providers stepped in where the state pulled out, leading to innovative practices but also inequalities of access.

The role of for-profit actors, in particular, is controversial. Proponents say it increases competition and parental choice. Critics note that private providers operating outside the public system often exclude poor children via high fees and entrance requirements. There is a risk of a two-track system, with low-income parents obliged to opt for lower-cost, poorer-quality public alternatives. To avoid this, governments need to take a more proactive role and develop a commonly agreed framework for regulation, quality assurance, monitoring and promotion of equity.

Improving quality

Governments need to ensure that minimum acceptable standards are met for all children. Such regulations should apply to all providers, public or private. Most governments regulate ECCE programmes, using easy-to-measure structural indicators of quality such as class size, staff-child ratios, availability of materials

and staff training. Equally important, if not more so, are carer-child relationships, inclusion of families and responsiveness to cultural diversity and to children with special needs.

Five Latin American countries have developed national quality standards for ECCE, and seven Caribbean countries have assessed programme quality using a common instrument to evaluate the learning environment and carer-child interactions. A few countries have early learning and development standards – national expectations of what children should know and be able to do. Standards must be established with care, and used with care: made at national level, they may not take into account cultural, linguistic and other forms of diversity; misused, they can stigmatize children, labelling them as 'failures' or 'not ready' to begin school.

Promoting quality through staffing policies

How children interact with their carers and teachers largely determines the quality of learning. Several industrialized countries are moving towards an integrated system of ECCE provision from birth to school entry that has involved restructuring staff qualifications and training, bridging the divide between the education and care components of ECCE. In Singapore, for example, all child care and pre-school personnel now undergo the same training and accreditation.

A key issue is how to recruit and retain large numbers of trained ECCE personnel. To draw more candidates to the field, some countries are developing flexible entry routes into higher education and teacher training. Several Caribbean islands give competency-based credit. Modern technology is also being harnessed in several countries. The Early Child Development Virtual University, for example, is a training and capacity-building initiative to help meet the need for leadership and development in this field in Africa and the Middle East. Students, who are in-service early childhood staff, are taught by faculty members from around the world and work with mentors in each country or region.

To ease the transition from early childhood programmes to primary school, several countries are introducing measures to assure professional continuity between the two levels. They include joint training (France, Ireland, Jamaica and the United Kingdom), emphasis on active learning approaches and equal professional status between ECCE and primary school teachers.

Assuring adequate financing

Expanding and improving ECCE will require raising additional public and private funds, and allocating them through more efficient financing mechanisms. Given the variety of situations involved, country-specific estimates of the costs of expanding and improving ECCE are of greater policy relevance than a global estimate. Sixty-five of the seventy-nine countries with data allocated less than 10% of education spending to ECCE in 2004. Over half the sixty-five countries allocated less than 5%. Of the fourteen countries allocating more than 10%, most were in Europe.

As a share of GNP, public expenditure on pre-primary education is greatest in Central and Eastern Europe (0.5%), compared with 0.4% in North America and Western Europe and 0.2% in Latin America. For North America and Western Europe as a whole, expenditure on pre-primary programmes is around 26% of the total for primary education, though the share rises to around 60% in France and Germany. In Latin America and the Caribbean, expenditure on pre-primary equals 14% of that on primary, with large variations across countries.

The small share of total public education spending allocated to pre-primary education reflects low enrolment ratios rather than low spending per child. For all countries with data, average public expenditure per child is 85% of that at primary level. Indeed, when the full costs of pre-primary education are met by the state, as tends to be the case still in the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, unit costs are almost 25% higher in pre-primary than in primary education, mainly because pupil-staff ratios are lower. In North America and Western Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean, public expenditure per child in pre-primary averages closer to 70% of that in primary (though reaching about 90% in France, Germany and Greece).

Overall, funding of ECCE is both public and private, with public funds often provided by more than one level of government. The relative shares of public and private funding vary considerably. Among OECD countries, for instance, the parents' share runs as high as 60% of the total in the United States but closer to 20% in Sweden and France. Among developing countries the variations are even greater. In Indonesia, ECCE is mainly regarded as a family responsibility and public funding represents no more than 5% of the total, usually as subsidies to privately operated urban child care centres. In Cuba the government covers 100%.

An alternative to funding ECCE programmes directly is for governments to provide resources (vouchers) enabling parents to purchase services from one of

Expanding and improving ECCE will require raising additional public and private funds

a variety of providers, an approach taken in Chile, the United States and Taiwan (China). In France, the fiscal and social security systems help offset families' child care costs.

Targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged children

ECCE programmes' greatest potential is among vulnerable and disadvantaged children. But these are precisely the children least likely to have access. When countries have limited resources, how can they be allocated to reach those most in need? Two types of targeting are used: geographical and by income. In addition, inclusion policies often involve targeting particular groups, such as the disabled and linguistic or ethnic minorities.

Donors allocate to the pre-primary level less than 10% of what they give to primary education

Geographical targeting is the approach of India's Integrated Child Development Services, which concentrates on remote rural regions, urban slums and tribal areas, reaching over 23 million children. Its integrated package of nutrition, immunization, health check-ups and referral services, and education for children under 6 and for pregnant and nursing mothers has a positive impact on the survival, growth and development of young children. Viet Nam targets remote and mountainous areas. Kenya targets children from pastoralist communities (Box 6.1). Income targeting, the more common option, can include restricting eligibility, subsidizing enrolment of the poor and provision of vouchers.

Box 6.1: Child care in Kenya's pastoralist communities

Kenya's national policy of universal free primary education has put pastoralist communities in the north under pressure to become more settled. Loipi – 'shade' in the local language – are enclosed places where grandmothers once looked after children, passing on oral traditions and skills. Since 1997, several pastoralist peoples have pooled resources to care for children aged 2 to 5, with professional guidance and financial support. Now reaching over 5,200 children, the Loipi programme is rooted in traditional approaches to child-rearing while offering access to health and nutrition services, income generation and information on harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. Enclosures and play materials are made by the community. Results include improved access to vaccination programmes, better nutrition and, according to pre-school teachers, a positive influence on children's transition to primary school.

With ECCE, as with other public services, there are risks that targeted approaches may not attract enough political support. Targeting can segregate children, leading to a concentration of disadvantage in programmes. Precise targeting is also very difficult. Many developed countries have publicly funded pre-school programmes that serve all children but also target extra resources to the most disadvantaged communities. This approach is less applicable in many developing countries, where most children are excluded from ECCE. A phase-in approach may be most feasible: countries develop a national ECCE policy for all children and settings, but begin by focusing public resources on the most disadvantaged.

Aid policies for early childhood

ECCE is not a priority for development aid. In a survey of sixty-eight donors, only four of the seventeen agencies responding identified ECCE as a specific component of their overall aid strategy; the others include early childhood within the education or health sector strategy. Donors give priority to centre-based ECCE programmes covering children from 3 to primary school age, and, to a lesser extent, to support for parents and carers. UNICEF and USAID were the only respondents supporting informal ECCE programmes. While not necessarily representative of all donors, these funding priorities may not match country needs. Less formal and less costly arrangements than centres can help reach more children.

It is difficult to separate early childhood from basic education in the main international aid database. In addition, some components of ECCE are included in other sectors, such as health. Low-income countries tend to receive less funding for ECCE than middle-income ones. Apart from Australia, Greece and Spain, donors allocate to the pre-primary level less than 10% of what they give to primary education, and a majority allocate less than 2%. ECCE's share of total aid to education is less than 0.5% for a majority of donors.

Stronger international political support, increased commitment from developing countries and more extensive dissemination of research on the benefits of ECCE would help increase donor agencies' commitment to ECCE issues. So would improved alignment of ECCE policies with education and health sector plans and poverty reduction strategies.

To conclude

The overall EFA picture is mixed. There has been significant progress since Dakar, especially on access to primary education, including for girls. The rest of the EFA agenda is lagging, however, and even the UPE goal is unlikely to be met on time, on present trends. In particular, there is still minimal attention to improving adult literacy and to programmes for children before they enter primary school.

Nine areas warrant urgent policy attention:

1. *Returning to the comprehensive approach of Dakar*. UPE has captured domestic and international agendas, but governments are not taking public responsibility for adult literacy – a staggering one in five adults lives without basic literacy skills – and ECCE. Achieving UPE, moreover, will require substantial expansion of places in lower secondary as an incentive to complete primary school.

2. *Acting with urgency*. There are only nine years left to 2015 and three to enrol all children of the relevant age group in primary school. Enrolling the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, ensuring that all children learn, expanding adult literacy programmes and creating education opportunities for children living in conflict and post-conflict situations are particular priorities.

3. *Emphasizing equity and inclusion*. In too many countries, fees for ECCE programmes and primary school remain a major obstacle to enrolment for poor families. Too many children remain out of school and too many are dropping out before the last grade of primary or do not attend regularly. Education policy needs to develop specific approaches for particular regions and population groups. An inclusive policy entails sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity and to learners with special needs, an overriding concern for gender equality in all learning situations, and efforts to bring schools and programmes closer to where people live.

4. *Increasing public spending and focusing it better*. Many governments are not spending enough public funds on basic education, especially ECCE and literacy. Public spending on education as a share of GNP has decreased in forty-one countries since the 2006 Report. Financial resources should be focused on indispensable requirements such as teachers in rural areas and inclusive measures to make EFA genuinely for *all*.

5. *Increasing aid and allocating it where it is most needed*. Aid to basic education in low-income countries needs to at least double and to focus more broadly on ECCE and literacy. The Fast Track Initiative needs to receive more funding, to deliver more predictable flows over a longer period and to broaden its primary education focus to include all of EFA.

There are only nine years left to 2015 and three to enrol all children of the relevant age group in primary school

EFA requires a more comprehensive approach and more sustained efforts

6. *Moving ECCE up domestic and international agendas*. High-level political endorsement, recognizing ECCE as essential to children's present welfare and future development, is key. Countries need to develop national policy frameworks on ECCE for children from birth to age 8 with a clearly designated lead ministry or agency that works with all related sectors. Such a policy should set goals and funding levels, and provide for regulations and quality monitoring. Programmes combining nutrition, health, care and education are more effective than those confined to one aspect. Effective partnerships with the private sector – a major ECCE actor in many countries – should be developed and the sector regulated to safeguard against inequities in access and quality.

7. *Increasing public financing for ECCE and targeting it*. Although national policy should encompass all young children, public resources in certain contexts may be best targeted initially to vulnerable and disadvantaged children. It is essential to include ECCE in key documents on public resource allocation (national budgets, sector plans and PRSPs. Other donors need to follow UNICEF's lead in prioritizing early childhood issues.

8. *Upgrading the ECCE workforce, especially as regards qualifications, training and working conditions*. Children's interaction with carers and teachers is the most critical determinant of quality in ECCE programmes. ECCE staff tend to be undervalued in terms of both training and pay. Quality standards are needed for all types of ECCE personnel. To be effective, staff need reasonable structural conditions (e.g. appropriate child/staff ratios and group sizes, and adequate materials).

9. *Improving the monitoring of ECCE*. Technical expertise should be brought to countries to assist in collecting more detailed information on ECCE, especially with regards to programmes for children under 3, ECCE personnel other than pre-primary teachers, quality measures and national expenditure on pre-primary education.

The considerable progress made towards EFA since Dakar provides a measure of just how much can be accomplished when countries and the international community join forces for concerted action. Yet EFA requires a more comprehensive approach and more sustained efforts. We must not let interest and momentum flag. EFA means education for all, not just education for some. It means all six goals, not just those related to primary school. It means paying particular attention to the early years, when effective steps to offset disadvantage can be taken at lowest cost, and when strong foundations are most easily laid. Finally, it means staying the course. Failing the youngest generation today not only violates their rights, it also sows the seeds of deeper poverty and inequalities tomorrow. The challenges are clear, the agenda too. The time for action is now. ■

All eyes on the alphabet outside a village primary school in Sathkira district, Bangladesh.

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EFA Global Monitoring Report Questionnaire

EFA GMR EDUCATION FOR ALL GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT

Feedback please!

The **Education for All Global Monitoring Report** *is an independent report published annually by UNESCO. Please take a few minutes to respond to our questions and tell us who you are. We welcome your comments and suggestions.*

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What is your main professional sector/activity?

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Do you consult the print edition of the full Report? the Summary Report?

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Explain how you use the Report:

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EFA GMR EDUCATION FOR ALL GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT

Sum/07

Summary

Early childhood is a time of remarkable transformation and extreme vulnerability. Programmes that support young children during the years before they go to primary school provide strong foundations for subsequent learning and development. Such programmes also compensate for disadvantage and exclusion, offering a way out of poverty.

This Summary Report focuses on the first Education for All goal, which calls upon countries to expand and improve early childhood care and education – a holistic package encompassing care, health and nutrition in addition to education. Disadvantaged children stand to benefit the most, yet too few developing countries, and too few donor agencies, have made early childhood a priority.

In other areas there is considerable progress toward Education for All, especially the key goal of universal primary education. More girls are attending school and international aid for education is increasing. As the Report demonstrates, however, much still needs to be done to meet the target date of 2015. Only if bold action is taken now can exclusion be overcome and comprehensive learning opportunities assured for everyone, in early childhood and throughout life.

EFA GMR EDUCATION FOR ALL GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT

Cover photo
Children at play in Kathmandu, Nepal.
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