EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009

Summary

Overcoming inequality: why governance matters

Education for All

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Overcoming inequality: why governance matters

Summary

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- 2008. Education for All by 2015 – Will we make it?
- 2007. Strong foundations – Early childhood care and education
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Foreword

When a majority of the world's countries committed at the turn of the new century to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015, they did so with the confidence that the EFA goals would stand the test of time.

They are making a difference. Remarkable gains have been registered in many of the world's poorest countries towards universal primary education and gender parity. But we still have a long way to go. Progress has been too slow and too uneven in many countries. There is now a clear and present danger that some key goals will not be achieved. Averting that danger is vital, not just because education is a basic human right, but also because it is crucial for improving child and maternal health, individual incomes, environmental sustainability and economic growth, and for driving progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals.

This seventh edition of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* offers a warning to governments, donors and the international community. On current trends universal primary education will not be achieved by 2015. Too many children are receiving an education of such poor quality that they leave school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. Finally, deep and persistent disparities based on wealth, gender, location, ethnicity and other markers for disadvantage are acting as a major barrier to progress in education. If the world's governments are serious about Education for All, they must get more serious about tackling inequality.

This Report persuasively argues that equity must be at the centre of the EFA agenda, to offset rising inequalities. Financing and governance reforms have an important role to play. Developing countries are not spending enough on basic education and donors have not lived up to their commitments. Stagnating aid to education is a serious concern for educational prospects in a large number of low-income countries. This clearly has to change in order to achieve EFA. But increased financing without equity will not benefit the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. A pro-poor approach to education policy is imperative for the goals to have meaning for the world's out-of-school children and 776 million adult illiterates.

The Report presents some of the public policy and governance reforms that can break the cycle of disadvantage, improve access, raise quality, and enhance participation and accountability.

At the September 2008 United Nations High-Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, world leaders and a broad range of partners stressed the key role of education for achieving anti-poverty targets and pledged additional resources. It is crucial that governments and donors do not renege on these commitments if education is going to become a reality for all the world's children.

This Report, which tracks progress annually towards the EFA goals, offers a comprehensive overview of the state of education in the world today. It provides national and international policy-makers with the analysis of complex issues, lessons learned and recommendations to provide equal chances in learning for all children, youth and adults. We are now more than halfway to 2015. The diagnosis is clear; so are the most effective strategies for addressing the most pressing educational challenges. By publishing this authoritative annual report, UNESCO, as lead United Nations agency charged with coordinating efforts towards EFA, aims to inform and to influence policy in order to steer the right course to 2015.

Koïchiro Matsuura

Highlights of the EFA Report 2009

Headline messages

- There has been remarkable progress towards some of the EFA goals since the international community made its commitments in Dakar in 2000. Some of the world's poorest countries have demonstrated that political leadership and practical policies make a difference. However, business as usual will leave the world short of the Dakar goals. Far more has to be done to get children into school, through primary education and beyond. And more attention has to be paid to the quality of education and learning achievement.
- Progress towards the EFA goals is being undermined by a failure of governments to tackle persistent inequalities based on income, gender, location, ethnicity, language, disability and other markers for disadvantage. Unless governments act to reduce disparities through effective policy reforms, the EFA promise will be broken.
- Good governance could help to strengthen accountability, enhance participation and break down inequalities in education. However, current approaches to governance reform are failing to attach sufficient weight to equity.

Progress on the six EFA goals

Goal 1 – Early childhood care and education

- Child malnutrition is a global epidemic that affects one in three children under the age of 5 and undermines their ability to learn. Slow progress in tackling child malnutrition and ill health – especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia – is undermining progress towards universal primary education.
- Progress indicators for the well-being of children in their pre-school years are a source for concern. The development targets set in the Millennium Development Goals for child mortality and nutrition will be missed by wide margins if current trends continue.
- Major global disparities in provision continue to divide the world's richest and poorest children. In 2006, pre-primary gross enrolment ratios averaged 79% in developed countries and 36% in developing countries, falling as low as 14% in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Global disparities are mirrored in wide gaps within countries, especially between the richest and poorest children. In some countries, children from the wealthiest 20% of households are five times more likely to attend pre-school programmes than those from the poorest 20%.

Goal 2 – Universal primary education

- The average net enrolment ratios for developing countries have continued to increase since Dakar. Sub-Saharan Africa raised its average net enrolment ratio from 54% to 70% between 1999 and 2006, for an annual increase six times greater than during the decade before Dakar. The increase in South and West Asia was also impressive, rising from 75% to 86%.
- In 2006, some 75 million children, 55% girls, were not in school, almost half in sub-Saharan Africa. On current trends, millions of children will still be out of school in 2015 – the target date for universal primary education. Projections for 134 countries accounting for some two-thirds of out-of-school children in 2006 suggest that some 29 million children will be out of school in 2015 in these countries alone.
- Children from poor households, rural areas, slums and other disadvantaged groups face major obstacles in access to a good quality education. While children from the wealthiest 20% of households have already achieved universal primary school attendance in most countries, those from the poorest 20% have a long way to go.

- Trends in primary education are susceptible to public policy. Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania are making remarkable progress in increasing enrolment and reaching the poor, thanks to policies such as the abolition of school fees, the construction of schools in underserved areas and increased teacher recruitment. In Nigeria and Pakistan, poor education governance is holding back progress and keeping millions of children out of school.

- In 2006, some 513 million students worldwide – or 58% of the relevant school-age population – were enrolled in secondary school, an increase of nearly 76 million since 1999. Despite progress, access remains limited for most of the world's young people. In sub-Saharan Africa, 75% of secondary-school-age children are not enrolled in secondary school.

Goal 3 – Meeting the lifelong learning needs of youth and adults

- Governments are not giving priority to youth and adult learning needs in their education policies. Meeting the lifelong needs of youth and adults needs stronger political commitment and more public funding. It will also require more clearly defined concepts and better data for effective monitoring.

Goal 4 – Adult literacy

- An estimated 776 million adults – or 16% of the world's adult population – lack basic literacy skills. About two-thirds are women. Most countries have made little progress in recent years. If current trends continue, there will be over 700 million adults lacking literacy skills in 2015.

- Between 1985–1994 and 2000–2006, the global adult literacy rate increased from 76% to 84%. However, forty-five countries have adult literacy rates below the developing country average of 79%, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia. Nearly all of them are off track to meet the adult literacy target by 2015. Nineteen of these countries have literacy rates of less than 55%.

- Major disparities in literacy levels within countries are often linked with poverty and other forms of disadvantage. In seven sub-Saharan African countries with low overall adult literacy rates, the literacy gap between the poorest and wealthiest households is more than forty percentage points.

Goal 5 – Gender

- In 2006, of the 176 countries with data, 59 had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education – 20 countries more than in 1999. At the primary level, about two-thirds of countries had achieved parity. However, more than half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab States had not reached the target. Only 37% of countries worldwide had achieved gender parity at secondary level.

- There is a confirmed trend towards more female than male enrolments in tertiary education worldwide, in particular in more developed regions and in the Caribbean and Pacific.

- Poverty and other forms of social disadvantage magnify gender disparities. For example, in Mali girls from poor households are four times less likely to attend primary school than those from rich households, rising to eight times at secondary level.

- Once girls are in school, their progress is often hampered by teacher attitudes and gender-biased textbooks that reinforce negative gender stereotypes. These school-based factors interact with wider social and economic factors that influence school performance along gender lines.

Goal 6 – Quality

- International assessments highlight large achievement gaps between students in rich and poor countries. Within countries too, inequality exists between regions, communities, schools and classrooms. These disparities have important implications not just in education but for the wider distribution of opportunities in society.

- In developing countries there are substantially higher proportions of low learning achievement. In a recent Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality assessment (SACMEC II) in sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than 25% of grade 6 pupils reached a desirable level of reading in four countries and only 10% in six others.

- Student background, the organization of the education system and the school environment explain learning disparities within each country. Many essential resources taken for granted in developed countries remain scarce in developing countries – including basic infrastructure such as electricity, seats and textbooks.

- More than 27 million teachers work in the world's primary schools, 80% of them in developing countries. Total primary school staff increased by 5% between 1999 and 2006. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, 1.6 million new teacher posts must be created and teachers recruited by 2015 to achieve UPE, rising to 3.8 million if retirement, resignations and losses (due to HIV/AIDs, for example) are taken into account.

- There are large national and regional disparities in pupil/teacher ratios, with marked teacher shortages in South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. But it is within countries that the greatest disparities exist, with teachers unevenly distributed across regions.

Financing education

National finance

- In the majority of countries with data, national spending on education has increased since Dakar. In some countries, increased spending has been associated with substantial progress on the EFA goals. However, the share of national income devoted to education decreased in 40 of the 105 countries with data between 1999 and 2006.

- Low-income countries are still spending significantly less on education than are other countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, eleven out of the twenty-one low-income countries with data spend less than 4% of their GNP. In South Asia, several high-population countries continue to spend under or only just over 3% of their GNP on education. This appears to reflect low political commitment to education.

- Global wealth inequalities are mirrored by inequalities in education spending. In 2004, North America and Western Europe alone accounted for 55% of the world's spending on education but only 10% of the population aged 5 to 25. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 15% of 5- to 25–year-olds but just 2% of global spending. South and West Asia represents over one-quarter of the population and just 7% of spending.

International aid

- Commitments to basic education are stagnating. In 2006, for developing countries, they amounted to US$5.1 billion, a little below the 2004 level. Half of all commitments to basic education came from just a handful of donors.

- Total aid for basic education for low-income countries in 2006 was US$3.8 billion. The amount will have to be tripled to reach the estimated US$11 billion required annually to finance a narrow range of goals in low-income countries.

- The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is failing to galvanize additional bilateral donor support for EFA. Current commitments to its Catalytic Fund fall short of those required to meet financing requests in the pipeline. By 2010, countries with plans approved by the FTI could be facing a financing shortfall of US$2.2 billion.

- An ambitious new agenda governing aid hopes to make aid more efficient and effective. To date progress is mixed: though some donors are willing to encourage national ownership, work through national systems and cooperate with other donors, others are more reticent.

Top policy recommendations

Meeting the EFA goals

Early childhood care and education

- **Strengthen the links** between education planning and child health provision, using cash transfer programmes, targeted health interventions and more equitable public spending in health sectors.

- **Prioritize early childhood education and care** in planning for all children, with incentives provided to include those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

- **Strengthen wider anti-poverty commitments** by tackling child malnutrition and improving public health systems, using innovative social welfare programmes which target poor households.

Universal primary education

- **Fix ambitious long-term goals** supported by realistic planning and sufficient medium- to long-term budgetary allocations to ensure progress in access, participation and completion in primary education.

- **Support equity** for girls, disadvantaged groups and underserved regions by setting clear targets for reducing disparities, backed by practical strategies for achieving more equitable outcomes.

- **Raise quality while expanding access** by focusing on smooth progression though school and better learning outcomes, increasing textbook supply and quality, strengthening teacher training and support, and ensuring that class sizes are conducive to learning.

Education quality

- **Strengthen policy commitments** to quality education and create effective learning environments for all students, including adequate facilities, well-trained teachers, relevant curricula and clearly identified learning outcomes. A focus on teachers and learning should be at the heart of this commitment.
- Ensure that all children attending primary school for at least four to five years **acquire the basic literacy and numeracy skills** that they need to develop their potential.
- Develop the capacity to **measure, monitor and assess education quality,** in areas that affect learning conditions (infrastructure, textbooks, class sizes), processes (language, instructional time) and outcomes.
- Revise existing policies and regulations to ensure that children have **sufficient instructional time** and that all schools minimize the gap between intended and actual instructional time.
- Participate in comparative regional and international **learning assessments** and translate lessons learned into national policy, and develop national assessments that best reflect each country's particular needs and goals.

Overcoming inequality – lessons for national governance reforms

- **Commit to the reduction of disparities** based on wealth, location, ethnicity, gender and other indicators for disadvantage. Governments should develop well-defined targets for reducing disparities and monitor progress towards their achievement.
- **Sustain political leadership** to reach education targets and tackle inequality through clear policy objectives and improved coordination within government through active engagement with civil society, the private sector and marginalized groups.
- **Strengthen policies for reducing poverty** and deep social inequalities that hinder progress towards education for all. Governments should integrate education planning into wider poverty-reduction strategies.
- **Raise quality standards** in education and work to ensure that disparities in learning achievement between regions, communities and schools are reduced.
- **Increase national education spending,** especially in developing countries that chronically underinvest in education.
- **Put equity at the centre** of financing strategies, in order to reach disadvantaged children, with more accurate estimates of the costs of reducing disparities and the development of incentives for reaching the most marginalized.
- **Ensure that decentralization** has an inbuilt commitment to equity through financing formulas that link resources to levels of poverty and deprivation in education.
- **Recognize that school competition and choice,** and private-public partnerships have their limits. If a public education system works poorly, the priority must be to fix it.
- **Strengthen the recruitment, deployment and motivation of teachers** to ensure that there are enough qualified teachers in all regions and schools, especially in remote and underserved communities.

Aid donors – delivering on commitments

- **Increase aid for basic education,** especially to low-income countries, by providing around US$7 billion to cover current financing gaps in priority EFA areas.
- **Enlarge the group of donor countries** committed to providing aid to basic education, in order to ensure that the financial support for the EFA goals is sustainable.
- **Commit to equity in aid for education** by providing more funds to basic education in low-income countries. Several donors – including France and Germany – should urgently review their current aid allocations.
- **Get behind the Fast Track Initiative** and close the projected financing gap – estimated at US$2.2 billion for 2010 – for countries with approved plans.
- **Improve aid effectiveness** and reduce transaction costs, as set out in the Paris Declaration, through greater alignment of aid behind national priorities, better coordination, increased use of national financial management systems and greater predictability in aid flows.

Chapter 1.
Education for All: human right and catalyst for development

Education plays a crucial role in reducing poverty and inequality, improving child and maternal health, and strengthening democracy

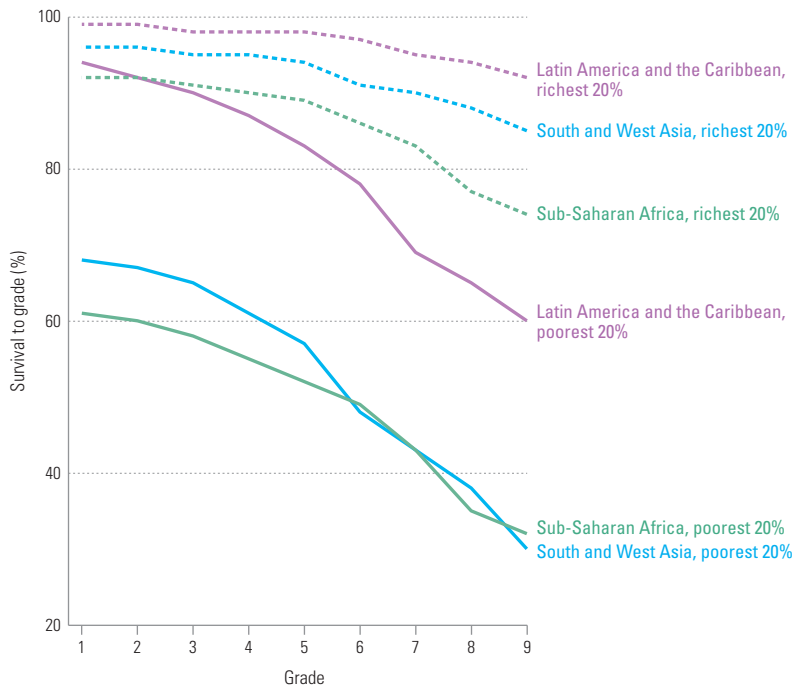
In 2000, world leaders made two sets of major development commitments. The first was the Dakar Framework for Action, where governments from 164 countries adopted six ambitious targets for education for all children, youth and adults for 2015. The second, also for 2015, was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): eight wide-ranging commitments for areas including education, child and maternal health, nutrition, disease and poverty.

The EFA goals and the MDGs (Box 1) are mutually interdependent. Not only a right in itself, education plays a crucial role in reducing poverty and inequality, improving child and maternal health, and strengthening democracy. Conversely, progress in education depends on gains in other areas, such as the reduction of poverty and disadvantages, and increased gender equality.

However, as the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009* documents, on current trends many of these global commitments will not be met by 2015. Though there has been progress in education, it has been too slow and uneven for many of the core Dakar commitments to be reached. The same is true for many MDGs in areas such as child mortality and nutrition. Progress in education could help unlock progress on the MDGs, but will require a strengthened commitment to equity.

The 2009 Report highlights the problems developing countries face in overcoming inequalities in education, which undermine progress on both the EFA goals and the MDGs. The Report examines key issues in education policy, reform, finance and management, and the role they can play in overcoming inequalities.

Figure 1: Grade attainment among 10- to 19- year-olds in Latin America and the Caribbean, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, 2000–2006[1]



1. Data are for the most recent year available during the period specified.
Source: See Figure 1.2 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*.

Education opportunity: highly polarized

From an international perspective, the gulf between rich and poor countries is wide – not only in terms of getting children through school but also in terms of what they are actually learning. A comparison of enrolment levels between Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and sub-Saharan Africa is particularly telling. By age 7, almost all children in OECD countries are in primary school, compared with 40% for sub-Saharan Africa. At age 20, in OECD countries 30% are in post-secondary education, and 2% in sub-Saharan Africa. Many children in countries such as Mali and Mozambique have less chance of completing primary school than their counterparts in France or the United Kingdom have of reaching tertiary education.

Global inequalities in education between high- and low-income countries often mask major disparities within countries. National inequalities based on income, gender, ethnicity, location and other factors can block a child's educational attainment. Children from the poorest 20% of households in South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa are less than half as likely to reach grade 9 as those from the richest 20% (Figure 1). National governments and international development agencies must strengthen the focus on equity to achieve the core EFA goals.

Unlocking the wider benefits of education

Strong progress in education can play an important role in getting the world on track for the wider MDGs. This is particularly true in three areas:

- **Tackling poverty through economic growth.** Equitable economic growth is the key to cutting poverty. There is strong evidence linking education to higher economic growth and productivity. One study of fifty countries for 1960 to 2000 revealed that an additional year of schooling lifted average annual GDP growth by 0.37% and, when that was combined with improved cognitive skills, the figure rose to 1%. Another found that an extra year of schooling could increase individual earnings by 10%. Inequalities in education mirror income inequalities: in India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, rising wage inequalities are closely linked with widening gaps between those with tertiary education and those with lower education attainment levels. When education is broad-based and widely shared by the poor, it can help create economic growth that is also broad-based, with large benefits for poverty reduction.

- **Improving child health and reducing mortality.** The links between education and public health are well established. Mothers with education, whether at secondary or primary level, reduce the child mortality rate. Educated parents also tend to have better-nourished children. In Bangladesh and Indonesia, for example, household survey data reveal that increased levels of parental education strongly reduce the chances of child stunting. Controlling for other factors, in Bangladesh having a mother who has completed primary education cuts the risk of child stunting by 22%. Primary and secondary education can have

There is strong evidence linking education to higher economic growth and productivity

Planting the seeds for success: teaching young children about healthy eating, in Zimbabwe

© Giacomo Pirozzi/PANOS

Box 1: The EFA goals and the education MDGs

EFA 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.

MDGs related to education

Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education.

Target 3. Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.

Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women.

Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

a positive impact on HIV/AIDS prevention as well. In all these areas, there is a strong two-way interaction between education and wider development goals.

- **Encouraging democracy and citizenship.** Education that equips people with literacy and other skills enables them to participate in society and hold government to account. When poor and marginalized people are educated, they are often more likely to participate in meetings of village councils and local bodies that manage education, health, water resources and the like. Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa reveals that education plays an important role in building support for multiparty democracy and challenges to autocracy. In a recent learning assessment by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), science education was shown to provide students with greater awareness of environmental issues and a stronger sense of responsibility for sustainable development. These in turn are tools people can use to hold governments to account and demand change.

This summary report provides an overview of the state of education and of how policies and reforms are making progress in tackling inequalities. Chapter 2 monitors progress towards the six EFA goals and overall education achievement, highlighting global, regional and national inequalities. Chapter 3 reviews education governance issues and seeks to identify if and how these reforms are tackling inequalities. Chapter 4 examines trends in international education aid and efforts to improve how aid is managed. Chapter 5 concludes with policy recommendations for achieving EFA.

There is a strong two-way interaction between education and wider development goals

Signing up for literacy classes, in Honduras

© Neil Cooper/PANOS

Chapter 2. The Dakar Goals: monitoring progress and inequality

This chapter examines the progress towards the EFA goals, following up on the mid-term assessment published in the previous Report. Drawing on data for 2006, it highlights the extraordinary progress made in many areas, notably by many of the poorest countries. However, some regions are not on track for achieving several key targets, including universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. Deep-rooted inequalities related to income, gender and other markers for disadvantage are holding back progress towards the EFA goals.

Early childhood care and education: a long way to go

Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The path towards EFA starts long before primary school. What happens during the very early years is vital for later success in education and in life. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes are important on many levels. They can support health and nutrition, facilitate cognitive development and give children the basic tools they need to learn and to overcome disadvantage. The wider benefits for society include higher productivity and income, improved health and more equal opportunities. Yet millions of children worldwide are held back by problems in health and nutrition, and access to pre-school provision remains limited and unequal.

Child health and nutrition: slow and uneven progress

Most indicators for child welfare are improving in the majority of countries. In some cases, there has been an impressive rate of progress in reducing child mortality, increasing immunization and vaccination, and treating those with HIV/AIDs. Strong national policies backed by international initiatives and support are making a difference. However, current efforts still fall far short of what is required. Slow progress in tackling child mortality and disease is undermining the rapid progress made in improving access to education.

Child mortality: slow progress and large inequalities. Each year around 10 million children die before reaching the age of 5. The vast majority of these deaths are the result of poverty. With MDG 4, governments pledged to cut deaths by two-thirds by 2015. Some progress has been made – in 2006 there were 3 million fewer under-5 deaths than in 1990, a decline of one-quarter. Countries including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Nepal have reduced under-5 mortality by 40% or more. Vaccination against measles is estimated to have cut deaths worldwide by 60%.

Without a greatly intensified effort, however, this MDG will be missed by a wide margin. Sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for half of all under-5 deaths, has been reducing child mortality at only a quarter of the rate required to achieve the goal. South Asia, which accounts for another third of all under-5 deaths, is doing only slightly better at one-third of the required rate. Both Bangladesh and Nepal have outperformed India, where, despite its higher income and economic growth, child mortality has been falling at around one-third of the rate required. If India had reduced child mortality to levels in Bangladesh, there would have been 200,000 fewer deaths in 2006. Recent studies indicate that, whatever the level of progress, the poorest children suffer most. Mortality rates among the richest households are much lower than for the poorest. In Nigeria this gap is widening despite improvements in average mortality.

Child malnutrition undermines potential and impedes progress. Child malnutrition is a major barrier to UPE. It is a worldwide epidemic, affecting one-third of all children under 5 and accounting for around 3.5 million deaths annually. Malnutrition has long-term consequences on physical and mental capacity and the ability to learn. Research in the Philippines has found that malnourished children perform more poorly in school because they tend to get a late start and their learning capacity is diminished.

Some countries are successfully tackling this problem with integrated maternal and child health interventions. Public health programmes in Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania are examples. However, overall

Child malnutrition is a major barrier to UPE, affecting one-third of all children under 5 and accounting for around 3.5 million deaths annually

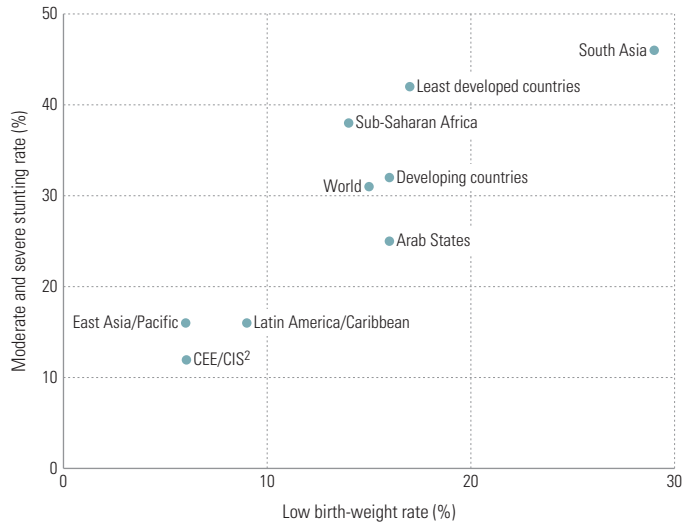
progress in reducing child malnutrition has been limited and in many countries the situation is deteriorating (Figure 2). Sub-Saharan Africa alone saw the number of undernourished people increase from 169 million to 206 million between 1990 and 2003. The international food crisis could dramatically worsen the situation, as rising prices especially affect poor households.

Good-quality ECCE provision: a foundation for equity

In Mexico and Ecuador, social protection programmes including early childhood and maternal care have registered impressive results

Services for children under 3, such as regular health visits, immunization and nutritional advice, differ enormously between developed and developing countries. In the latter they can be limited and often poorly coordinated, with households acting as the principle carer. Yet some governments in poorer countries are developing broad-based social protection programmes – including strong early childhood and maternal care components – with impressive results. In Mexico, the conditional cash transfer programme called Oportunidades reached 5 million families in 2007 with a budget of US$3.7 billion. Ecuador's Bono de Desarrollo Humano provides unconditional cash transfers to women in difficult circumstances. Recent evaluations show it has led to improvements in children's fine motor control, long-term memory and physical well-being. Transfers amounting to about US$15 per month have increased school enrolment rates from 75% to 85% and reduced child labour among the very poor by seventeen percentage points.

Figure 2: Malnutrition as illustrated by low birth weight and moderate and severe stunting worldwide.[1] Prevalence is higher in developing countries, especially South Asia



1. Data are for the most recent year available.
2. Central and Eastern Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independant States.
Source: See Figure 2.4 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009.*

A nutritious meal, in Lesotho

© Gideon Mendel/Corbis

Formal pre-school access from age 3: uneven expansion, deep inequalities

Worldwide access to pre-school facilities has been steadily increasing. Some 139 million children were enrolled in ECCE programmes in 2006, up from 112 million in 1999. But there are huge disparities between rich and poor countries, and within countries. In 2006, the pre-primary gross enrolment ratio (GER) averaged 79% in developed countries and 36% in developing countries. Coverage was lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States. Of the thirty-five countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the relevant data, seventeen had GERs below 10% in 2006. Out of eighteen Arab States with data, six had GERs below 10% and three below 20%.

Participation in pre-primary education tends to rise with average national income, but this is not automatic. Several high-income Arab states have lower enrolment ratios than poorer countries such as Ghana, Kenya and Nepal. Outcomes depend on whether governments choose to treat ECCE as a priority. Of course, low-income countries have funding constraints, but strong public policies can make a difference. External aid could play a far more effective role in supporting ECCE, which currently accounts for just 5% of total education aid.

There are marked disparities in pre-primary education provision within countries. Although vulnerable children from poor and rural households stand to benefit most from ECCE, international evidence suggests the children in the greatest need have the lowest attendance rates. Inequalities linked to income, location and socio-cultural group are all marked.

- **Income.** Pre-primary attendance rates for the poorest households fall far below those for the wealthiest. In the Syrian Arab Republic, children in the wealthiest 20% of the population are five times more likely to attend early childhood programmes than those in the poorest 20%. Reasons include lack of facilities, cost and parental perception that quality is inadequate.

- **Location.** Rural-urban gaps are marked in many countries, as are other geographic disparities. In Côte d'Ivoire, pre-primary attendance rates range from 19% in Abidjan to under 1% in the remote north-east. In Bangladesh, slum dwellers are the most disadvantaged.

- **Socio-cultural group.** Factors such as language, ethnicity and religious affiliation all influence ECCE access and participation.

Developing countries are not alone in struggling to make ECCE more equitable. There are large disparities in pre-school provision among OECD countries. In France and some Scandinavian countries, for example, nearly all children are enrolled in pre-primary education, while the rate is six out of ten in the United States. Unlike most rich countries, the United States has no national standard or regulatory structure for ECCE, resulting in large variations in quality and coverage. Federal initiatives such as Head Start have targeted the poor, but with mixed results. In the United States, as in many other countries, current approaches to pre-school provision are failing to get all children off to an equal start in life.

Progress towards UPE: nations at the crossroads

Goal 2: Ensuring 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.

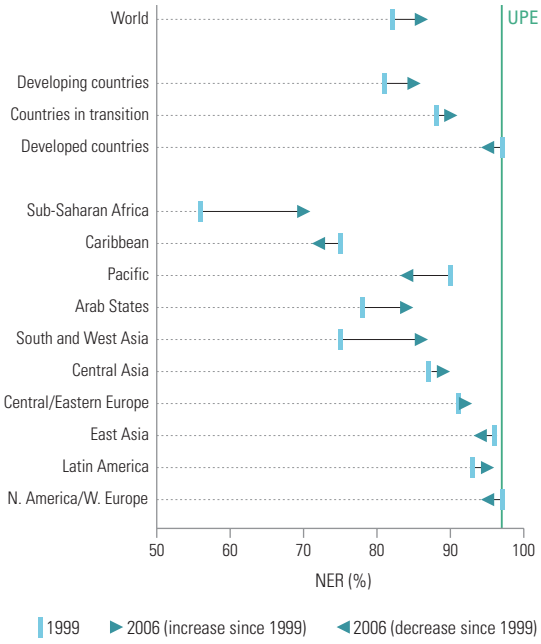
With only seven years to go, will governments fulfil their pledge to achieve UPE by 2015? Not if they remain on their current course. Progress is too slow and uneven to reach the target.

In 2006, there were 40 million more children in primary school than in 1999. Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States, and South and West Asia accounted for nearly all the global enrolment increase. In other regions, total enrolment is down slightly, partly because school-age populations have fallen.

The primary net enrolment ratio (NER) shows the extent to which children in the official age group for primary school are enrolled. The average NER for developing countries as a group has increased since 1999 at twice the rate registered in the 1990s, reaching 85% in 2006 (Figure 3). The higher priority being attached to primary education in many countries has been a major factor. In sub-Saharan Africa, the average annual NER increased between 1999 and 2006 at six times the rate of the pre-Dakar decade, climbing to 70%. South and West Asia also recorded a sharp increase, from 75% to 86%.

There are some striking success stories. Ethiopia has doubled its NER and made dramatic advances in improving access to school and tackling inequalities, partly through an ambitious rural school construction programme. Despite civil conflict, Nepal increased its NER from 65% to 79% between 1999 and 2004 (Box 2). Among the Arab States, the four countries with the lowest NERs in 1999 – Djibouti, Mauritania, Morocco and Yemen – have all registered strong progress. Public policies to eliminate school fees, increase public spending on schools, teachers and teaching materials, and provide incentives to reduce inequalities have all played an important role. So has international aid.

Figure 3: Net enrolment ratios in primary education, weighted average by region, 1999 and 2006



Source: See Table 2.3 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009.*

Although vulnerable children from poor and rural households stand to benefit most from ECCE, they have the lowest attendance rates

Box 2: Nepal on fast-forward towards UPE

Nepal has sustained progress towards UPE since 2000 despite a violent civil conflict which ended in 2006. Between 2001 and 2006, the NER increased from 81% to 87%. Retention levels improved. Survival to grade 5 increased to 79% in 2005 from 58% in 1999.
The number of out-of-school children declined from 1 million before Dakar to 700,000 in 2006. Nepal's experience demonstrates the power of public policy reforms to yield rapid returns. Key factors include strengthened local accountability, improved equity via scholarship programmes for disadvantaged children, infrastructure expansion and a focus on quality and effective donor support.

Out-of-school children: still a long way to go

In 2006, there were 28 million fewer out-of-school children than in 1999. Compared with the 1990s, the progress achieved since Dakar has been dramatic. However, 75 million children of primary school age, 55% of them girls, were still not in school. The out-of-school population is heavily concentrated by region and country. Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounts for almost half (47%) of all out-of-school children, with South and West Asia accounting for a further fourth. Eight countries[1] have more than 1 million out-of-school children each, and mixed post-1999 records.

If current trends continue, just under 29 million children will be out of school in 2015 in the 134 countries included in the projections

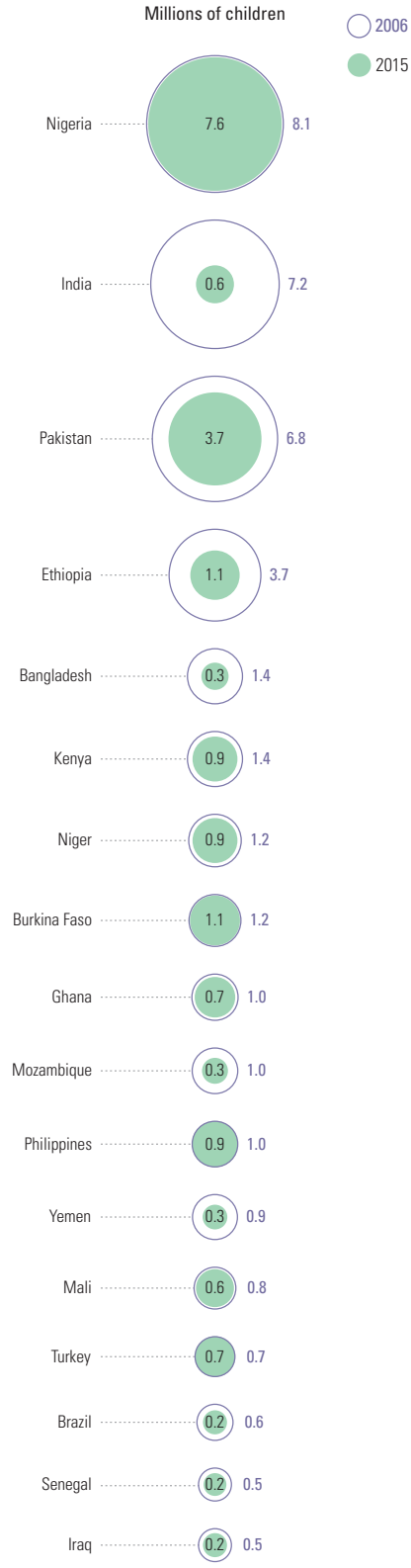
Projections for out-of-school children give reason for concern. If current trends continue, just under 29 million children will be out of school in 2015 in the 134 countries included in the projections.[2] Nigeria will have the largest out-of-school population in 2015 (7.6 million) followed by Pakistan (3.7 million), Burkina Faso and Ethiopia (1.1 million each), the Niger and Kenya (0.9 million each). Of the seventeen countries with the most children out of school, just three – Bangladesh, Brazil and India – are on track to achieve NERs in excess of 97% by 2015 (Figure 4).

These figures are derived from projections based on past trends. But trends are not destiny. They are susceptible to public policy interventions. Some low-income countries, including Ethiopia, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania, are outperforming richer countries such as Nigeria and Pakistan in getting children into school. In the space of seven years, the United Republic of Tanzania reduced its out-of-school population from over 3 million in 1999 to fewer than 150,000 in 2006, primarily through government policy interventions. Nigeria, which accounts for around one in eight of all out-of-school children, and Pakistan both suffer from weak governance and high levels of inequity in finance and provision.

1. Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, the Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan.

2. In 2006 the 134 countries covered in the projections were home to about two-thirds (48 million) of the 75 million children out of school worldwide.

Figure 4: Estimated number of out-of-school children, 2006, and projections for 2015, by selected country[1]



1. Countries are included if available information indicates they had more than 500,000 out-of-school children in 2006.
Source: See Table 2.4 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*.

Progression through primary school: dropout, repetition and low survival rates

In many developing countries smooth progression through primary school is the exception rather than the rule. High repetition rates are widespread. Of the thirty-one countries in sub-Saharan Africa with data, eleven have grade 1 and nine have grade 2 repetition rates over 20%. In Burundi, Cameroon and Comoros, grade 1 repetition rates exceed 30%. Repeaters represent a substantial cost burden for governments. Repetition is estimated to consume 12% of Mozambique's education budget and 16% of Burundi's. Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean spend some US$12 billion annually as a result of grade repetition. Repetition also puts a greater burden on households, especially poor households, and increases the chances of dropout.

To achieve UPE, countries must increase enrolment *and* completion. The twin challenge is to get children into school and through a full cycle of primary education. Since 2000, some countries have dramatically increased enrolment but not necessarily improved survival rates. Madagascar has registered dramatic progress towards universal enrolment, but an equally dramatic decline in survival to the last primary grade. Conversely, Nepal has managed to increase enrolment rapidly and also record a strong increase in survival levels. Reaching the last grade, however, does not automatically imply finishing it. In Senegal only 30% of primary school-age children complete the full primary cycle.

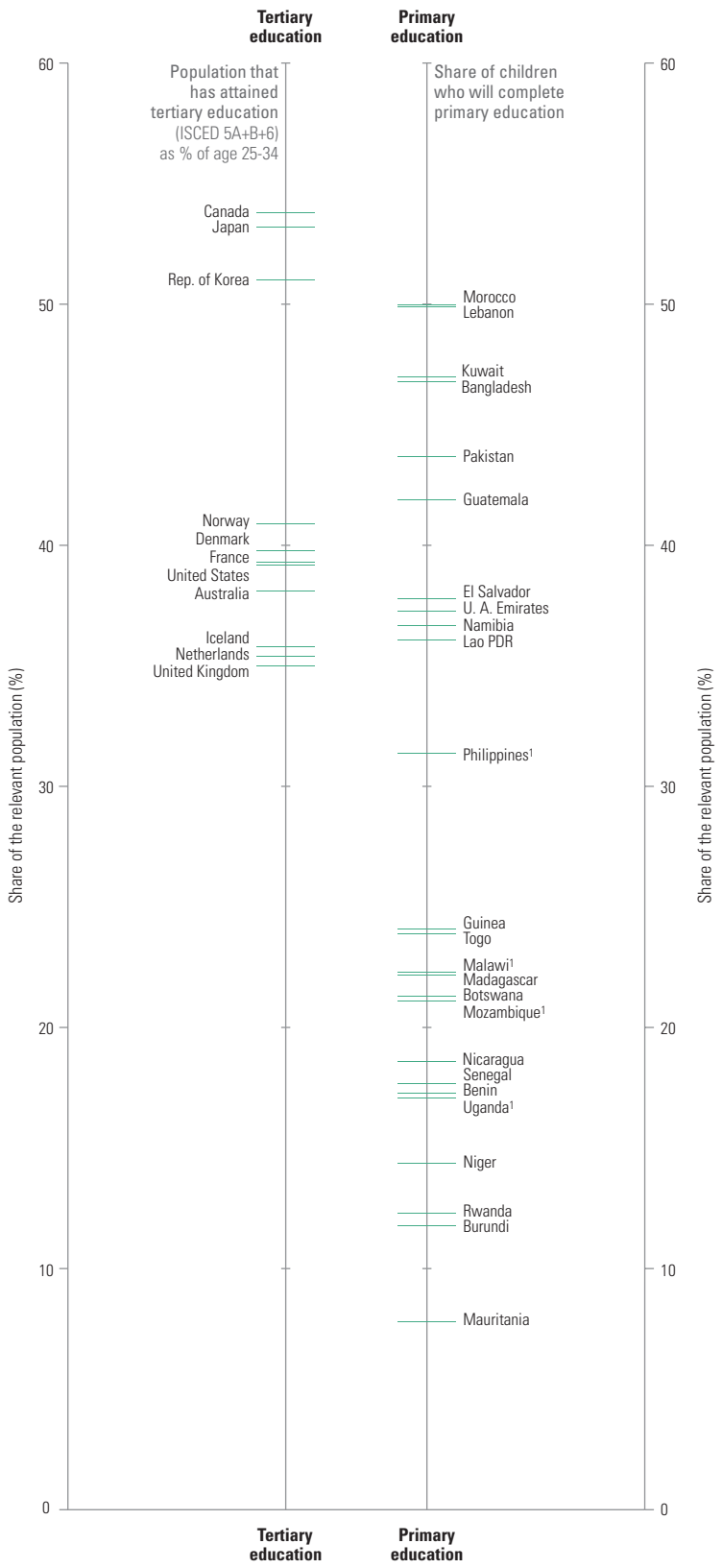
Opportunity gaps

Vast disparities in opportunity divide rich and poor nations. In rich countries such as Canada and Japan, over half the population aged 25 to 34 has reached tertiary level. In contrast, half the children in poor countries such as Bangladesh and Guatemala will not even complete primary school. Children in France are twice as likely to enter tertiary education as children in Benin or the Niger are to complete primary school (Figure 5).

Disparities within countries because of factors such as income, location, language, gender or ethnic group can also predetermine opportunities for education and hinder progress towards UPE:

- **Income-based inequalities.** In many of the world's poorest countries, such as Indonesia, Peru, the Philippines and Viet Nam, the richest households have reached UPE while the poorest lag far behind. A striking feature emerging from the data is that, irrespective of a country's average wealth or overall level of school attendance, children born in the richest 20% of households have similar attendance rates.

Figure 5: Opportunity gaps: population reaching tertiary education in OECD countries and chances of primary school completion in developing countries



1. Data for these countries refer to the survival rate to the last grade of primary school, which will always be greater than or equal to the completion rate.

Source: See Figure 2.19 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*.

In Senegal, urban children are twice as likely to be in school as rural ones

For example, attendance rates for the richest 20% in India and Nigeria are the same, even though Nigeria's national average is far lower. As there is a higher proportion of out-of-school children among the poorest families, any attempt to reach the Dakar goal must target this group.

- **Rural-urban inequalities.** In many countries, rural children are less likely than urban children to attend school and more likely to drop out. In Senegal, urban children are twice as likely to be in school as rural ones. Poverty, including its effects on child labour and malnutrition, is a large part of the explanation.

- **Disparities faced by slum dwellers.** Typically, slum areas have high levels of poverty, poor child health and limited education participation. In Benin and Nigeria, slum dwellers had attendance rates some twenty percentage points lower than other city children. In six countries, including Bangladesh and Guatemala, attendance rates for children in slums were lower even than rates in rural areas.

- **Language-based disparities.** There are large differences in school attendance and completion among different linguistic groups. Recent studies suggest that mother-tongue instruction can improve school attendance.

Three barriers to UPE: child labour, ill-health and disability

Every country faces its own distinctive set of challenges in achieving UPE. Three of the most common are:

- **Child labour.** Progress towards universal enrolment and completion of primary education is bound up with the elimination of child labour. There were around 218 million child labourers[3] in 2004, of whom 166 million were between 5 and 14 years of age. This is a violation of the right to education, as well as of international child labour conventions. Child labour is associated with delays in school entry, reduced school attendance and early dropout. The reasons for child labour are complex; distance to school, tuition fees, low education quality and household poverty can pull children into work. To combat this problem, practical measures are needed, such as abolishing school fees and introducing school feeding programmes and financial incentives. In countries including Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, abolishing school fees has helped reduce child labour.

- **Health barriers to UPE.** Globally, millions of children suffer the consequences of hunger, micronutrient deficiency and infection, all of which undermine attendance, learning and chances of completing school. As many as 60 million school-age children suffer from iodine deficiency, which limits cognitive development. Some 200 million have anaemia, which affects concentration. Public health programmes targeting schools can make a difference. In Kenya, a school-based mass treatment campaign for intestinal helminths reduced infection rates – and reduced school absenteeism by one-quarter. Public health campaigns are also helping prevent HIV/AIDs, an increasingly formidable obstacle to progress towards UPE.

- **Disabled learners.** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in force since May 2008, is the newest legal tool supporting the right of disabled people to education. Yet children with disabilities are still among the most marginalized and least likely to go to school. The difference in school attendance rates between children aged 6 to 11 with disabilities and those without ranges from ten percentage points in India to almost sixty in Indonesia. For disabled children, the physical distance to school, the layout and design of school facilities, and shortages of trained teachers can all be barriers to attending school. Negative attitudes towards the disabled are also a serious obstacle. Public leadership is needed to make facilities more accessible and change public attitudes towards the disabled. One positive example is Uganda, where the human rights of disabled people are enshrined in the Constitution and sign language is recognized as an official language. Deaf children attend local schools, with appropriate support to enable them to learn.

Box 3: Achieving UPE – lessons from strong performers

Though there is no blueprint for accelerating progress towards UPE, the Report identifies five broad lessons that can be drawn from the experience of strong performers:

- Set ambitious targets, backed by political commitment and effective planning.
- Get serious about equity and reduce structural inequalities affecting poor and otherwise disadvantaged children.
- Raise quality while expanding access, with a focus on smooth progression and learning outcomes.
- Strengthen wider anti-poverty commitments and support poor households.
- Strengthen governance across all sectors, addressing equity concerns.

3. The International Labour Organization defines child labour as full-time work done by children under age 15 that prevents their getting an education or that is dangerous to their physical and mental development.

A disabled child joins the game, in the United Kingdom

Secondary education and beyond: some gains

Overall, enrolment in secondary education is rising. In 2006, some 513 million students were enrolled in secondary schools worldwide, an increase of nearly 76 million since 1999. The world average secondary NER increased from 52% to 58%, though that masks enormous variations within regions and countries.

While developed countries and most transition countries are moving closer to universal enrolment, the situation is much more mixed for developing regions. The NER for secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa was just 25% in 2006 and that in South and West Asia was 45%. The transition from lower to upper secondary is a dropout point in many education systems, especially in East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa. At global level, the average GER in 2006 was much higher in lower secondary education (78%) than in upper (53%).

Within-country inequalities in secondary education are even more marked than those among countries. Secondary enrolment and survival rates are characterized by disparities related to factors such as income and language. In most developing countries, students from the poorest households are significantly less likely to complete secondary education. In Mozambique, 43% of people aged 16 to 49 who speak Portuguese have at least one grade of secondary schooling; among those who speak only vernacular languages the shares range from 6% to 16%.

Tertiary education has expanded rapidly since the Dakar conference. Worldwide, 144 million students were enrolled at tertiary level in 2006, some 51 million more than in 1999. The vast majority of new places in tertiary institutions were created in developing countries, where the total number of tertiary students rose from 47 million in 1999 to 85 million in 2006. Even with such rapid growth, however, global disparities remain large. Tertiary GERs range from 70% in North America and Western Europe to 32% in Latin America, 22% in the Arab States and 5% in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, these wide disparities capture just the quantitative side of the equation. Qualitative gaps are also important. In equivalent dollar terms, France spent sixteen times as much per university student as did Peru or Indonesia in 2004.

Box 4: Meeting the lifelong learning needs of youth and adults

Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

Goal 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.

There is a large unmet need for adult learning programmes. Millions of out-of-school youth and over 775 million adults worldwide lack basic literacy skills and have little or no access to lifelong learning or skills training. Many governments simply do not prioritize non-formal education in strategies and policies, do little to coordinate existing programmes and allocate little public funding to adult learning programmes.

Notions of 'adult learning' 'life skills' and 'non-formal education' are often ambiguous and open to interpretation. The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008* examined some thirty non-formal education systems in detail and found broad differences by country. Some, such as Mexico, Nepal and Senegal, mostly see non-formal education as adult education. Others, such as Bangladesh and Indonesia, take a broader view that stresses flexibility and programme diversity to complement formal education. The different approaches make systematic monitoring of this goal a challenge.

There is a strong case to be made for greater clarity of purpose, improved data flows and stronger political commitment to lifelong learning. As a first step towards more effective data collection and monitoring, better information is needed about how various stakeholders define adult learning needs, which groups are targeted, what types of skills are taught, how programmes are implemented and if they are sustainable with current funding sources.

Adult literacy: still neglected

Goal 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.*

Knowing how to read and write is essential for living in today's world. It is a key to lifelong learning that also opens the way to lower child mortality, better health and increased employment opportunities. Yet literacy remains a neglected goal. An estimated 776 million adults – 16% of the world's adult population – continue to be denied the right to literacy; almost two-thirds are women. The vast majority of illiterate adults live in South and West Asia, East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

An estimated 776 million adults continue to be denied the right to literacy; almost two-thirds are women

The global progress report on literacy is not encouraging. Between 1985–1994 and 2000–2006, the number of adults without literacy skills fell by almost 100 million, mostly due to a marked reduction in China. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and the Pacific, the number of illiterate adults increased as population growth continued. Global progress has slowed in recent years. On current trends, over 700 million adults will lack basic literacy skills in 2015 (Figure 6).

In terms of absolute numbers, 80% of adult illiterates worldwide live in only twenty countries and half live in Bangladesh, China and India

In terms of absolute numbers, 80% of adult illiterates worldwide live in only twenty countries and half live in Bangladesh, China and India. While significant reductions have occurred in Algeria, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey since 1985–1994, progress elsewhere has been less promising.

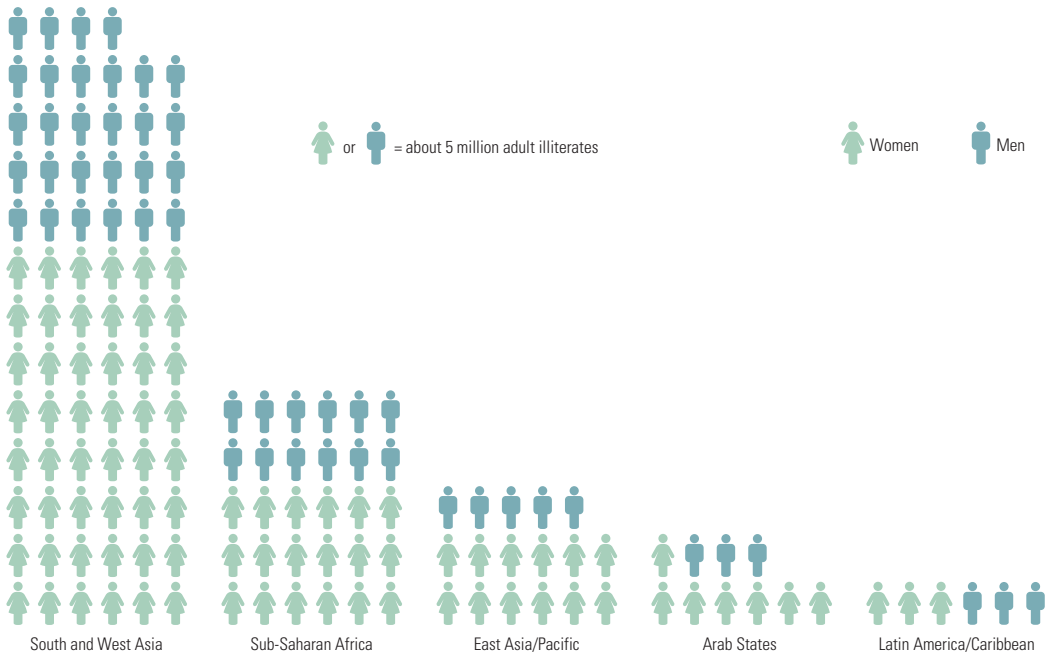
Between 1985–1994 and 2000–2006, the global adult literacy rate increased from 76% to 84%. Among developing countries there was a marked increase – from 68% to 79%, with levels improving in almost all regions. However, regional adult literacy rates remain below the developing country average in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, the Arab States and the Caribbean.

In 45 countries out of 135 with data, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, adult literacy rates are below the developing country average (79%). Nineteen countries in this group have very low literacy rates, less than 55%. Severe poverty is rampant in thirteen of these countries, with at least three-quarters of the population living on less than US$2 per day. On current trends, few of the forty-five countries will reach the adult literacy goal by 2015.

The global number of youth (aged 15 to 24) lacking literacy skills declined from 167 million in 1985–1994 to 130 million in 2000–2006. Absolute numbers dropped in most regions except sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of illiterate youth increased by 7 million due to high population growth and persistent low school participation and completion rates. The global youth literacy rate improved during the period from 84% to 89%, with notable rises in South and West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Arab States.

Illiteracy and low literacy rates are not confined to poor countries. In the Netherlands, some 1.5 million adults are classified as functionally illiterate, roughly 1 million of them native Dutch speakers. One-quarter of the native Dutch speakers are almost completely illiterate. In metropolitan France, 9% of adults of working age (18 to 65) – more than 3 million people – had attended school in France but had literacy problems, according to a 2004–2005 assessment. Some 59% of them were men. The majority of people in France with literacy problems were over 45, and half of them lived in rural or sparsely populated areas.

Figure 6: Projected number of adult illiterates (age 15+), by gender and region, 2015



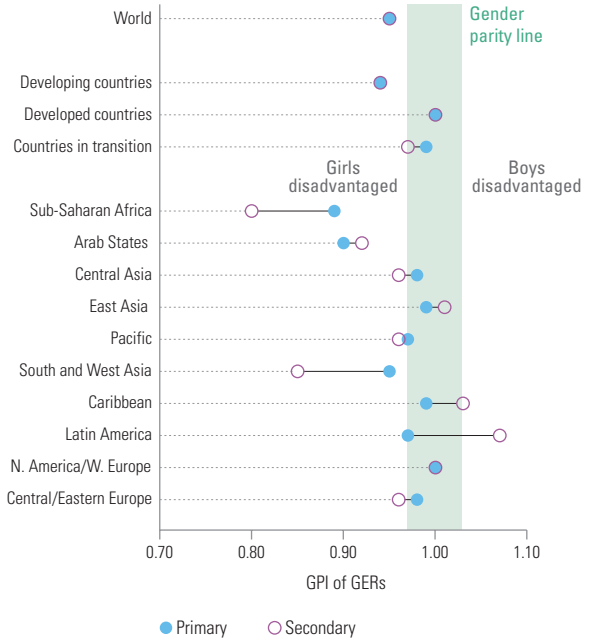
Source: See Table 2.11 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*.

Literacy, inequality and exclusion

National literacy rates conceal major disparities within countries. Once again, gender, poverty, place of residence, ethnicity and language group can exacerbate inequalities in literacy rates:

- **Gender** disparities in adult literacy are fairly widespread, especially in the countries with the lowest literacy rates. Gender and poverty often interact: in the Gambia, literacy rates ranged from 12% among extremely poor women to 53% for richer men.
- In seven sub-Saharan African countries with particularly low adult literacy rates, the literacy gap between the **poorest and wealthiest** households is more than forty percentage points. In India, literacy levels are lowest in the poorest states.
- Literacy rates are almost always lower in **rural** communities and regions than in urban ones. In Ethiopia regional disparities in literacy rates range from 83% in the Addis Ababa region to 25% in the rural Amhara region.
- **Indigenous** populations tend to have lower literacy rates than non-indigenous ones.

Figure 7: Changes in gender disparities in primary and secondary gross enrolment ratios by region, 2006



Source: See Figure 2.33 and Annex, Statistical table 5 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009.*

Assessing gender disparities and inequalities in education

Goal 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.

The world has continued to make progress towards gender parity, but many countries still have a long way to travel. In 2006, only 59 of the 176 countries with data had achieved parity[4] in both primary and secondary education. While this is twenty countries more than in 1999, the fact that over half the countries have not achieved parity is a source of concern.

Primary education: substantial progress but some are still far from gender parity

About two-thirds of 187 countries with data had achieved gender parity at the primary level by 2006 and most of the remaining 71 countries had made progress since 1999 (Figure 7). There has been significant progress in many countries in South and West Asia, where the GPI of the GER rose from 0.84 to 0.95 between 1999 and 2006 (in other words, from 84 to 95 girls per 100 boys enrolled). Bhutan, India and Nepal have all achieved gender parity in primary education or are close. However, Pakistan still only enrols 80 girls for every 100 boys at primary level. Progress towards gender parity in sub-Saharan Africa has been slow and uneven. The mean regional GPI climbed from 0.85 in 1999 to 0.89 in 2006. But the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Niger and Mali all had fewer than 80 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. On the other hand, parity in primary education has been achieved in many countries, including Ghana, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. Despite this progress, more than half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab States had yet to achieve gender parity in 2006, and many of these are among the countries farthest from achieving the goal.

In many countries, once girls are in primary school they do better than boys: they are less likely to repeat grades, more likely to reach the final grade and more likely to complete primary school. In 114 of the 146 countries with data for 2006, fewer girls than boys repeated grades. In Afghanistan, which had fewer than 70 girls to every 100 boys entering school in 2005, the percentage of primary school repeaters was 14% among girls but 18% for boys. In 63 of the 115 countries with data, girls and boys made it to the last grade in equal numbers in 2005, In thirty-six out of the other fifty-two countries where gender disparities remained, the survival rate to the last grade favoured girls.

More than half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, and the Arab States had yet to achieve gender parity in 2006

4. As captured by the gender parity index (GPI), the ratio of male to female enrolment. Parity has been reached if there are between 97 to 103 girls enrolled per 100 boys (GPI of GER ranging from 0.97 to 1.03).

Gender disparities in secondary and tertiary education: different scales, different patterns

As secondary school enrolment has grown, gender disparities have declined in almost all regions, excepting sub-Saharan Africa. However, only 37% of countries with data had reached gender parity in secondary education by 2006. Worldwide, there are about as many countries with gender disparities favouring girls as there are with disparities favouring boys.

Developed and transition countries have generally achieved parity at secondary level, while developing countries as a group, at 94 girls enrolled per 100 boys in 2006, were still below the global average. The Arab States, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa combine low secondary enrolment with low GPIs. Conversely, in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, more girls are enrolled than boys in secondary education, particularly at the upper secondary level. Socio-economic context, occupational practices and gender identity in school all appear to play a role in keeping boys away from school in Latin America.

In Mali, girls from the richest households are four times more likely than the poorest girls to attend primary school

At country level, gender disparities at secondary level have narrowed in more than half the 142 countries with data. Progress has been striking in many countries. GPIs rose by more than 20% in Benin, Cambodia, Chad, the Gambia, Guinea, Nepal, Togo, Uganda and Yemen. In Bangladesh, public policy and reforms played a key role in helping the country reach the EFA gender parity goal ahead of schedule (Box 5). While girls' secondary school participation has worsened in several countries, gender disparities at the expense of boys have increased in some, including Argentina, El Salvador, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Tunisia.

Increasingly, more women than men are enrolled in tertiary education worldwide. The global GPI rose from 0.96 in 1999 to 1.06 in 2006. Large differences among regions exist. The situation of developing regions varies, with higher rates of women's participation in the Caribbean (1.69) and the Pacific (1.31), and far fewer females in tertiary education in South and West Asia (0.76), and sub-Saharan Africa (0.67). In some countries, fewer than 30 women were enrolled for every 100 men in 2006.

Box 5: Bangladesh's triumph: achieving gender parity by 2005

Bangladesh is one of the few countries to have achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and the only one besides Sri Lanka in South and West Asia. Good governance has played a major role. So have stipend programmes, which have increased girls' participation in school. The improved levels of secondary education among girls have had a positive impact in other areas of society, with declines in child mortality, better nutrition, and more and better-paid jobs for women.

Gender disparities within countries

There is a strong association between poverty and gender disparities in primary education, and even more at secondary level. In Mali, for example, girls from the richest households are four times more likely than the poorest girls to attend primary school and eight times more likely to go to secondary school.

Income disparities interact with wider social, economic and cultural factors to disadvantage girls. According to cross-country research, being born into a group that is indigenous, a linguistic minority, low caste or geographically isolated can magnify disadvantage. In Guatemala, indigenous girls are less likely to be enrolled than those in other demographic groups, with only 54% of them in school at age 7, compared with 75% of non-indigenous girls. Overcoming such inequalities requires specific measures for girls, supported by committed political leadership and legislation.

Gender equality in education: more difficult to achieve

In addition to the target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, the EFA gender goal calls for achieving gender *equality* in education by 2015, with a focus on full and equal access to, and achievement in, good-quality basic education, especially for girls. This is far more challenging than the parity goal, as studies of learning outcomes and school practices reveal.

Learning outcomes and subject choice: gender differences persist. Girls and boys achieve very different outcomes in school, not just in overall performance but also by subject. Student assessments show wide-ranging gender differences. While the disparities vary, four distinctive patterns emerge. First, girls continue to outperform boys in reading literacy and language arts across a diverse range of countries. Second, though boys have historically outperformed girls in mathematics in both primary and secondary education, recent assessments reveal that girls have caught up or even overtaken boys in this subject. Third, though boys are still doing better than girls in science, more often than not the difference is statistically insignificant. Finally, in tertiary education some subject areas remain male domains, especially in science and engineering. In half the countries with data, women account for more than two-thirds of students in fields long considered 'feminine', such as education, health and welfare.

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Support and encouragement from a primary school teacher, in Djibouti

Why do girls perform differently in achievement tests? The reasons for the differences in boys' and girls' learning outcomes are complex. How education systems are organized and what happens in the classroom play a role in explaining gender differences in learning. If teachers treat girls and boys differently, this can effect development and reinforce gender stereotyping. So can textbooks. In many countries, textbooks continue to be gender-biased, with girls and women under-represented and both sexes still shown in highly stereotyped roles. Progress here is slow and, while the most obvious examples of sexism have largely disappeared, sexist learning material remains.

Ensuring both equity and the quality of learning

Goal 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.

The ultimate aim of EFA is children acquiring the basic skills they need to enrich their lives, expand their opportunities and participate in society. The quality of the education they receive is the key.

The international divide in learning outcomes

Recent international, regional and national learning assessments reveal that, in many countries, children are emerging from school with only the most basic skills. Levels of learning are lowest in developing countries. In a 2007 survey in India, fewer than half the children in grade 3 could read a simple text and only 58% could subtract or divide. Results from the SACMEQ II[5] assessment indicate that fewer than 25% of grade 6 children reached the 'desirable' level of reading in Botswana, Kenya, South Africa and Swaziland, and fewer than 10% in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia. Assessments of more complex skill sets are just as alarming. In the recent SERCE assessment in Latin America, half or more of grade 3 students in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Guatemala tested at the lowest reading level.

In many countries, children are emerging from school with only the most basic skills

The contrast between developing and developed countries is striking. The PISA 2006 results on science achievement showed 60% of students in Brazil, Indonesia and Tunisia scoring the lowest possible ranking, compared with less than 10% in Canada and Finland. In the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 assessment, fourth graders in middle- and low-income countries outside Europe scored significantly less in reading than the international average. And these learning assessments cover only children in school – including results for out-of-school children would further accentuate disparities.

Beyond national averages: huge inequalities in achievement

Disparities in learning outcomes are most pronounced within countries and are often linked to poverty and other forms of disadvantage. Inequality exists at every level: between regions, communities, schools and classrooms. In the PIRLS 2006 study, the top 5% of fourth graders in South Africa scored five times higher in reading than the bottom 5%. Disparities in learning achievements within a given country can be explained by student background, the education system and school context:

- **Student background.** Apart from inherent ability, student achievement is the product of social, economic and cultural circumstances, such as gender, language spoken at home, parental occupation and education, family size and immigrant status. These factors largely account for how much students learn in school.

- **Education system.** The way an education system is organized significantly influences learning outcomes. Factors include policies on promotion between grades, whether students are grouped by ability, multigrade teaching and school-leaving exams. Policies extending ECCE provision and increasing school autonomy, for

5. Chapter 2 of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009* gives details and the full names of the various international and national learning assessments.

example, can increase equity while other practices, such as selective academic streaming, can lead to greater disparities.

- **School context.** An effective learning environment relies on basic infrastructure, professional leadership, motivated teachers, sufficient instruction time and resources, the use of performance-enhancing monitoring and evaluation, and adequate funding. Many essential resources taken for granted in developed countries, such as electricity, seats, desks and textbooks, are scarce in developing countries. In six sub-Saharan African countries, half of grade 6 students learn in classrooms that do not have a single book. In many developing countries, key school resources are unequally distributed between urban and rural areas. In Latin America and elsewhere, poor children are more likely to attend inadequately equipped schools, which exacerbates existing inequalities.

Teacher supply and quality

Teachers are the front-line providers of quality education. For students to perform well, they need an adequate supply of well-trained and motivated teachers, and reasonable pupil/teacher ratios (PTRs).

Worldwide, more than 27 million teachers were working in primary schools in 2006, some 80% of them in developing countries. Their numbers increased by 5% between 1999 and 2006, with the largest increases occurring in sub-Saharan Africa. Teacher numbers also increased in Latin America and the Caribbean. Since 1999 the global number of secondary school teachers, has increased by 5 million, to reach 29 million in 2006.

Governments will have to recruit and train teachers on a vast scale to meet the EFA goals

Governments will have to recruit and train teachers on a vast scale to meet the EFA goals. Globally, an estimated 18 million more primary school teachers are required by 2015, with the most pressing need for additional teachers (1.6 million) in sub-Saharan Africa. Taking teacher retirement into account pushes that figure up to 3.8 million. East Asia and the Pacific needs 4 million teachers, and South and West Asia 3.6 million, also taking retirement and other factors into account.

There is broad consensus that classes should have no more than forty students per teacher (PTR of 40:1) for a good-quality learning environment. Little progress has been made in reducing large national and regional disparities in PTRs, especially in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Particularly sharp *increases* in PTRs are evident in some countries, including Afghanistan, Kenya, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. In Afghanistan, Chad, Mozambique and Rwanda, national PTRs in primary school exceed 60:1. By contrast, primary PTRs in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in North America and Western Europe have declined as a result of lower enrolment and/or increased teacher numbers. In secondary education, the highest PTRs are again found in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia.

Trained teachers are in short supply in many countries. In primary education, the median shares of trained teachers in the teaching force in 2006 ranged from 68% in South and West Asia to 100% in the Arab States. Nearly half the forty countries with data increased the percentage of trained teachers between 1999 and 2006. The Bahamas, Myanmar, Namibia and Rwanda raised the proportion of trained teachers by more than 50%. However, the percentages of trained teachers declined in more than a third of countries, including Bangladesh, Nepal and the Niger.

National PTRs often mask large disparities within countries, again associated with location, income and type of school. In Nigeria, PTRs in Bayelsa state were five times higher than in Lagos. Wealthier children often attend schools with better PTRs and a greater proportion of trained teachers. PTRs also vary according to whether the school is publicly funded. In Bangladesh, for example, government schools had average PTRs of 64:1 while non-government schools had PTRs of 40:1.

Other factors affecting the quality of teaching and learning include teacher absenteeism, low teacher morale (related to poor salaries and working conditions) and the effect of HIV/AIDS on teacher mortality rates.

Education for All: measuring composite achievement

While each EFA goal is important, what ultimately matters is progress on all fronts. The EFA Development Index (EDI) helps capture overall EFA progress. It focuses on the four most easily quantifiable goals: UPE, adult literacy, gender parity and equality, and education quality. For the latest Report the EDI could be calculated for 129 countries with data on all four goals for the school year ending in 2006. Among the many countries not included are a majority of so-called fragile states, including those in conflict or post-conflict situations.

Of the 129 countries included:

- Fifty-six – five more than in 2005 – have either achieved the four goals or are close to doing so, with EDI values averaging 0.95 or above. Most of these high-achieving countries are in more developed regions.

- Forty-four countries, mostly in Latin America and the Caribbean (eighteen), the Arab States (nine), sub-Saharan Africa (nine), and East Asia and the

Pacific (five), are midway to achieving EFA, with EDI values ranging from 0.80 to 0.94. Though participation in primary education may be high in these countries, deficits in other areas, such as adult literacy and education quality, weigh down their overall achievement.

- Twenty-nine countries – more than a fifth of those in the EDI sample – are lagging behind with EDI values below 0.80. Sub-Saharan Africa is over-represented in this group, with EDI values below 0.60 in Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali and the Niger. Countries in other regions, including four in the Arab States and five out of six countries in South Asia, are also in this category. Most of these countries have low scores on all four goals measured.

Changes in the EDI between 1999 and 2006 could be analysed for only forty-five countries. Thirty-one of these recorded increases – significant ones, in several cases. Even though absolute EDI values remained low in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Nepal, they increased by more than 20%. The EDI decreased in fourteen countries. Chad experienced the largest fall and ranked last in the EDI list in 2006, well behind other countries.

Increased school participation was the primary driver of EDI improvement. The total primary NER[6] increased on average by 7.3% across the forty-five countries. For most of the fourteen countries where the EDI declined, poor education quality was an important factor.

Overall EFA achievement: inequalities within counties remain the rule

The standard EDI discussed above provides a snapshot based on national averages. However, it does not capture variations within countries. To address this shortcoming, an innovative new education index, the EFA Inequality Index for Income Groups (EIIIG), was created for thirty-five developing countries, using household survey data (Figure 8). It examines the distribution of overall EFA achievement within countries, based on wealth and rural-urban location. It reveals that:

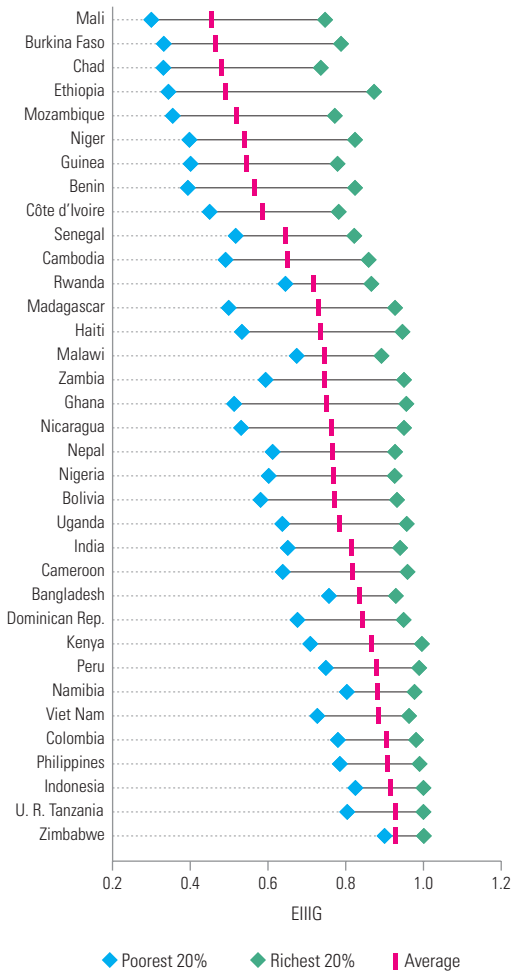
- There are large disparities in overall EFA achievement between income groups in almost all thirty-five countries covered. Differences within countries are almost as large as those between nations. Disparities are particularly wide in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique and the Niger; the EIIIG for the richest group in these countries is more than twice that of the poorest group.

- Countries with better-functioning education systems have not only higher overall EFA achievement but also fewer inequalities.

- Progress towards overall EFA achievement has benefited the poorest in most countries. The difference between the richest and poorest fifth of the population decreased in three-quarters of the thirty-five countries. In Benin, Ethiopia, India and Nepal, the difference between the richest and poorest decreased by 15% or more.

- Overall EFA achievement is greater in urban than in rural areas, whatever the income group. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia and Mali, the urban EIIIG is at least twice the level registered in rural areas.

Figure 8: EFA Inequality Index by wealth quintile, selected countries, most recent year



Source: See Figure 2.44 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*.

There are large disparities in overall EFA achievement between income groups in almost all thirty-five countries covered

6. The proportion of children of primary school age who are enrolled in either primary or secondary education.

Chapter 3.
Raising quality and strengthening equity: why governance matters

Good governance in education is not an abstract concept. It is about ensuring that children have access to well-funded schools that are responsive to local needs, and employ trained and motivated teachers. Governance concerns the distribution of power in decision-making at all levels of an education system, from ministry down to school and community. Chapter 3 focuses on how governments implement policies and reforms in four key areas of governance: education finance; choice, competition and 'voice' in schooling; teachers and monitoring; and education planning and poverty reduction strategies. It seeks to identify if and how education governance is improving quality and reducing inequalities.

Going their separate ways: school girls and street children in New Delhi

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Education governance: the Dakar Framework and beyond

Governance reform is a prominent part of the EFA agenda. The Dakar Framework for Action set out broad principles, which include creating responsive, accountable and participatory education systems. While not advocating a one-size-fits-all model for good governance, the Dakar Framework promotes decentralization and encourages participation in decision-making down to the grass roots, aiming to make systems more equitable.

The array of country experience in governance reform is vast and the evidence points to mixed results. Two broad problems can be identified: a tendency to apply 'blueprints' that do not address local conditions and insufficient attention to equity. Often, too, there has been widespread failure to place strategies for reducing poverty and inequality at the heart of reform. For countries to accelerate progress towards the EFA goals, more weight is needed on equity in governance reform.

In examining four aspects of education governance and how they are tackling inequality, the Report draws four major conclusions:

- **Education finance:** While decentralization is important, central government should retain a strong role in equalizing the distribution of education finance.
- **School governance:** Transferring responsibility to communities, parents and private providers is not a substitute for fixing public basic education systems.
- **Teachers and monitoring:** Governments must strengthen teacher recruitment and motivation; create incentives for improved accountability, equity and learning; and develop policies for monitoring that is accompanied by support to schools.
- **Planning and poverty reduction:** Education needs to be integrated into wider strategies for overcoming poverty and extreme inequality.

Financing education for equity

Additional funding is needed if the world is to achieve the Dakar goals. But increasing funding is part of a broader set of education policy challenges. Countries need to improve efficiency and increase financial resources if EFA is to be achieved. They also need to develop strategies addressing inequalities in education finance.

Government spending on education

The share of national income devoted to education differs substantially among regions and income groups (Table 1). Low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, where some 80% of the out-of-school population lives, tend to invest the smallest shares of GNP in education. In sub-Saharan Africa, eleven of the twenty-one low-income countries with data spend less than 4% of GNP on education. In South Asia, Bangladesh devotes only 2.6% of its national income to education, India 3.3% and Pakistan 2.7%. Variations within the low-income group are wide: the Central African Republic sets aside 1.4% of GNP for education while Ethiopia devotes 6%.

Government spending has increased since Dakar in the majority of countries with data. In some countries large increases in spending are associated with substantial progress on EFA goals. Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique and Senegal have sharply increased the share of GNP invested in education and each has seen a significant decline in the number of out-of-school children.

However, the share of national income devoted to education between 1999 and 2006 decreased in 40 of the 105 countries with data. In twelve countries it dropped by more than a percentage point. The latter group includes several countries with relatively high numbers of out-of-school children, such as the Congo and India. In other countries in South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, spending was stagnant. Given their current low levels of investment, these countries need to increase the level, efficiency and equity of public spending on education.

For countries to accelerate progress towards the EFA goals, more weight is needed on equity in governance reform

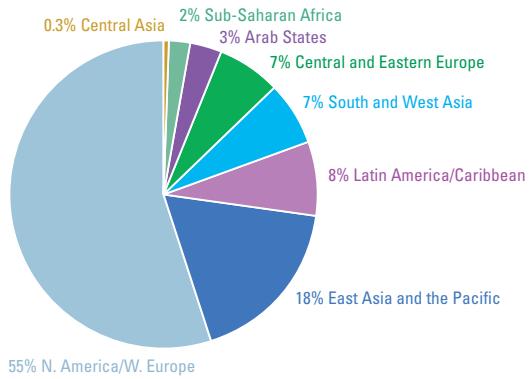
Table 1: Total public expenditure on education as % of GNP and as % of total government expenditure by region, 2006

Sub-Saharan Africa	Arab States	Central Asia	East Asia and the Pacific	South and West Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	North America and Western Europe	Central and Eastern Europe
Total public expenditure on education as % of GNP							
4.4	4.6	3.4	...	3.3	4.1	5.5	5.3
Total public education expenditure as % of total government expenditure							
18	21	...	...	15	15	12	13

Source: See Table 3.2 and Annex, Statistical Table 11 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*.

Global income inequalities are mirrored by inequalities in education spending. In 2006, per-student expenditure at primary level varied from less than US$300 in much of sub-Saharan Africa to over US$5,000 in most developed countries (expressed in constant 2005 dollars). As a region, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 15% of the world's 5- to 25-year-olds, but 2% of global public education spending. South and West Asia is home to over one-quarter of the age group and 7% of the spending (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Distribution of global public education expenditure by region, 2004



Source: See Figure 3.4 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*.

Improving efficiency and reducing corruption

Increases in funding must be complemented by improvements in financial efficiency and strengthened governance of financing. Though it is difficult to measure efficiency in education spending across countries, comparisons of financial inputs and specific outcomes such as enrolment, completion and learning achievement are telling. For example, Senegal and Ethiopia had the same rate of primary school enrolment (71%) in 2006 but Senegal spent over twice as much per pupil as Ethiopia. This suggests that Ethiopia's education system was more efficient in translating resources into school places, though it does not show whether there is a difference in the quality of a school place in each country.

In several sub-Saharan African countries, the abolition of school fees has enabled more poor children to enter school

Corruption has profoundly negative consequences for education. In many countries, misuse of funds at various levels means a significant share of education funding does not reach schools. A 2003 survey in Mexico estimated that households paid almost US$10 million in bribes – an average of US$30 per household – to secure access to public education, which by law is free. Corruption often hits the disadvantaged especially hard as they rely more on the public system, have less recourse to legal protection and are less able to make 'informal' payments. One example of a national initiative to reduce corruption is Indonesia's School Improvement Grant Programme, which integrated institutional structures to strengthen governance and tackle corruption.

Strategies for greater equity in financing. Public spending on education has the potential to redress inequalities, but can also reinforce them. Wealthier regions and advantaged groups often attract higher levels of financing than poorer regions and disadvantaged groups. In some cases, unequal funding follows ethnic lines. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for example, schools whose students are of Albanian background receive almost 20% less per student in funding than schools whose students are of Macedonian background, and the gap rises to 37% in rural areas.

Governments have developed various approaches aimed at strengthening equity. In several sub-Saharan African countries, expenditure has become more equitable following the abolition of school fees, which has enabled more poor children to enter school. For example, in Senegal, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia the decision of political leaders to abolish user fees in education while increasing spending at the primary level has strengthened equity in public spending and has had important positive effects on enrolment.

Another approach is the provision of school grants, which transfer funds from central authorities to local communities and schools. They can reduce inequalities by providing additional resources for disadvantaged or vulnerable students. In Ghana, a school grant programme led to sharp increases in enrolment ratios. In particular, enrolment of children in disadvantaged areas rose.

Decentralization: a potential driver of inequality

In a growing number of countries, financial responsibility and management are being transferred to lower levels of government, local communities and school providers. This decentralization, placing decision-making closer to communities, is seen as making systems more responsive to local needs and giving the poor a greater voice.

However, decentralization in finance has uncertain implications for equity. Evidence from many countries – including China, Indonesia and the Philippines – suggests that transferring financial responsibility can exacerbate inequalities, with wealthier regions better placed to mobilize resources. In Nigeria, the wealthiest states and regions with the highest education participation received the lion's share of federal resources, in some cases up to five times more than poorer areas. The situation was exacerbated by low local revenue-raising in poorer regions. The system reinforced large disparities in education funding.

The key to avoiding such outcomes is a strong role for central government in redistributing resources to poorer regions and disadvantaged groups. This has been the case to varying extents in, for example, Brazil, Ethiopia, South Africa and Viet Nam. Decentralization is intrinsically neither good nor bad for equity. The key questions are not necessarily whether to decentralize but how and what to decentralize. Strategies for equitable decentralization include:

- Establishing clear guidelines for decentralized revenue mobilization, such as prohibiting subnational governments from levying fees on basic education.
- Developing equitable financing formulas whereby financial transfers from central government to local levels are weighted to take poverty, education and health indicators into account, and reflect the estimated costs of achieving national EFA goals.
- Establishing clear policy objectives reflecting a strong commitment to national poverty reduction goals and the Dakar Framework for Action.

Choice, competition and voice: school governance reform and EFA

What are the roles of governments, parents, communities and private providers in managing and financing schools? The discussion below focuses on three currents of school governance reform: the transfer of authority to schools and local communities; the expansion of school choice and competition; and the growth of low-fee private schools. It seeks to determine whether these reforms strengthen the voice of the poor and increase their choices.

School-based management: a broad spectrum of approaches and outcomes

School-based management describes a range of reforms that give teachers, parents and communities more autonomy over decision-making in schools. Advocates argue that school-based management makes schools more responsive to local needs, gives parents a real voice and strengthens teacher participation, motivation and accountability.

In some cases school-based management reforms have improved learning achievement and strengthened equity. Pupils at EDUCO schools in El Salvador, for example, score higher in mathematics and language than non-EDUCO pupils. However, in similar programmes in Honduras, test scores at participating schools did not significantly differ from scores at traditional schools. In Latin America and other regions, there were no noticeable changes in teaching practices.

Impacts on 'voice' are also ambiguous. More localized decision-making may bring authority closer to parents and communities via the creation of formal structures such as parent-teacher associations and school governing bodies. But it does not automatically follow that this will overcome wider disadvantages. In Nepal, for example, school management committees are run mostly by high-caste men; in Australia and New Zealand, minority groups are under-represented on school boards. Existing social inequalities and conditions such as poverty undermine attempts to increase equity through participation.

Choice and competition in education provision

In almost all countries, the state is ultimately responsible for school systems. Its role can range from direct provision of education to the management and regulation of private providers. Expanding parental choice in school selection is widely viewed as a key to increasing quality. In some countries, public-private partnerships, where government provides financial support to private providers, are the main vehicle for expanding school choice and competition.

Does increased parental choice lead to improved learning outcomes and greater equity? The evidence is inconclusive

School choice and competition are at the centre of sometimes polarized debates in both developed and developing countries. Does increased parental choice lead to improved learning outcomes and greater equity? The evidence is inconclusive. The PISA assessments do not point to strong effects on learning outcomes from school competition. In the United States, the development of charter schools and the use of voucher programmes have not unambiguously raised academic achievement or tackled disparities. The same is true for Chile: while it is widely cited as a role model for governance reforms on choice and competition, its results are disappointing. Private schools with state subsidies do not register any advantage over municipal schools, once adjustments are made for socio-economic status.

The American and Chilean experiences provide no definite evidence in favour of choice and competition in terms of improvements in education quality and equity. Experience in Sweden has been more positive. Since the early 1990s, the country has allowed parents to choose non-public providers and take state funding with them. There is broad support in Sweden for this system. However, its exportability is subject to debate. Competition was introduced in a country with a public education system offering all children the option of a good education and with low levels of inequality. There is also strong government capacity to regulate and oversee private providers. These are not conditions that prevail in many developed countries, let alone developing ones.

If governments increase school choice without creating safeguards to protect the disadvantaged, then school systems can become a source of inequality. The overwhelming priority, especially in the poorest countries, is to ensure that a properly financed public system is available to all.

Low-fee private schools: symptom of state failure

Low-fee private primary schools have grown rapidly in recent years in countries such as Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan. Poor quality in government provision and a lack of public schools are important factors in this growth. Although the extent of their expansion varies, low-fee private schools seem to be spreading in areas that serve some of the most disadvantaged populations, including children in slums.

When it comes to basic education, private finance and provision are not substitutes for good-quality public education systems

Some see low-fee private schools as an effective alternative to public education. They argue that the fact that parents choose to pay for these schools is evidence that the schools are responding to a real need, are affordable and provide parents with a real choice.

Evidence does not support many of these claims. The poorest members of society often cannot pay school fees without immense sacrifices in other areas. Education quality in such schools can be low. Demand in some cases is due simply to the absence of government provision. For example, residents of some slums in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, cannot choose to send their children to government schools for the simple reason that there are none.

© Crispin Hughes/PANOS

A committed teacher opens young minds to the excitement and benefits of education, in rural Mali

Some attempts have been made to experiment with integrating low-fee private schools into public-private partnerships. One of the most prominent is in Pakistan. In a context of low overall enrolment and very wide gender disparities, a voucher and school subsidy programme, similar to those in Sweden and the United States, has been introduced to support low-fee private providers, with some positive results. However, with low government capacity and dependence on external funding, there are questions as to the programme's sustainability. More importantly, most poor families remain dependent on state-provided education.

The rapid emergence of low-fee private schools may be a response to real demand, but there is little evidence to suggest that they offer a genuine choice of affordable, accessible, high-quality education. Private finance and providers have a role to play, and governments should ensure that they are integrated into properly managed national strategies. However, when it comes to basic education, especially in the poorest countries, private finance and provision are not substitutes for public systems that offer everyone the option of a good-quality education.

Strengthening teacher governance and monitoring

Many school systems fail to provide an education that meets even the most basic standards for quality and equity. This situation leaves millions of children without fundamental literacy and numeracy skills even after attending school. The following discussion examines two aspects that are critical to improving and maintaining education quality: teachers and monitoring.

Recruitment, deployment and motivation

Making sure there are enough qualified teachers where they are most needed is a major policy challenge in education. The Report examines four governance themes relating to teachers: salaries and living standards, recruitment, deployment and motivation.

Salaries and living standards. In setting teacher salaries, governments face the dilemma of creating incentives for recruitment and motivation while maintaining the balance between spending on teachers and spending on other areas in education.

Recent surveys of teacher motivation note that pay levels in some countries do not cover basic household living costs. In much of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, teacher pay levels are perilously near, or even below, the poverty line. Low salaries and late payment make it difficult to recruit well-qualified staff. They also weaken

morale and force teachers to make ends meet with other jobs – all of which affects teaching quality. Teachers resorting to private tutoring to supplement their income have been extensively documented in most Central Asian countries.

Contract teachers: increasing recruitment at the expense of quality and equity? Some countries have responded to teacher shortages by recruiting new teachers on a contract basis, bypassing civil service arrangements. Contract teaching has increased the supply of teachers in many countries. This is particularly the case in West Africa – over a third of teachers in Guinea, the Niger and Togo are contract teachers.

There is some evidence that recourse to contract teaching can have potentially damaging consequences. In Togo, where 55% of government primary school teachers are now hired on contract, students in classes taught by contract teachers did not perform as well as than those taught by civil service teachers. In India, contract teachers have been used to increase the supply of teachers to remote rural schools. As they are often less qualified and more inexperienced than civil service teachers, the situation raises concerns about providing teaching of equal quality to all areas.

From an EFA perspective, increasing the supply of teachers while lowering quality standards is false economy. Yet governments have limited room for manoeuvre within tight budgets. In the poorest countries, increased aid may be required alongside stepped-up national efforts to meet teacher recruitment needs.

Tackling equity gaps in teacher deployment. Often there are not enough qualified teachers in areas that are remote, poor and home to marginalized children. Where teachers have a choice, they may be unwilling to work in remote locations under relatively difficult living conditions. The low proportion of qualified and experienced teachers working in rural schools is a particularly serious source of inequality. In Namibia, only 40% of teachers in rural schools in the north are qualified, compared with 92% in the capital.

Some promising policies to get teachers into such areas include offering financial incentives and promoting local recruitment, in some cases with quotas for under-represented groups in teacher training. Benefits of local recruitment include increased teacher supply in underserved areas, improved teacher motivation and closer monitoring of teachers by parents. However, in practice, recruiting teachers from under-represented groups can be difficult to manage. Governments in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic have succeeded in getting more teachers from minority ethnic groups into teacher training, but have had problems ensuring that trained teachers return to teach in their home areas. In Brazil, central government redistribution of financial resources has been used to support teacher recruitment and training in poor areas.

Fragile states affected by conflict face particularly acute problems in teacher allocation, as the example of Afghanistan reveals (Box 6).

Box 6: Teacher deployment in a fragile state: the experience of Afghanistan

Given the massive increases in enrolment taking place in Afghanistan and the high numbers of school-age children still out of school, rapid teacher training, recruitment and targeted deployment are critical. In response, the government built a system of thirty-eight teacher-training colleges. However, deployment remained concentrated in urban areas, with over 20% of teacher-training students – and almost 40% of women students – in Kabul, the capital.

In an attempt to redress the imbalance, the Ministry of Education has developed a policy to integrate community schools into the government system. In a major undertaking, teachers previously paid by communities on a largely ad hoc basis are being brought onto the government payroll. The collective effort of the Ministry of Education and four non-government organizations has been crucial in this task.

The limits to performance-related pay. Rewarding teachers based on student performance is one approach aimed at addressing poor teacher motivation and weak accountability. This is often difficult from a policy point of view and highly contentious. Opponents argue that providing incentives based on improved results on assessment tests can have perverse effects, such as narrowing the subjects being taught and excluding children who are less likely to succeed.

Only a few countries have introduced performance-related pay reforms in their education systems on a large scale and the evidence is inconclusive in both developed and developing countries. In the United States, studies reveal no clear cause and effect relationship between performance-related pay and teacher performance. Moreover, gearing teaching towards the tests can have negative consequences for equity. In Chile, for instance, a programme rewards schools that are already doing well rather than those that are improving yet still need to do better. Small-scale experiments in India and Kenya found that the improved test results reflected a tendency of teachers to train students for the test, often to the exclusion of other aspects of the curriculum, with teachers often focusing on the best students. In the case of Kenya, improved learning achievements were found to be short-lived.

From an EFA perspective, increasing the supply of teachers while lowering quality standards is false economy

Rewarding teachers with higher earnings based on learning outcomes is complex, as many factors combine to improve student performance. In addition, factors such as job satisfaction, public sector ethos and work conditions may have much more bearing on teacher motivation than monetary incentives.

Monitoring education systems for enhanced quality and equity

Two broad strategies have been adopted to improve education monitoring: wider use of large-scale learning assessments and reform of school supervision and inspection services.

Learning assessments: more coverage, but weak links to planning. The recent growth in the number of large-scale learning assessments is an indicator of the increased emphasis on learning outcomes. Between 2000 and 2006, around half the world's countries, including an increasing number of developing countries, conducted at least one national learning assessment.

Governments need to develop and adequately fund effective systems that monitor progress in education quality and equity

Most recent learning assessments have aimed at measuring the performance of education systems as a whole. Other types of assessments, often in the form of end-of-school examinations, hold students and teachers to account for their performance. Findings suggest that secondary school students perform better in countries with standardized secondary exit exams than they do elsewhere. However, if the driving concern is to maximize average school scores, weaker pupils can be viewed as a potential liability. In Kenya, one study found that the transition rate between grades 6 and 7 fell partly because the poorer performers were discouraged from taking the final primary examination. Schools did not want their overall average – made public in league tables – to be pulled down by underperforming pupils.

Using monitoring to improve policy-making. Results from large-scale learning assessments can play an important role in informing policy design. The following examples identify some key areas:

- **Setting benchmarks for minimum learning standards:** In Lesotho and Sri Lanka, national learning assessments have been used to establish minimum learning standards against which pupils' learning achievements are monitored for each province.
- **Informing curriculum reform:** In Romania poor assessment results on the TIMSS served as a wake-up call. As a result, the government changed the mathematics and science curriculum, and developed new teachers' guides and teaching materials.
- **Reviewing policy:** In Senegal, assessments from 1995 to 2000 were used to throw light on the negative effects of grade repetition for primary school learning outcomes. As a result, the government prohibited repetition for some primary grades.
- **Contributing to educational planning and reform:** Results from SACMEQ's learning assessments in sub-Saharan Africa have been used in Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe to formulate education sector and subsector reforms.

Governments need to develop and adequately fund effective systems that monitor progress in education quality and equity, and translate the lessons that emerge from assessments into policy design and implementation.

Combining national assessment with school-level monitoring

As the only direct institutional link between classrooms and education ministries, school supervision is crucial for managing education systems. Through school visits, supervisors can bring school realities to the attention of policy-makers while they support and monitor the implementation of official policies in schools. While little research has been conducted on school supervision systems in developing countries, anecdotal evidence suggests they are overstretched. Some countries give priority to the weakest schools. In Chile, instead of having control over many establishments, supervisors now work with and support far fewer schools. To make supervisors more support-oriented, this initiative has included developing new job descriptions, training and creating new working tools.

An integrated approach to education and poverty reduction: the missing link

When governments met in Dakar, they called for EFA policies to be clearly linked to holistic poverty elimination and development strategies. To what extent has education been incorporated into wider strategies for overcoming poverty and inequality, especially via poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs)?

Education planning: stronger, but still not strong enough

Governments spell out their goals, priorities and strategies, and the financial commitments for achieving them, through national plans. Since 2000, education planning has been strengthened in many countries to incorporate greater clarity of measurable outcomes, clearer strategic priorities, stronger sector-wide approaches and more medium- to long-term plans.

However, while much has been achieved, systemic planning problems in education remain in at least four areas. First, the link between strategies and budgets is often weak and plans are not supported by real budget allocations. Second, planning documents often fail to consider the social or political context. Third, many plans neglect the key areas of ECCE, literacy and non-formal education. Fourth, the plans do not have sufficient links with other sectors affecting education, such as those dealing with public health and child nutrition. These limitations mean education planning is unlikely to achieve its objectives of accessibility and quality education for all.

Poverty-reduction strategies: new generation, old problems

PRSPs set out the broad development priorities of governments and provide part of the framework for international aid. Fifty-four countries now have operational PRSPs. Most are low-income countries – more than half of them being in sub-Saharan Africa. The Report presents analysis of the eighteen countries that have developed a first and second PRSP. With the exception of a few success stories, many PRSPs contain only half-hearted attempts to address the issue of education for the most disadvantaged. In more concrete terms, PRSPs are failing education in four main areas: the link to the EFA agenda, target-setting, broader government reforms and cross-sector integration.

Weak link to the EFA agenda. Most PRSPs attach far more weight to achieving the quantitative target of UPE by 2015 than to other EFA goals. Wider EFA goals are either downplayed or delinked from a broader poverty reduction agenda. ECCE and literacy both require coordination by multiple sectors to be successful, yet the links are surprisingly absent from PRSPs. A successful approach is seen in Madagascar's non-formal education programme, which combines strong cooperation between government agencies and United Nations agencies with a robust literacy component in the national PRSP. Experience in making such links is, however, extremely rare.

Problems in target-setting. Unrealistic and inconsistent target-setting is common in PRSPs and there is often a mismatch between targets, strategies and financing commitments. For example, in Cambodia, a clear mismatch exists between stated planning intentions and budget availability. Moreover, only a limited number of countries provide specific targets to ensure monitoring of equity in education. Target-setting is stronger in relation to gender, but less so in other areas where inequalities are prevalent, such as in relation to ethnicity or poverty.

A separation between education strategies and governance reform. PRSPs often incorporate national commitments to wide-ranging governance reforms. However, the implications of the reforms for equity in education are seldom considered in any detail, even for reforms with potentially significant consequences. Decentralization is one prominent example. More generally, few PRSPs set out practical strategies for ensuring that governance reforms strengthen the linkage between education planning and wider poverty reduction efforts.

Education missing in cross-sectoral approaches. Addressing the deep, persistent inequalities in education linked to factors such as poverty, gender, location and cultural marginalization requires practical policies that extend far beyond the education sector. Evidence from PRSPs points to weak or non-existent links in areas where initiatives outside education are critical to EFA progress: gender, child malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, disabilities, marginalization and conflict.

Addressing the persistent inequalities in education requires practical policies that extend far beyond the education sector

Integrated social protection for the poor and vulnerable

While PRSPs are broadly failing to provide an integrated framework, there are positive experiences to draw upon. Social protection programmes are making a strong contribution to education by addressing problems in health, nutrition and child labour. Targeted cash transfers in Latin American countries such as Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico have been particularly successful. For example, the Bolsa Familia programme in Brazil reaches around 11 million families, many of them among society's poorest. It provides a cash transfer of up to US$35 a month to poor families with children, conditional on keeping children in school and taking them for regular health checks. A recent study in South Africa found that children who had been in the child support programme for much of their childhood had improved nutrition. The programme has also had a significant impact on school enrolment.

Programmes of this type have been so successful that one has been adopted on a pilot basis in the United States (Box 7). There are strong grounds for considering an increase in public investment and aid for cross-sectoral programmes of this kind in other contexts.

Strengthening participatory planning for the most vulnerable

Encouraged by the Dakar Framework and also as part of the PRSP process, civil society organizations and national coalitions of such organizations are increasingly influential in the creation of national education plans. They are also active in galvanizing support for the poor and disadvantaged, though there are limitations to the extent to which they directly include the voices of the poor. Participatory poverty assessments, which aim to

Participatory poverty assessments have given new insights into the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability

Box 7: New York is learning lessons from Mexico's Oportunidades programme

New York City is experimenting with a model based on Mexico's Oportunidades programme. Opportunity NYC is a pilot programme covering just over 5,000 families in districts with disproportionately high poverty and unemployment. The two-year, US$53 million programme is privately funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and other donors. Families covered can receive as much as US$4,000 to US$6,000 per year as long as they meet conditions in health, job training and education. Education conditions include regular school attendance, parental attendance at parent-teacher conferences and obtaining a library card. The overall approach is to provide financial transfers not just to address immediate hardship but also to create incentives that will change behaviour.

include the disadvantaged more directly, have been created in many countries as part of PRSP consultation processes. They have given new insights into the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability. In Uganda the evidence collected directly influenced national poverty reduction priority-setting. Efforts to make PRSP documents more widely accessible (for example, by publishing them in national languages in Nepal) have also been made.

Though the consultation process is laudable, it has limits. There are many difficulties in engaging with the poor and marginalized, for many reasons, including illiteracy and weak organizational capacity. Real consultation that takes into account the needs of the poor and translates them into government reform is reliant on sustained political will, coupled with a commitment to national ownership and equity.

Mexico's Oportunidades programme reaches out to poor and indigenous households

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Chapter 4. Increasing aid and improving governance

When the world set its goals for education in 2000, developing countries pledged to strengthen national education planning, tackle inequalities and enhance accountability. Rich countries pledged to ensure that no credible national plan would be allowed to fail for want of finance. Increased and more effective aid is vital to achieving the EFA goals. Are donors delivering on their promise?

The Report reviews the most recent data on aid to education and basic education, and it examines initiatives by donors and countries to improve the way aid is delivered.

Aid for education

Total aid flows: donors are not delivering on their commitments

International aid plays a crucial role in supporting policies that have helped increase access, enhance equity and improve education quality. In the United Republic of Tanzania, aid has supported an education sector strategy that has cut the number of out-of-school children by 3 million since 1999. In Ethiopia, the share of the budget allocated to education increased from 3.6% of GNP in 1999 to 6% in 2006, bolstered by external aid. Meanwhile the number of out-of-school children dropped from 7 million to 3.7 million. Without aid, many more children would either be out of school or sitting in even more overcrowded classrooms, without books or desks.

Though aid is vital in many countries to help meet the EFA goals and the wider MDGs, global trends in aid are serious cause for concern. Most donors are falling short of their own commitments to increase official development assistance (ODA) and need to make unprecedented increases to meet the targets they set themselves for 2010.

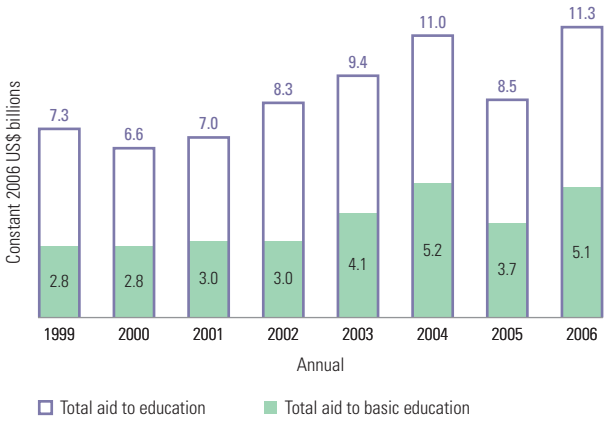
In 2005, when aid was on a rising trend, donors pledged to increase it from an estimated US$80 billion in 2004 to US$130 billion in 2010 (at 2004 prices). ODA had risen by 8% per year from 1999 to 2005, to US$110 billion. Now, however, it has fallen for two consecutive years to under US$97 billion. An OECD assessment of future spending plans reports that planned growth in ODA is far below the level required to meet donor promises for 2010. Meeting the commitment will require an additional US$30 billion (at 2004 prices).

Aid to education is stagnating

When developed countries signed on to the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, they pledged to provide countries with additional financial support needed to help meet the EFA goals. These promises have been repeated several times since. But the most recent data tell of a slowdown in aid for education and even more so in aid for basic education.

Aid commitments to the education sector as a whole have broadly followed overall aid trends. Commitments to education rose significantly between 1999 and 2004 (from US$7.3 billion to US$11 billion) but then fell by 23% in 2005. Commitments to basic education followed the same pattern, increasing to US$5.2 billion by 2004 but then falling to US$3.7 in 2005. While commitments increased again in 2006, they remained just below the 2004 level (Figure 10). The 2007 Report estimated that

Figure 10: Total aid commitments to education and basic education, 1999–2006



Source: See Figure 4.3 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009.*

The most recent data tell of a slowdown in aid for education and even more so in aid for basic education

© Ami Vitale/PANOS

Empowering local communities: low caste women meet to exchange information and voice their concerns, in Uttar Pradesh, India

an annual US$11 billion of aid was required to support achievement of just three EFA goals in low-income countries: UPE, adult literacy and ECCE. Current commitments fall far short of that and would need to be tripled to meet this amount.

Aid disbursements, the amount of aid actually made available to countries in a given year, reflect commitments in previous years. Disbursements for education reached US$9.0 billion in 2006, up from US$5.5 billion in 2002. Disbursements for basic education grew at the same rate, reaching US$3.5 billion in 2006 compared with US$2.1 billion in 2002. However, the risk is that the slowdown in commitments since 2004 will soon be reflected in slower growth, or even stagnation, in disbursements.

Allocating aid to those in greatest need: is equity improving?

Is aid reaching the countries which need it the most to reach the EFA goals? In 2006, the group of sixty-eight low-income countries received US$6.4 billion in aid to education and 75% of the overall amount of aid provided for basic education, the highest rates recorded since 2000 (apart from 2004). Despite these positive trends, two-fifths of aid to education and over a quarter of aid to basic education went to middle-income developing countries. As for the fifty poorest countries, their share in total aid to basic education barely increased, from 45% to 46%, between 2000–2002 and 2003–2005.

Countries referred to as fragile states are particularly in need of aid for education. But in 2006, these thirty-five

countries received US$1.6 billion in education aid, of which US$0.9 billion was allocated to basic education. Their share of aid to education compared with their population is hardly more than that for all other low-income countries.

Is more aid allocated to the countries which use it more effectively? While there is some evidence to suggest that aid is increasingly being focused on those with the greatest need and those that use it most effectively, the relationship remains weak. There do appear to be strong grounds for increasing aid to the countries with the greatest needs and those registering progress.

Donor performance, a mixed record

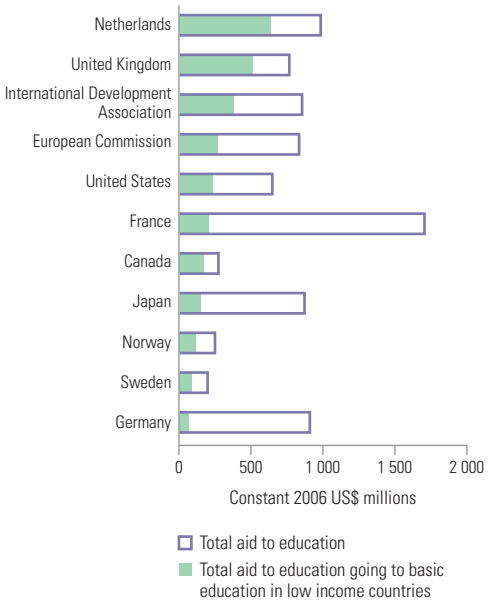
Not enough donors are making the EFA goals a high priority, either through their own programmes or by support to the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Catalytic Fund. While aid to basic education did grow between 2005 and 2006, this was more the result of action by a very few donors rather than a broad-based effort by the international community.

In 2006 overall financing for education was dominated by a small core of donors: France (US$1.9 billion), Germany (US$1.4 billion), the Netherlands (US$1.4 billion), the United Kingdom (US$1.2 billion) and the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA, US$1.0 billion). When it comes to aid to basic education, half of all commitments came from just three donors – the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and IDA. The Netherlands was the largest donor to basic education with US$1.1 billion – almost one-quarter of the global total. These three were also responsible for 60% of all aid to basic education in low-income countries. At the other end of the spectrum, France allocates only 17% of its total education aid to basic education and Germany just 11%; they channel most of their funds to tertiary students. These countries and Japan are seriously neglecting basic education in the low-income countries that need it the most (Figure 11 presents annual averages for 2005–2006).

Though a majority of bilateral donors increased their overall aid to education in 2006, only seven out of twenty-one significantly increased aid for basic education. Large increases from a few donors were insufficient to counteract the significant fall in 2005. The concentration of aid to basic education among just a few donors poses serious questions about the commitment of donors as a group to meet the pledge made at Dakar.

Bilateral donors outside the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) also support education in developing countries. Private foundations provide support for basic education, such as the Hewlett and Gates

Figure 11: Priority to low-income countries and to basic education, main donors, commitments, 2005-2006 annual average



Source: Derived from Figure 4.13 in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009.*

foundations' grants amounting to US$60 million to improve primary and secondary education quality. The Dubai Cares Foundation has raised US$1 billion to provide education to children, in partnership with organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children.

Fast Track Initiative: not meeting expectations

The FTI Catalytic Fund has become an important source of finance in its own right for several low-income countries. However, it has not mobilized sufficient amounts and faces a serious shortfall. For 2004–2011, seventeen donors pledged US$1.3 billion, but most of this comes from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the European Commission and Spain. Of the total pledged, agreements totalling just US$329 million have been made and only US$270 million had been received by countries by end February 2008. The largest amounts of grants have been allocated to just five countries[7] and thirteen others have received sums no larger than US$10 million.

At the current rate, the projected needs will simply not be met. Taking into account the eight countries that will have joined the current thirty-five covered by the FTI, there is a potential financing gap of US$1 billion for countries that have had plans endorsed. By 2010, with another thirteen countries having joined the FTI, that figure could have climbed to US$2.2 billion. Working on the assumption

The concentration of aid to basic education among just a few donors poses serious questions about the commitment of donors to meet the Dakar pledge

7. Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nicaragua and Yemen.

that the Catalytic Fund would cover 40% to 50% of the financing gap, there is a shortfall of around US$1 billion looming. If these deficits materialize, some countries currently receiving support will see aid flows interrupted and others may get no support at all.

Governance and aid effectiveness

How aid is delivered is as important as how much aid is delivered. Unpredictable aid, donor proliferation and weak coordination have dogged recipient countries and donors. Recognizing that they were part of the problem, donors, together with recipient countries, adopted a new vision of aid governance in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005. In this vision, which has as its main principles national ownership, alignment and harmonization, members of the OECD-DAC agreed to targets for enhancing aid predictability, using national institutions and financial systems, and cutting transaction costs through donor coordination.

Progress in all areas has been variable. A recent OECD survey provides clear evidence that there are still serious problems in aid relationships.

Four keys to better aid governance

The Report examines four areas of reform in aid governance and their impact on aid to education.

The shift from individual projects to system-wide programmes. Where donors work together to provide aid to broad sector programmes, this is said to strengthen national ownership and deliver results on the ground. The goal of the Paris Declaration is to raise to two-thirds the share of aid provided as pooled funding budget support and delivered within sector-wide approaches by 2010. In education, such programme-based support increased from 33% in 1999–2000 to 54% in 2005–2006. The shift has been strongest in low-income, more aid-dependent countries. It is less prevalent in other country groups: middle-income countries tend to prefer to negotiate with donors separately and fragile states often lack government capacities to take the lead.

Numerous success stories are associated with sector-wide approaches (SWAps) in education, such as large increases in enrolment in several countries which have adopted this model – Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, India, Nepal, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. However, major challenges remain and the approach is far from straightforward. For SWAps to be successful, they rely on strong political leadership and government departments with the necessary capacity.

National ownership. Strengthened national ownership is based on a two-way partnership between national governments and donors. In theory, governments lead in the creation and implementation of national development strategies, with donors respecting country leadership and strengthening capacity. But in practice, conditions for government leadership vary, as the contrasting experiences of India and Mozambique illustrate. India, with its low levels of aid dependency, high levels of government capacity and strong national institutions for capacity development, was firmly in control of setting priorities and implementation of its national programme to achieve UPE. Mozambique had emerged from civil war with a weakened administration and lacked the capacity to lead the process. The preparation of its current SWAp in education took over three years and tested the ability of the government and donors to reach an agreement. Despite frustrations on both sides, over time the SWAp has increased the Mozambique Government's ability to take charge of the national education programme.

Aligning aid with national priorities and using government systems. The new aid agenda calls upon donors to adapt to country priorities and systems, not vice-versa. Though the processes are not easy, aligning aid to education sector plans and national management systems can yield positive results. These include greater sector coherence, better oversight of donor activities and increased financial flexibility, including aid covering both development and recurrent costs. In Cambodia, the launch of the Education Strategic Plan in 2001 marked the beginning of closer government-donor cooperation. The plan acts as a vehicle for sector coherence and has improved the education ministry's knowledge of, and influence on, donor actions.

Aligning aid to education sector plans and national management systems can yield positive results

In Burkina Faso, channelling aid through government management structures has led to more effective budgeting and financial reporting from the Ministry of Basic Education, more predictable funds and, over time, an increase in the number of donors accepting the common funding arrangement. To develop national capacity, some donors, including Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, are willing to channel aid through national systems while recognizing their deficiencies. Others, such as Australia, Portugal and the United States, prefer to wait until national systems function better.

For aid to be managed effectively, countries need to know how much will be received and when. Progress on aid predictability has been limited. While short-term predictability is high, the move to sector budget support aid has not led to more predicable medium- or long-term support. This is in part due to weak developing country governance practices, in part to donor practices. Recent

initiatives such as the European Commission's MDG contracts and the United States's Millennium Challenge Corporation are addressing this by providing multi-year commitments.

Improving coordination among donors. The Paris Declaration recognizes key actions for improved donor coordination that aim to reduce inefficiency and transaction costs:

- **Increasing joint missions.** Grouping donor missions to a given country reduces transactions costs and allows governments to use senior staff more efficiently. In 2007, only 20% of all donor missions were conducted jointly, far below the target level of 40%. Nevertheless, the education sector seems to have made more progress than any other. For instance, in Honduras, 73% of all education donor missions in 2007 were joint missions.

- **Creating donor groups.** In many countries, donor groups are being formed with appointed lead donors in the education sector. Among the countries receiving funds from the FTI Catalytic Fund, all but one have created such groups. However, donors are heterogeneous and not all are working at the same speed. For example, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and some Scandinavian countries are leading the way in harmonizing their practices while others, such as the United States and Japan, prefer to continue working in parallel structures.

- **Rationalizing aid delivery.** A large number of donors providing small amounts of aid results in higher transaction costs and is simply inefficient. However, donor efforts to concentrate larger amounts of aid to fewer countries each have so far been limited. In 2005–2006, eighteen countries each had to deal with at least twelve donors for basic education. Between 2002 and 2006, most donors increased the number of recipient countries at the same time as they increased their amounts of aid to basic education. Several donors, including Austria, Greece, Ireland, Japan and Spain, increased the number of recipient countries more rapidly than aid levels, thus actually reducing the amount of aid per country. In sharp contrast, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom more than doubled their disbursements to basic education while reducing the number of recipient countries.

Promoting good governance through aid

Donors are investing more in 'good governance'. The growing profile of governance issues in aid programmes is seen in the amount of finance they attract. In 2006, donors allocated 9% of total sector aid to 'governance and civil society' – higher than any other sector.

In 2006 and 2007, several major donors adopted new strategies on governance. The World Bank and the European Commission have been particularly active in promoting good governance through their aid programmes. Their focus includes aspects such as public financial management, decentralization, transparency and accountability, and public sector employment. Donors are also attempting to measure the status of a country's governance arrangements, for example with the Country Governance Analysis developed by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development.

Has the increased interest in governance by donor countries influenced policies and programmes in the education sector in recipient countries? A review of recent World Bank education projects and programmes for basic education reveals growing interest in a deepening governance agenda. Governance issues are found in the promotion of greater community participation in schools in Honduras, teacher recruitment, deployment and monitoring in Indonesia, and school-based management in the Philippines, to name a few. SWAps promote an even more ambitious governance agenda in Bangladesh, Kenya and Pakistan. Some include emphasis on teachers, greater community participation and private sector participation.

There is a risk of donors themselves seeking to define and prioritize what constitutes good governance in education based on current approaches in the donor country and not necessarily on what is best or relevant for poor countries. Though good governance in education should be a priority, donors do not have a monopoly of insights into what this constitutes.

There is a risk of donors themselves seeking to define and prioritize what constitutes good governance in education based on current approaches in the donor country

Overall, with stagnating levels of aid for education and basic education, the financing gap for meeting the EFA goals is not closing, and is unlikely to do so. Donors and countries may have identified ways to improve aid governance, but progress is slow. Accelerated progress towards meeting the EFA goals will not be possible without a strengthened international commitment to increase overall aid and make it more effective.

Chapter 5. Policy conclusions and recommendations

The long road to education: walking through the desert to get to school, in Yemen

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Achieving the goals set out in the Dakar Framework for Action will require bold political leadership and change at many levels. Governments need to extend pre-school opportunities, get tens of millions of children into and through school, raise learning standards, and broaden youth and adult learning opportunities, to name a few. Governance reform is critical to progress.

The Report explores lessons to emerge from the monitoring of EFA goals and from approaches to governance reform. The final chapter draws together broad conclusions and policy recommendations.

Progress towards the EFA goals

Monitoring of progress towards the EFA goals reveals a mixed picture. Some of the world's poorest countries have registered extraordinary advances, improving access, making rapid strides towards UPE and reducing gender disparities. However, overall progress remains too slow and too uneven to deliver on the Dakar commitments.

High levels of inequality are acting as a brake on progress in education and wider development goals. If governments are serious about achieving the EFA goals, they will have to strengthen their commitment to equity and inclusive education. The Report highlights key priorities.

Early childhood care and education

Progress towards ECCE has been disappointing and highly unequal, both across and within countries, and this is holding back progress in education. The Report urges governments and aid donors to:

- **Strengthen the links** between education planning and child health provision, using cash transfer programmes, targeted health interventions and more equitable public spending in health sectors.
- **Prioritize early childhood education and care** in planning for all children, with incentives provided to include those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.

- **Strengthen wider anti-poverty commitments** by tackling child malnutrition and improving public health systems, using innovative social welfare programmes that target poor households.

Universal primary education

Political leadership is the key to accelerating progress towards UPE. The Report identifies three broad lessons drawn from strong performers:

- **Fix ambitious long-term goals** supported by realistic planning and sufficient medium- to long-term budgetary allocations to assure progress in access, participation and completion in primary education.

- **Support equity** for girls, disadvantaged groups and underserved regions by setting clear targets for reducing disparities accompanied by practical strategies that can support education with equity. Practical strategies include withdrawing user fees and increasing public spending in the areas that need it most.

- **Raise quality while expanding access** by focusing on smooth progression and better learning outcomes, increasing textbook supply and quality, strengthening teacher training and support, and ensuring that class sizes are conducive to learning.

Education quality

National authorities, community officials and local school leaders must work together to overcome learning deficits and ensure that all children, regardless of background or place of residence, emerge from school with the skills and learning achievements they need to fulfil their potential. The Report identifies five critical areas of action:

- **Strengthen policy commitments** to quality education and create effective learning environments for all students, including adequate facilities, well-trained teachers, relevant curricula and clearly identified learning outcomes. A focus on teachers and learning should be at the heart of this commitment.

- Ensure that all children attending primary school for at least four to five years **acquire the basic literacy and numeracy skills** that they need to develop their potential.

- Develop the capacity to **measure, monitor and assess education quality,** including learning conditions (infrastructure, textbooks, class sizes), processes (language, instructional time), outcomes and gaps between regions, communities and schools.

- Revise existing policies and regulations to ensure that children have **sufficient instructional time** and that all schools minimize the gap between intended and actual instructional time.

- Participate in comparative regional and international **learning assessments** and translate lessons learned into national policy; develop national assessments that best reflect each country's particular needs and goals.

Overcoming inequality – lessons for national governance reforms

Good governance in education is the key to meeting the EFA goals, improving student learning achievement and equalizing opportunity. But in many countries governance reforms have two major defects: a lack of attention to tackling inequality and a tendency to apply blueprints, in particular in turning to the private sector to solve public sector problems. New approaches to education governance are needed. The Report pinpoints areas where government action is necessary:

Good governance in education is the key to meeting the EFA goals, improving student learning achievement and equalizing opportunity

- **Commit to the reduction of disparities** based on wealth, location, ethnicity, gender and other indicators for disadvantage. Governments should develop well-defined targets for reducing disparities and monitor progress towards their achievement.

- **Sustain political leadership** to reach education targets and tackle inequality through clear policy objectives and improved coordination within government and beyond (civil society, the private sector and marginalized groups).

- **Strengthen policies for reducing poverty** and deep social inequalities which hinder progress towards education for all. Governments should integrate education planning into wider poverty-reduction strategies.

- **Raise quality standards** in education and work to ensure that disparities in learning achievement between regions, communities and schools are reduced.

- **Increase national education spending,** especially in developing countries that chronically underinvest in education.

- **Put equity at the centre of financing strategies** in order to reach disadvantaged children through more accurate estimates of the costs of reducing disparities and the development of incentives for reaching the most marginalized.

- **Ensure that decentralization** has an inbuilt commitment to equity through financing formulas that link resources to levels of poverty and deprivation in education.

- **Recognize that school competition and choice** and private-public partnerships have their limits. If the public education system works poorly, the priority must be to fix it.

- **Strengthen the recruitment, deployment and motivation of teachers** to ensure that there are enough qualified teachers in all regions and schools, especially in remote and underserved communities.

Aid donors: delivering on commitments

Donor countries must increase aid to basic education, especially in low-income countries

Developing country governments carry the main responsibility for achieving the EFA goals. Developed countries can support them in this by increasing financial commitment, improving aid practices and ensuring that aid is used to support national priorities. The Report proposes action in several key areas:

- **Increase aid for basic education,** especially to low-income countries, by providing around US$7 billion to cover current financing gaps in priority EFA areas.

- **Enlarge the group of donor countries** committed to providing aid to basic education, to ensure that the financial support for the EFA goals is sustainable.

- **Commit to equity in aid for education** by providing more funds to basic education in low-income countries. Several donors – including France and Germany – should urgently review their aid allocations.

- **Get behind the Fast Track Initiative** and close the projected financing gap – estimated at US$2.2 billion annually by 2010 for countries with approved plans.

- **Improve aid effectiveness** and reduce transaction costs, as set out in the Paris Declaration, through greater alignment of aid behind national priorities, better coordination, increased use of national financial management systems and greater predictability in aid flows.

Non-government actors: a critical role

The Report emphasizes the central importance of government leadership and public policy in education. That does not diminish the role of non-government actors. Achieving EFA requires partnerships at many levels – between schools and parents, between civil society organization and government actors, and between state and non-state education providers. Civil society organizations and coalitions should:

- **continue to represent those without a voice,** the marginalized – slum dwellers, child labourers, and low-caste and indigenous people – in the effort to extend education for all;

- **hold governments to account,** support education provision and build capacity.

Good governance for overcoming inequality can and must be at the heart of all public policy. It is vital in developing more inclusive, responsive education systems that meet the needs of all children – especially those at the greatest disadvantage. Building education systems that foster equity will be crucial if the world is to reach the EFA goals by 2015.

Overcoming inequality: why governance matters

Education is a basic human right. Yet across the world there are vast disparities in education based on wealth, gender, location, language and other markers for disadvantage. These disparities threaten to undermine efforts to achieve the six Education for All (EFA) goals agreed by over 160 governments in 2000. Failure to place strategies for greater equity at the centre of the EFA agenda will deny millions of children, youth and adults the education and learning opportunities they need to realize their potential, escape poverty and participate fully in society.

This is the Summary of the seventh edition of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*. It documents progress towards the EFA goals. Focusing on those being left behind, the Report explores current approaches to education governance reform and assesses whether these are helping to improve access, quality, participation and accountability. It also examines aid governance. Rich countries have pledged that no national education strategy will be allowed to fail for want of finance. Yet this promise is not being honoured.

The full Report, as well as comprehensive education statistics and indicators and other language editions, are available online at www.efareport.unesco.org.

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Cover photo
Unlike many children his age from poor households, this young boy in Indonesia is learning to read and write at school.
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