

# GENDER AND EFA 2000-2015: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Education for All

Gender Summary



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**UNGEI**  
United Nations Girls'  
Education Initiative

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## Gender Summary



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*'Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realizing the right to education. Without overcoming this obstacle, Education for All cannot be achieved. Girls are a majority among out-of-school children and youth, although in an increasing number of countries boys are at a disadvantage. Even though the education of girls and women has a powerful trans-generational effect and is a key determinant of social development and women's empowerment, limited progress has been made in increasing girls' participation in basic education.*

*"International agreement ... to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education ... requires that gender issues be mainstreamed throughout the education system, supported by adequate resources and strong political commitment. Merely ensuring access to education for girls is not enough; unsafe school environments and biases in teacher behaviour and training, teaching and learning processes, and curricula and textbooks often lead to lower completion and achievement rates for girls. ... Increasing levels of women's literacy is another crucial factor in promoting girl's education. Comprehensive efforts therefore need to be made at all levels and in all areas to eliminate gender discrimination and to promote mutual respect between girls and boys, women and men.'*

Excerpts from the Dakar Framework for Action, *Education For All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments*, adopted at the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, April 2000, pp. 16–17.

# Introduction

The vision agreed upon at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 was clear and transformational: long-standing gender bias and discrimination undermine the achievement of education for all (EFA). Until all girls and women exercise their right to education and literacy, progress in achieving EFA will be stymied, and a dynamic source of development and empowerment will be squandered. Fifteen years later, the road to achieving gender parity and reducing all forms of gender inequalities in education continues to be long and twisting. This report provides detailed evidence of how much has been achieved in the past 15 years but also where considerable – some quite intractable – challenges remain. It highlights notable progress in gender parity in primary and secondary education, particularly in South and West Asia, while underscoring the persistent barriers to achieving gender equality in education. The lack of progress in literacy among adult women is especially stark: in 2015 an estimated 481 million women, 15 years and over, lack basic literacy skills, 64% of the total number of those who are illiterate, a percentage virtually unchanged since 2000.

What can be done to eliminate gender-specific obstacles in education and create a more gender-just world? This report describes an array of country efforts, some quite effective, to achieve and go beyond gender parity in education. Many of these policies and programmes focus on the immediate school environment in which girls learn. Others focus on the informal and formal laws, social norms and practices that deny girls their right of access to, and completion of, a full cycle of quality basic education. The analyses and key messages in Gender and EFA 2000–2015 deserve careful scrutiny as the world embarks on a universal, integrated and even more ambitious sustainable development agenda in the years to come.





# Key Messages

## Progress towards gender parity in primary and secondary education has been one of the biggest education success stories since 2000.

- Between 2000 and 2015, the number of girls for every 100 boys has risen from 92 to 97 in primary education and from 91 to 97 in secondary education.
- There are 84 million fewer out of school children and adolescents since 2000; 52 million of these are girls.
- The number of countries that have achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education from 2000 to 2015 has increased from 36 to 62.

## Nevertheless, major challenges in achieving parity remain.

- **Fewer than half of countries will have achieved the Education for All goal on gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2015.** No country in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to achieve parity at both levels by the deadline.
- **Gender disparities widen the higher up the education system you go.** In pre-primary education, 70% of countries have achieved gender parity, compared to around 66% in primary, 50% in lower secondary, 29% in upper secondary, and only 4% in tertiary.
- **Girls, and particularly the poorest, continue to face the greatest challenges in accessing primary school.** Nine percent of children around the world are out of school. Among these, almost half of the girls will never set foot in a classroom, equivalent to 15 million girls, compared with just over a third of the boys. However, while girls are less likely to enroll in primary school in the first place, boys are more likely to leave school early.
- **Gender disparities in secondary education are closing, but still remain and are most extreme for girls.** In 2012, there were at least 19 countries with fewer than 90 girls for every 100 boys, of which the majority were in the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Boys are more likely than girls to drop out of upper secondary education.** Only 95 boys for every 100 girls complete this level, with barely any change since 2000. In OECD countries, 73% of girls compared with 63% of boys complete upper secondary education on time.
- **More women than men are enrolled in tertiary education** except in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, extreme disparities are increasing rather than decreasing at this level.
- **Gender gaps in youth literacy are narrowing.** However, fewer than seven out of every ten young women in sub-Saharan Africa are expected to have basic literacy skills by 2015.
- **The lack of progress in literacy among adult women is particularly stark:** two-thirds of adults lacking basic literacy skills are women, a proportion unchanged since 2000. Half of adult women in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa cannot read or write.

## **A shift in focus is needed from parity to gender equality to enable all, and especially girls and young women, to reap the full benefits from education.**

- **Structural barriers and entrenched discriminatory social norms contribute to gender inequality,** including early marriage and early motherhood, gender-based violence, traditional seclusion practices, the favouring of boys in families' education investment, and the gendered division of household labour.
- **Child marriage is a persistent barrier to girls' education.** In 2012, almost one in five women married were between 15 and 19 years of age.
- **Long distances to travel and the lack of good water and sanitation in schools disproportionately impact girls' chances of staying and completing their education.** A one hour reduction in the time spent walking to a water source increases girls' enrolment by 18-19% in Pakistan and 8-9% in Yemen.
- **Direct or hidden costs for education can disadvantage girls in particular where families' resources are limited.** Yet, in a review of 50 countries, one-quarter of households spent more on education than governments
- **Increasing the number of female teachers and gender-sensitive teacher training help** schools to effectively challenge gender stereotypes and entrenched discriminatory social norms.
- **Boys can be affected by social and gender norms too,** resulting in disengagement from their education and increased drop outs. This can be exacerbated by poverty and the need to pursue employment.

# Global progress towards gender parity and equality 2000–2015

## Growing international commitment to gender parity and equality in education from 2000

In April 2000, the international education community assembled in Dakar, Senegal, to set an agenda for achieving education for all by 2015. At this World Education Forum, members from 164 country governments, together with representatives from regional groups, international organizations, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, adopted the Framework

for Action ('the Dakar Framework') to deliver EFA commitments.

The Dakar Framework comprised two key elements: 6 goals, and associated targets to be achieved by 2015, with the target of gender parity to be achieved by 2005; and 12 strategies to which all stakeholders would contribute (**Box 1**).

Gender concerns were embedded in all of the Dakar Framework's six goals, and three of them made explicit reference to gender. Goal 2 focused on universal primary education and emphasized the

### Box 1: The Dakar EFA goals and strategies

#### 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% 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

#### STRATEGIES

1. Mobilize strong national and international political commitment for education for all, develop national action plans and enhance significantly investment in basic education
2. Promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies
3. Ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development
4. Develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management
5. Meet the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability, and conduct educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict
6. Implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education that recognize the need for change in attitudes, values and practices
7. Implement education programmes and actions to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a matter of urgency
8. Create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning, with clearly defined levels of achievement for all
9. Enhance the status, morale and professionalism of teachers
10. Harness new information and communication technologies to help achieve EFA goals
11. Systematically monitor progress towards EFA goals and strategies at the national, regional and international levels
12. Build on existing mechanisms to accelerate progress towards education for all

importance of ensuring girls' access to education. Goal 4, on adult literacy, stressed the importance of improving literacy levels, particularly for women. Goal 5 was the goal specifically addressing gender, and called for '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.'

### A focus on parity since 2000 limited progress in gender equality

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were approved by world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit, held in September 2000. The MDGs formed an agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives, and encapsulated eight goals. Education was given a prominent position in the framing of this agenda. MDG goal 2 called for the achievement of universal primary education, setting the target that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls, would complete a full course of good quality primary schooling. MDG goal 3, which referred to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, included a target to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels no later than 2015. Including this education target in MDG goal 3 implied that the achievement

of gender parity in primary and secondary education was a necessary component of gender equality more broadly.

Despite the emphasis on gender parity in both the EFA goals and the MDGs, the early 2005 deadline for ensuring equal numbers of boys and girls are enrolled in primary and secondary schooling was missed. And at the United Nations World Summit held that year, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to 'eliminate gender inequality and imbalance' as well as 'renew efforts to improve girls' education' (United Nations, 2005).

International conventions preceding the Dakar Framework and the MDGs supported gender equality in education (**Box 2**), but this goal is evidently taking a long time to be achieved.

## Trends in education and gender, 2000–2015

Since 2000, the EFA agenda of gender equality has been limited because of the focus on gender parity in the MDGs, underpinned by the emphasis

### Box 2: International conventions that support gender equality

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, agreed by the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 1989, and the World Declaration on Education for All, made in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, reaffirmed education as a basic human right, as first stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. These treaties heralded a new environment of international cooperation and solidarity.

At Jomtien, attention was drawn to the fact that girls constituted two-thirds of children without access to primary education, and women constituted the majority of adults without basic literacy skills. This international recognition of gender inequality built on the UN's 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW provided the basis for realising equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, as well as affirming the reproductive rights of women.

Despite this recognition, few links were developed between the EFA movement and women's groups to promote the gender equality agenda in education. This was a missed opportunity, as women's groups have been key actors for social change. In 1995,

the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were drawn up at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. These placed gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of the development agenda and made specific reference, for the first time, to ensuring the right of women and girls to education. They also emphasized the principle of power and responsibility in the family, community, workplace and society and more broadly, the need for men and women to 'participate fully in all actions towards equality'.

The Platform for Action set clear targets for gender equality. It called on states' commitment, by the year 2000, 'to provide universal access to basic education and ensure completion of primary education by at least 80% of primary school-age children; close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005; [and] provide universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015' (Para. 80). In 2010, on the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Conference, this commitment was reaffirmed, as was the promise to fulfil the 1979 CEDAW obligations, in recognition that both sets of commitments are 'mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women'.

Sources: UNESCO (2012c); United Nations (1997); United Nations (2000-2009); United Nations (2010).

on universal primary education. While this focus led to notable progress in terms of gender parity in primary school enrolment, this narrow framing of gender and education meant that broader discussion and achievements were limited.

Thus, taking stock of progress towards gender equality between 2000 and 2015, the world remains far from achieving gender equality in education and a gender-just society, despite some progress towards EFA goals. Looking more specifically at each of the EFA goals, four important trends can be highlighted.

First, notable progress towards achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education has been one of the success stories of the post-Dakar EFA era. Globally, women and girls have had better access to educational opportunities than at any other time in history, helping to realize the right of all girls to education. However, improving gender parity does not necessarily ensure greater equality or improving the social and economic position of women.

Second, as more children, especially girls, have gained access to school, awareness has increased of the barriers that continue to prevent millions of girls, as well as boys, from enrolling, attending, remaining and succeeding in school; many of these barriers have a gendered dimension. The increased recognition of gender inequalities in education is a necessary step to tackle gender discrimination.

The third important trend is the growing recognition of the importance of good quality education. School-based factors, including overcrowded classrooms, untrained teachers, a lack of resources and gender-based violence, prevent many children from receiving a quality education. A poor quality education restricts children's achievement in learning and increases the risks of their early exit from schooling. Children who already face disadvantage and discrimination – especially girls – suffer the most from poor quality schooling (UNESCO, 2014c). Furthermore, the legacy of this learning crisis in formal schooling also extends into adulthood. Millions of adults who have been failed by education systems, the majority of whom are women, have inadequate literacy skills and struggle to access decent health care or decent jobs because they cannot read or write – a situation that has not been remedied during the EFA era.

The fourth trend is the recognition of the need to shift from the dominant focus on gender parity to understanding and advocating for gender equality in education. It is a challenge. Advocacy for gender equality does not yet match advocacy for gender parity. This is complicated by gender equality in education being a complex notion that is harder to measure than parity. Assessing progress towards gender equality in education will require moving beyond counting the number of boys and girls, and men and women who are in school or who have an education. It will involve exploring how ideas and practices relating to gender shape the form and quality of people's educational experiences in the classroom and school community, their educational achievements and their aspirations for the future. It will also require examining the extent to which education will empower people to challenge forms of gender discrimination they may experience in their families, communities and society more broadly.

**Progress towards achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education has been one of the success stories since Dakar**

## Progress towards gender parity in education

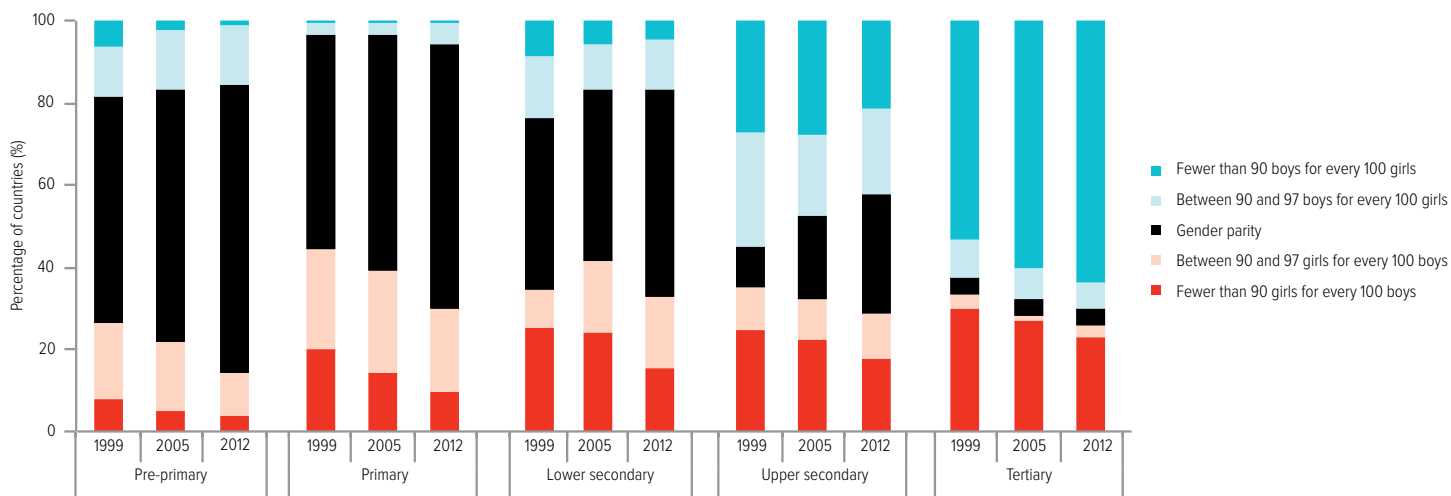
Achieving gender parity in enrolment is an important step towards the goal of gender equality in education. But while the proportion of countries achieving gender parity in education – measured by a gender parity index (GPI) of 0.97 to 1.03<sup>1</sup> – has increased since 1999, progress has been uneven across education levels and disparities have not been eliminated (**Figure 1**).

The proportion of countries demonstrating parity at the pre-primary level increased from 55% in 1999 to 70% in 2012, with relatively few countries exhibiting large gender disparities in enrolment. Although the target of reaching gender parity in primary enrolment by 2005 was missed, over two-thirds of countries with data achieved it by 2012. Progress towards gender parity in secondary education has been less marked: half of countries with data achieved parity in lower secondary by 2012, and only 29% in upper secondary. And although the number of countries with severe disparities in both lower and upper secondary has declined, large disparities in enrolment remain and are increasingly prevalent moving up through the education levels. Only 4% of

1. Gender parity is formally 'achieved' if the GPI ranges from 0.97 and 1.03. For the purposes of this report, severe gender disparity is indicated by a GPI of less than 0.90 (less than 90 girls to every 100 boys) or greater than 1.11 (less than 90 boys to every 100 girls).

**Figure 1: Gender disparities in enrolment are more apparent as education levels increase**

Percentage of countries by gender parity index (GPI) for gross enrolment ratios, all education levels, 1999, 2005 and 2012



Note: Only countries with data for each of the three years are included.  
Source: UIS database.

countries with data had achieved gender parity at the tertiary level by 2012.

While the need to target women and girls is highlighted in goals 2 and 4, the Dakar Framework’s explicit target for gender parity focused on primary and secondary education. Projections calculated for the 2015 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (GMR) indicate that although progress has been made, fewer than half of countries in 2015 have achieved gender parity at both levels (**Box 3**).

The remainder of this section of the report looks in more detail at trends in gender parity within formal education – starting with pre-primary education, but placing particular emphasis on access and completion of primary and secondary education. Consideration of gender differences in education outcomes should not ignore the fact that many millions of girls and boys are out of school: having never attended, or dropping out along the way. Understanding the patterns behind gender differences in school enrolment is important, particularly in countries still struggling to increase enrolment overall.

**Box 3: Fewer than half of countries will have achieved parity in both primary and secondary education by 2015**

EFA goal 5 calls for eliminating gender disparities in both primary and secondary education. While progress in primary and secondary is often assessed separately, consideration of both levels together provides a measure of the extent to which goal 5 has been achieved. Trend projections for the GPI at both education levels among 145 countries with data show that only 62 countries will have achieved gender parity in enrolment for both primary and secondary education by 2015.

More than three-quarters of these are in North America and Western Europe (22), Central and Eastern Europe (15), and East Asia and the Pacific (10); 7 countries are in Latin America and the Caribbean, 4 countries in Central Asia, 3 in the Arab States, and 1 (India) in South and West Asia. No country in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to achieve gender parity at both primary and secondary levels by 2015.

Although the gender parity target has been missed in more than half the countries with data, progress has been made, and accelerated, in the last 15 years: projections based on 1990–1999 trends indicate that only 25 countries, rather than 62, would have achieved gender parity at both the primary and secondary levels by 2015.

Source: Bruneforth (2015).

## Gender parity has nearly been achieved in pre-primary education

Access to good quality pre-primary education has an enormous impact on girls' and boys' primary education outcomes, increasing their chances of enrolling, avoiding dropout and repetition, and achieving strong foundational skills (Berlinski et al., 2009; Myers, 2004).

The global pre-primary gross enrolment ratio increased from 27% in 1990 to 33% in 1999 and 54% in 2012; if it continues to rise at the 1999–2012 rate, it will reach 58% by 2015.

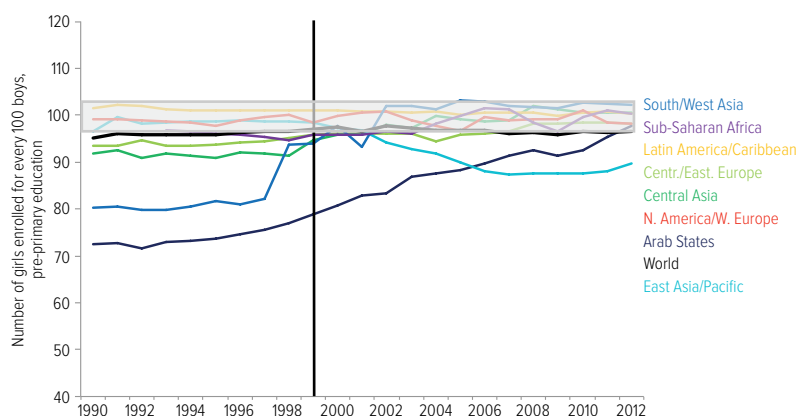
There has been near gender parity throughout the period (Figure 2). In 2012, only East Asia and the Pacific recorded gender disparity at this level, although it was at parity in 2000. Notable progress was achieved in the Arab States, where only 79 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys in 1999.

## Major progress in primary education but much more is needed

In 1999, there was considerable disparity in primary education at the global level, with only 92 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. By 2012, the global average had increased to 97, just above the threshold for parity (Figure 3). Globally, gender disparity in primary enrolment has substantially reduced since 1999 but has not been eliminated. Among countries with data for 1999, 2005 and 2012, the share of those at parity rose from 52% in 1999 to 57% in 2005 and 65% in 2012 (Figure 1). Of 57 countries yet to achieve parity by 2012, 48 have fewer girls enrolled than boys and 9 have fewer boys enrolled than girls.

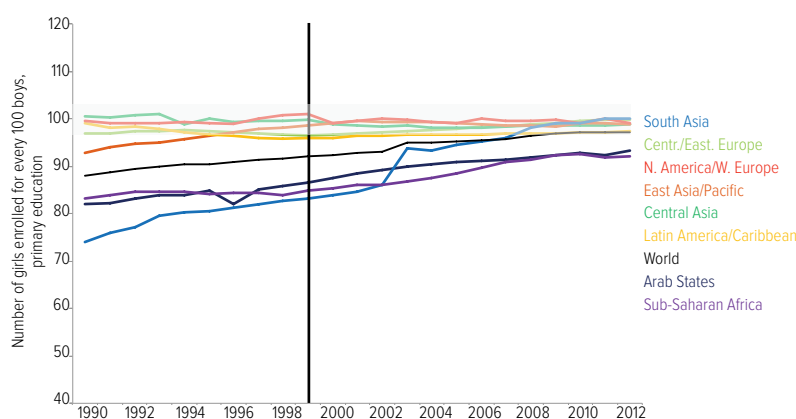
Among regions, South and West Asia made the strongest progress, achieving parity in primary enrolment from the lowest starting point. The regional GPI increased from 0.83 in 1999 to 1.00 in 2012 (Figure 3). Yet this average masks wide variation among countries in the region. Over the period, only 4 of the 8 countries with data achieved parity: Bhutan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan had just 72 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. In Nepal by 2012, the gender gap had been reversed, with more girls than boys enrolled in primary education.

**Figure 2: All regions but one achieved gender parity in pre-primary education**  
Gender parity index, pre-primary education, by region, 1990–2012



Source: UIS database.

**Figure 3: Regional gender disparities in primary education have narrowed, with the greatest progress seen in South and West Asia**  
Gender parity index, primary education, by region, 1990–2012



Source: UIS database.

The regional GPIs for the Arab States, 0.93 in 2012, and sub-Saharan Africa, 0.92, represent improvement since 1999, but parity has not yet been achieved. There has been a clear trend of reducing gender disparity in primary gross enrolment ratios for a majority of countries in these two regions, often starting from a point of severe disadvantage for girls (Figure 4). Countries that made good progress in reducing gender disparity include Benin, Burkina Faso and Morocco. In Burundi, where only 79 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys in 1999, gender parity was achieved by 2012. However, these two regions overall remain the furthest from parity, and of the 18 countries with fewer than 90 girls for every 100 boys enrolled, 13 are in sub-Saharan Africa.



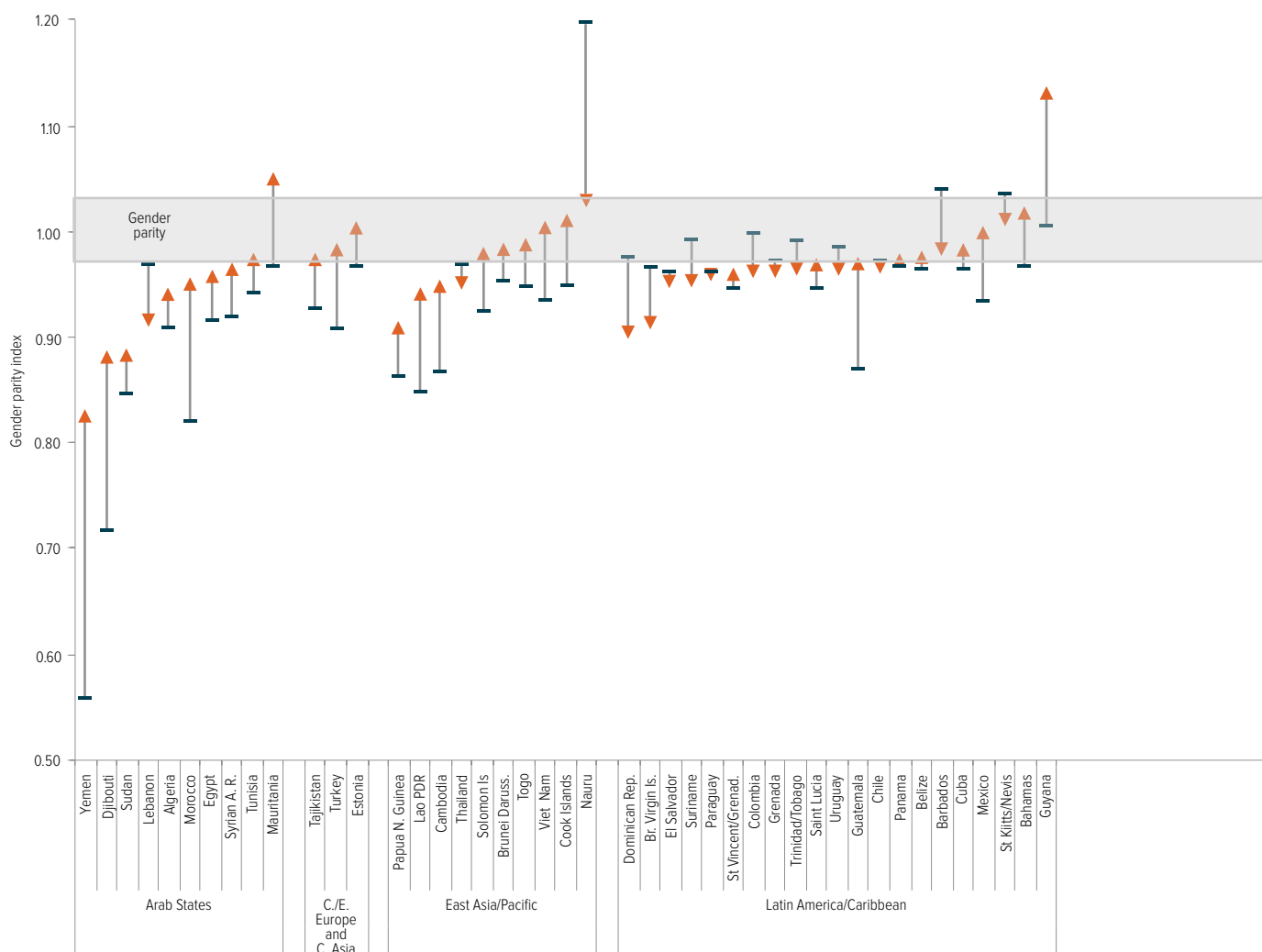
Countries where gender gaps have been reversed underline the dynamic nature of achieving gender parity. Careful analysis of enrolment trends is needed to inform future policy. In the Gambia, Nepal and Senegal, increases in the ratio of girls' enrolment relative to boys reflect not only more girls enrolling, but also more boys dropping out of school. In Senegal in 1999, fewer boys than girls dropped out of school: 81 boys dropped out for every 100 girls who did. By 2012, this trend had reversed with more boys dropping out than girls: 113 boys for every 100 girls. Caution is needed, therefore, in interpreting changes in gender parity, as these may reflect undesirable developments in the education

system or wider society. But such changes are not a matter of cause and effect: increases in the enrolment and retention of girls should not be seen as bringing direct disadvantage to boys.

*Progress has been made in countries where girls faced the greatest disadvantage*

Since 1999, important progress has been made in reducing gender disparity in countries where the enrolment ratio of girls to boys was particularly low. Of the 161 countries with data for both 1999 and 2012, 33 countries – including 20 in sub-Saharan Africa – had fewer than 90 girls enrolled for every

**Figure 4: Gender disparity in primary enrolment has been reduced, but wide gaps remain in several countries**  
 Gender parity index of the primary gross enrolment ratio, selected countries, 1999 and 2012



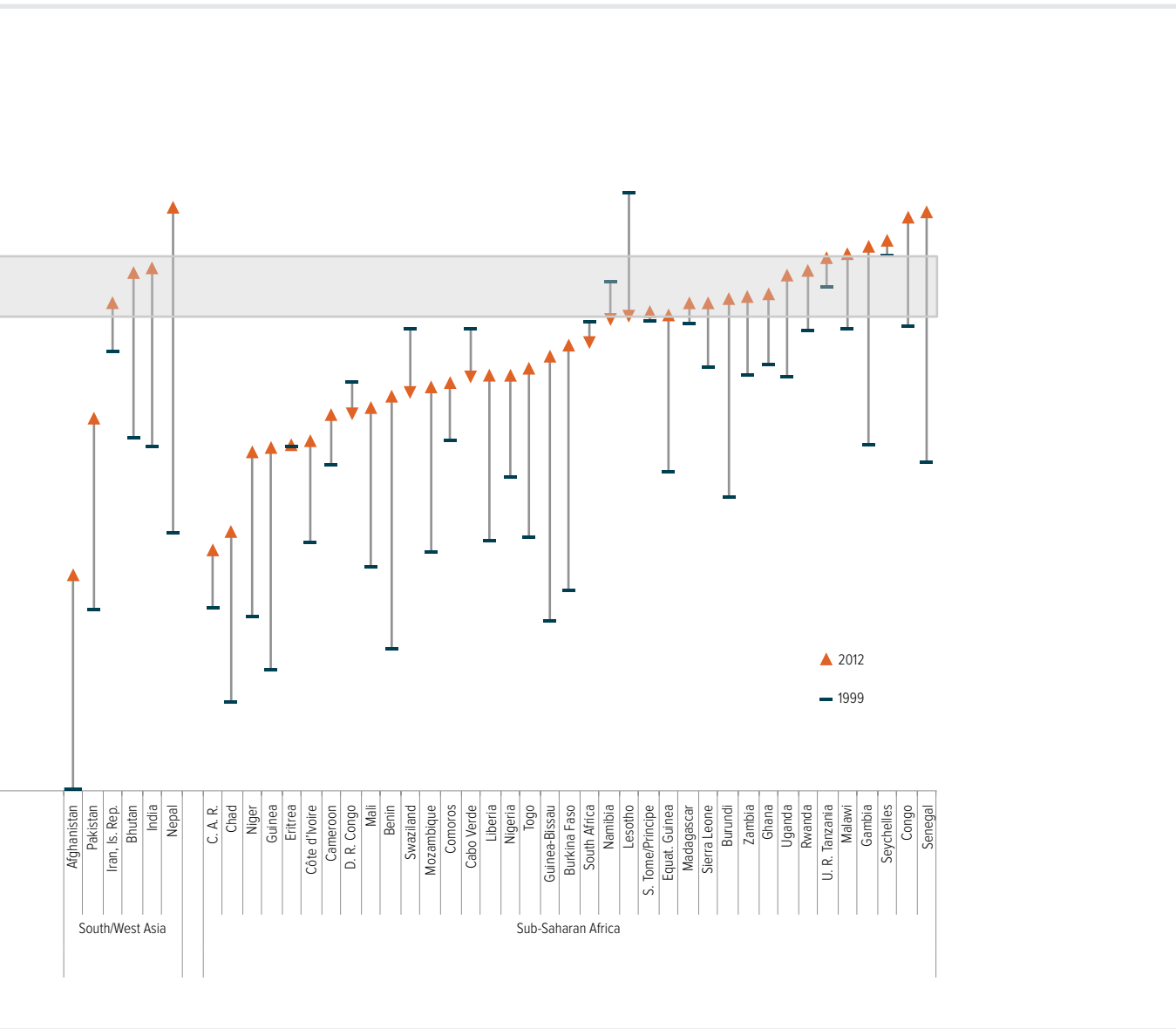
Source: UIS database.

100 boys in 1999. By 2012, this number had fallen to 16. Afghanistan, the lowest-ranking country in 1999, overcame immense obstacles to raise its estimated primary gross enrolment ratio from less than 4% in 1999 to 87% in 2012, resulting in its GPI increasing from 0.08 to 0.72.

**Figure 5** compares progress in countries with data for 1990, 1999 and 2012. Among the 28 countries with GPIs below 0.90 in 1999, 16 had passed this threshold by 2012. Of these, Bhutan, Burundi and India achieved gender parity. In some countries that had not reached gender parity, including

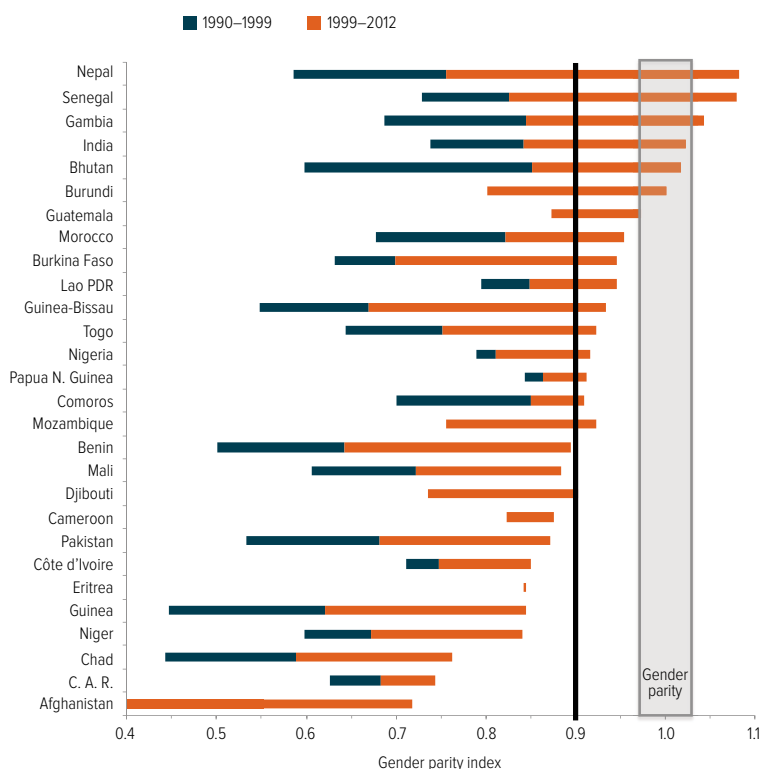
Benin, Burkina Faso and Morocco, the index still increased dramatically.

Countries such as Guatemala and Morocco, close to reaching the goal of gender parity and with high overall enrolment, need to increase efforts to address obstacles to schooling that affect the most marginalized girls. Djibouti, Eritrea and Niger, all of which had a gross enrolment ratio of less than 80% in 2012, face the dual challenge of increasing the number of children in school while continuing efforts to reduce severe gender disparity.



**Figure 5: Despite progress in reducing severe gender disparity, girls still face difficulty enrolling in primary school in several countries**

Gender parity index of the primary gross enrolment ratio, countries with GPIs below 0.90 in 1999, 1990–1999 and 1999–2012



Source: UIS database.

school, compared with 37% of boys. But more boys than girls – 26% compared with 20% – are likely to drop out of school. In the Arab States, it is estimated that half of out-of-school girls will never enrol, compared with just over one-quarter of boys (Figure 6).

Poor children, especially girls, are particularly at risk of being out of school. During the 2000s, 9 of 10 countries with the highest percentages of children who had never attended school were in sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 7). And while the overall proportion of children who had never been to school fell, the poorest girls continued to be the most likely never to have attended. In Guinea and Niger, approximately 70% of the poorest girls had never attended school, compared with less than 20% of the richest boys.

In Ethiopia and Senegal, education policies targeting girls supported progress to reduce the gender gap among the poorest children, although large numbers of both boys and girls still missed out on school. In Pakistan, between 2006 and 2012, little progress was made in either reducing the number of the poorest children who had never enrolled in school, or in reducing the gender gap of 18 percentage points between them.

*Given the chance to enrol in school, girls progress alongside boys*

Although girls are overall less likely than boys to enrol in primary school, when they do girls stand an equal or better chance than boys of continuing to the upper grades. In many countries, survival rates to grade 5 for girls have consistently been equal to or higher than those of boys. Of 68 countries with data for both 1999 and 2011, 57 had either parity in grade 5 survival rates or more girls than boys in 1999; the number was almost the same, 58, in 2011.

Even in countries where girls are severely disadvantaged at the point of initial intake, survival rates to grade 5 of enrolled children generally show narrower gender gaps or none at all. Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire both have a GPI of less than 0.90 for gross intake rates, but survival rates for girls and boys are at parity (Figure 8).

In the few countries where boys are disadvantaged at the point of intake, including the Gambia, Malawi and Nepal, gross enrolment ratios remain lower for boys than girls. In countries such as Bangladesh,

*The poorest girls remain the least likely to enrol in school*

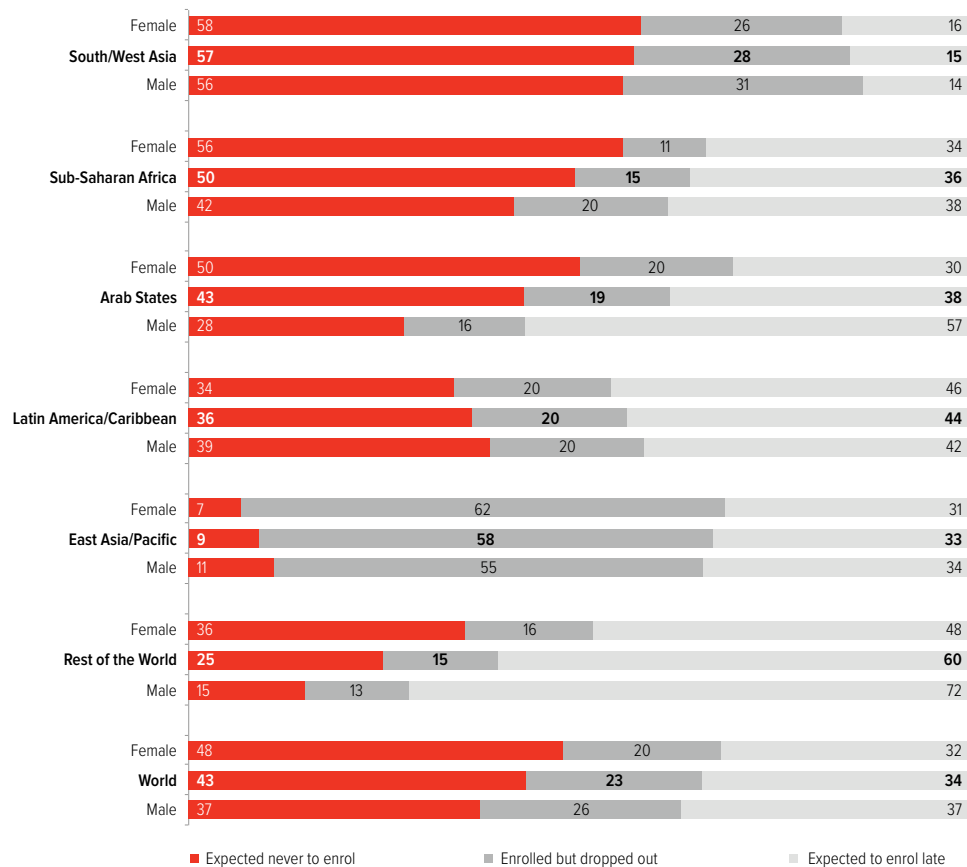
As of 2012, it was estimated that almost 58 million children of primary school age were out of school, down from 106 million in 1999. Just over 50% live in sub-Saharan Africa, an increase from 40% in 1999. By contrast, South and West Asia, where 35% of the world's out-of-school children lived in 1999, accounted for 17% of the total in 2012.

There are three categories of out-of-school children: those who will eventually go to school, those who will never go, and those who were enrolled but dropped out. Estimates indicate that about 25 million, or 43% of out-of-school children, will never go to school. This estimate rises to 50% in sub-Saharan Africa and 57% in South and West Asia.

Considerable gender disparity exists: 48% of out-of-school girls are likely never to enrol in

**48% of out-of-school girls are likely never to enrol in school, compared with 37% of boys**

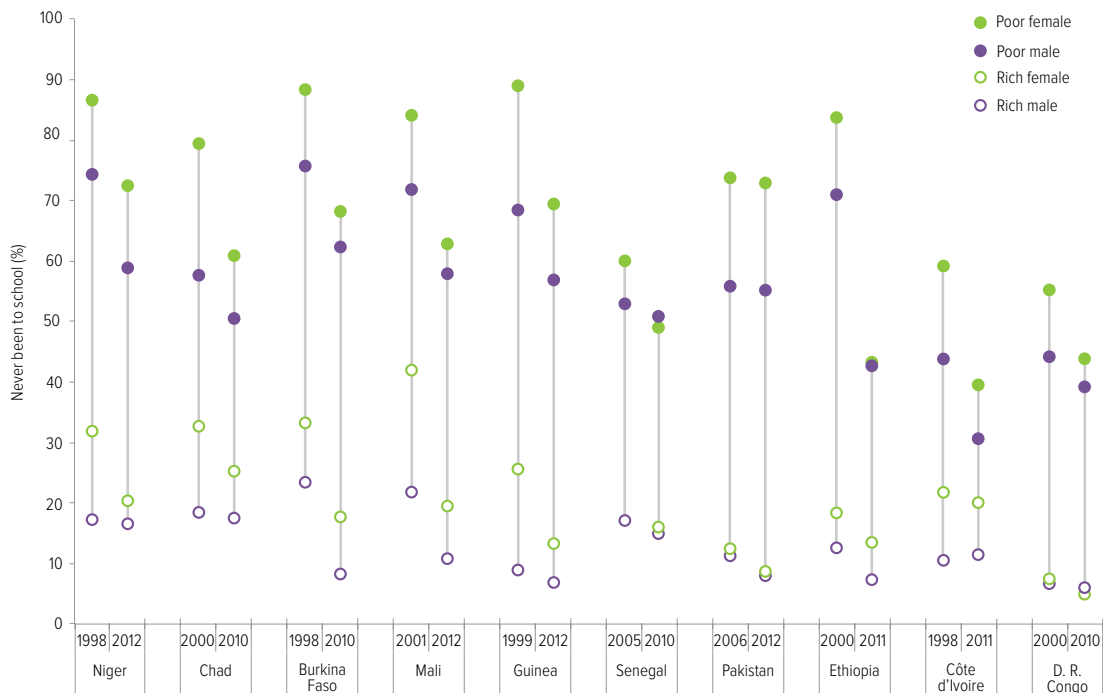
**Figure 6: Almost half of out-of-school girls will never enrol in school**  
 Distribution of out-of-school children by school exposure, by gender, for world and selected regions



Source: UIS database.

**Figure 7: In most countries with high numbers of children out of school, the poorest girls continue to be most likely never to have attended**

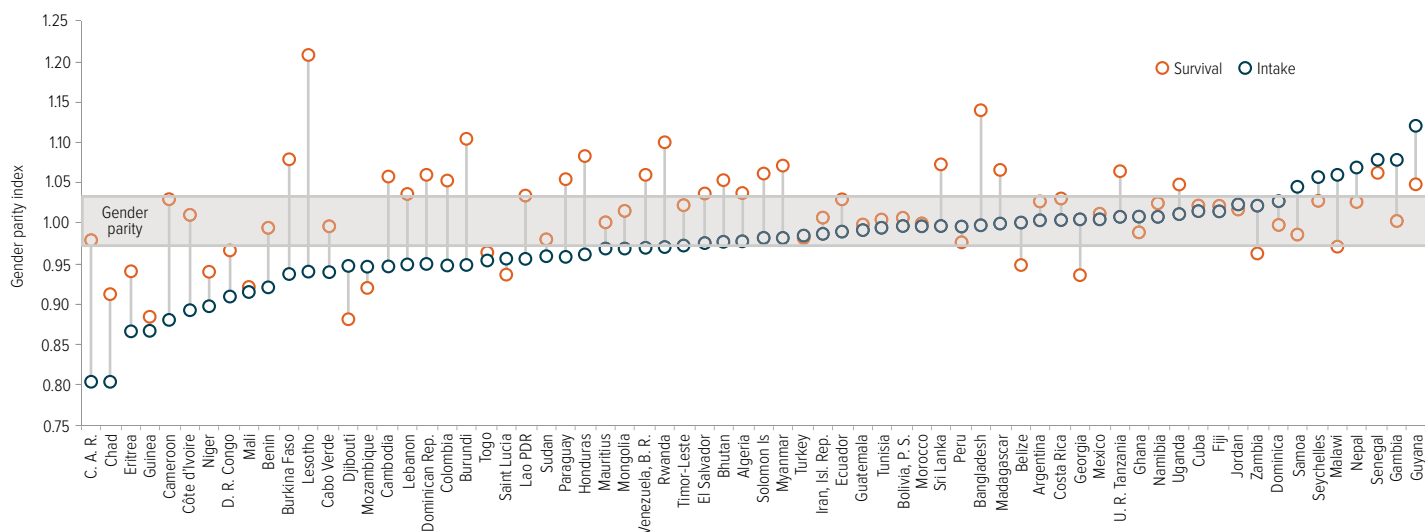
Percentage of boys and girls who never attended school, by wealth, selected countries, circa 2000 and 2010



Note: The countries selected were those with the highest percentages of children who had never attended school.

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team calculations (2014) using data from Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.

**Figure 8: While girls are less likely to enrol in school, boys are more likely to leave early**  
Gender parity index of the primary gross intake rate and survival rate to grade 5 of primary school, 2011 and 2012



Notes: The figure excludes high income countries. A GPI below 0.97 denotes disparity at the expense of females while one above 1.03 denotes disparity at the expense of males.  
Sources: UIS database.

Myanmar and the United Republic of Tanzania, no gender gap exists in intake rates but fewer boys than girls survive to grade 5, indicating boys are relatively more likely to drop out.

### *Poverty deepens gender disparities in attainment of primary education*

Using the primary attainment rate as a measure of school completion, which includes all school-age children in a population rather than just those enrolled in school, it can be seen that gender disparity is often far wider among the poorest children than the richest (**Figure 9**). In countries, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique and Uganda, where gender parity in primary attainment has been achieved since 2000 among the richest children, primary attainment of the poorest girls is still below that of the poorest boys. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the proportion of the richest girls who attained full primary education rose from 88 per 100 boys in 2000 to parity in 2010, while that of the poorest girls fell from 77 to 70 per 100 boys.

Countries including Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, where primary attainment was particularly low among the poorest boys in 2000, have since experienced progress towards gender parity. Yet in countries including Haiti and Zimbabwe, wide disparities have emerged, with the

poorest boys now less likely than the poorest girls to complete primary education.

Strategies to address the emergence of low primary attainment among poorer boys need to tackle why boys drop out of school. Meanwhile, countries seeking to improve overall attainment for girls must redouble their efforts to ensure that girls, particularly those who are poor and disadvantaged, enter school in the first place, and address specific barriers girls face once in school, as discussed below. Careful examination of patterns at the point of entry to primary school and in all subsequent grades is required to ensure equitable participation and completion of primary education for both girls and boys.

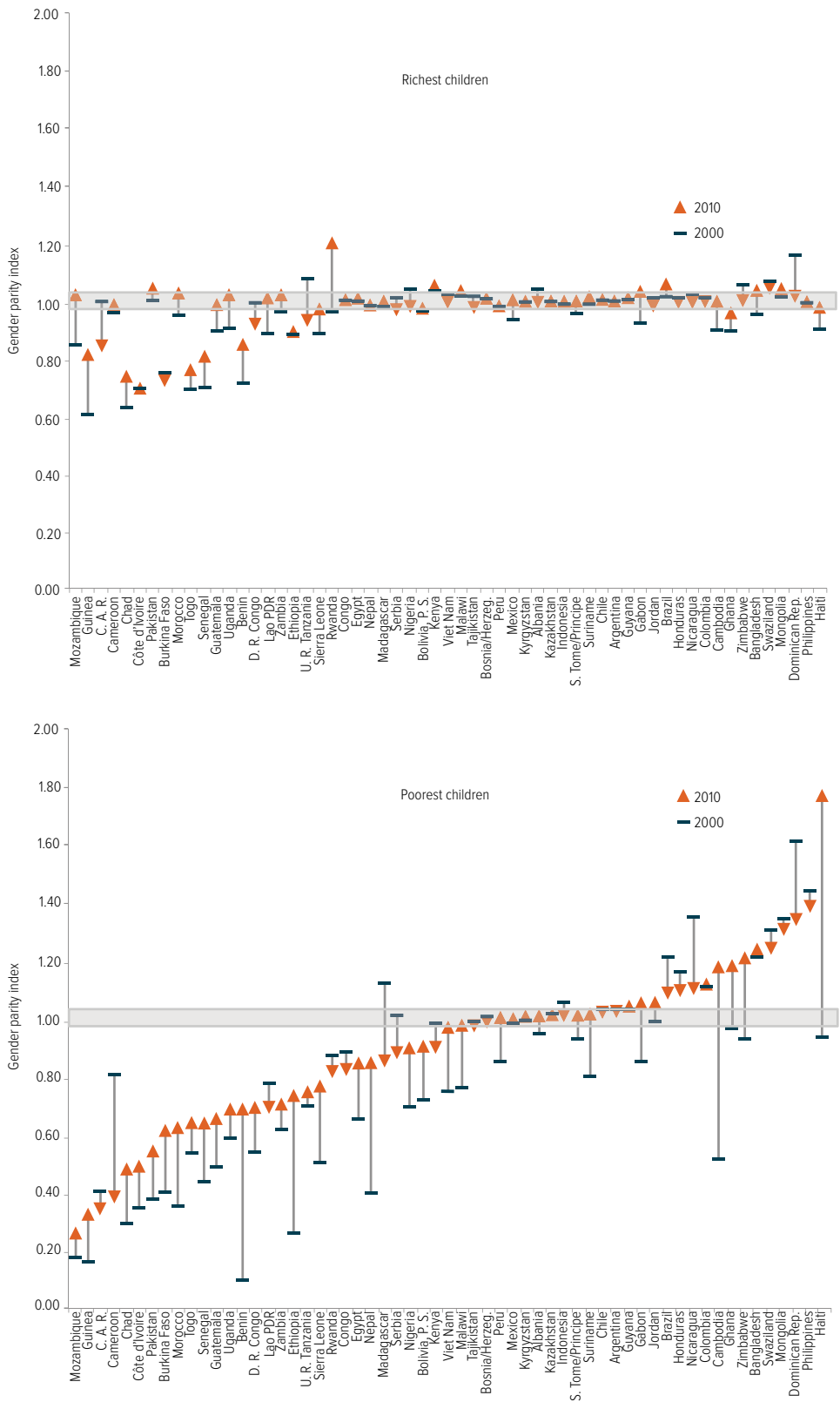
### **Gender disparity is wider and more varied in secondary education**

Participation in lower and upper secondary education, particularly in poorer countries, has increased since 1999 as a result of improved transition rates from primary to secondary schooling and higher retention rates. Between 1999 and 2012, enrolment in secondary education overall increased by 27% globally, and girls accounted for nearly 52% of this increase.

Globally, this translates to a reduction in gender disparity from 91 girls enrolled for every 100 boys

**Figure 9: While progress has been made, gender disparity in attaining a primary education is widest among the poorest children**

Gender parity index of the primary attainment rate, by wealth in selected countries, circa 2000 and 2010



Note: A GPI below 0.97 denotes disparity at the expense of females while one above 1.03 denotes disparity at the expense of males.  
 Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team calculations (2014) using data from Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.

**There are more countries with disparity at the expense of boys in upper secondary education**

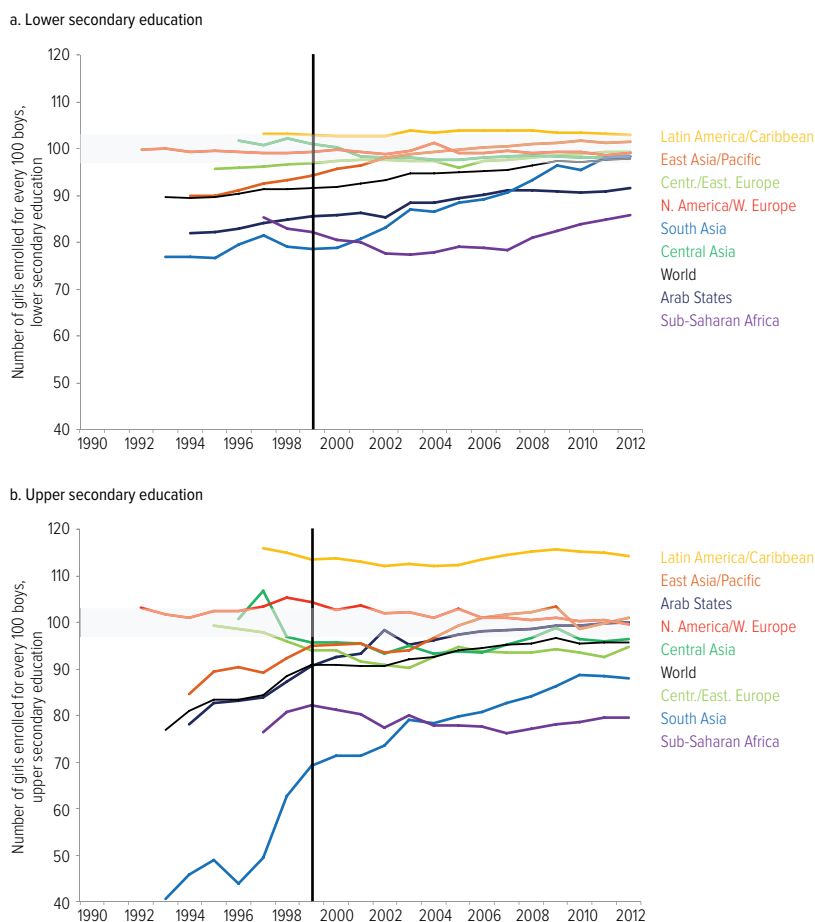
in 1999 to almost 97 girls for every 100 boys in 2012, just below the threshold for parity. This varies by region. South and West Asia made the strongest progress in secondary enrolment, from 75 girls enrolled for every 100 boys, the lowest starting point, to 93, with rapid progress at both the lower and upper secondary levels (Figure 10a and b). The Arab States made progress too, as the number of girls enrolled for every 100 boys increased from 87 in 1999 to 95 in 2012. In sub-Saharan Africa, the average number of girls enrolled relative to boys has only risen slightly since 1999, to 84 for every 100 boys in 2012. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 93 boys were enrolled for every 100 girls in 2012, with little change from 1999.

Overall, gender disparities are narrowing. At the lower secondary education level, the share of countries at parity increased from 41% in 1999 to 42% in 2005 and 50% in 2012. At the upper secondary education level, the corresponding shares were 10%, 20% and 29%. There are relatively more countries with disparity at the expense of girls in lower secondary education and more countries with disparity at the expense of boys in upper secondary education.

Across both levels, of 133 countries with data in both years, the number of countries with fewer than 90 girls enrolled for every 100 boys fell from 30 in 1999 to 19 countries in 2012, of which the majority were in the Arab States or sub-Saharan Africa. The number of countries where fewer than 90 boys enrolled for every 100 girls fell from 18 to 9 over the period (Figure 11).

The most extreme cases of disparity in secondary education enrolment are still at the expense of girls. In 2012, despite progress since 1999, 13 countries had fewer than 80 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. In Angola, the gender gap increased from 76 girls per 100 boys in 1999 to 65 in 2012. In the Central African Republic and Chad, both affected by conflict, approximately half as many girls as boys were enrolled in secondary school in 2012.

**Figure 10: While some regions have shown remarkable progress in reducing gender disparity in secondary education, wide disparities remain**  
Gender parity index, by region, 1990–2012



Source: UIS database.

Changes in the pattern of boys' enrolment in secondary education have varied since 1999. In a number of middle and high income countries with overall high levels of secondary enrolment, persistent gender gaps at the expense of boys had closed in all Western European countries except Finland and Luxembourg by 2012. In Mongolia and South Africa, strong progress in reducing disparities saw both countries near to achieving gender parity in 2012. However, in some richer countries such as Argentina, Suriname and several Caribbean countries, gender gaps in secondary enrolment have widened. In a few poorer countries, including Bangladesh, Myanmar and Rwanda, they have emerged. In Lesotho, only 71 boys were enrolled for every 100 girls in 2012, a ratio unchanged since 1999.

### *Poor primary attainment and dropout from secondary education reinforce disparity*

Gender disparity in the numbers of children entering and completing lower secondary schooling has narrowed, although many countries are far from achieving parity. Analysis of household survey data from 78 countries for the 2015 GMR shows the lower secondary attainment rate increased from 25% in 1999 to 31% in 2008 in low income countries, from 52% to 64% in lower middle income countries and from 81% to 85% in upper middle income countries. It also shows that, on average, the number of girls attaining lower secondary increased from 81 per 100 boys in 2000 to 93 in 2010.

Most disparity in lower secondary attainment in these countries is accounted for by initial disparities at the primary level. Although boys and girls who completed primary school were on average equally likely to transition to lower secondary, fewer girls had enrolled in primary school in the first place. Thus fewer girls are attaining primary education and greater numbers of girls are being left behind.

Some poorer countries, such as Malawi and Cambodia, have seen considerable progress towards parity in lower secondary attainment, driven almost exclusively by progress in reducing disparity in primary attainment. In Cambodia, where only 66 girls attained a primary education for every 100 boys in 2000, parity in primary education was achieved within 10 years. This contributed to progress towards parity in lower secondary with a GPI of 0.90 in 2010. Malawi moved towards parity in primary attainment but despite this progress, 90 girls for every 100 boys attained primary education, 82 for every 100 made the transition to secondary, and only 75 survived to the end of lower secondary. In both Malawi and Cambodia, disparities increase at entry to and completion of lower secondary, indicating significant bottlenecks for girls (Figure 12).

In richer countries, such as Brazil and Tunisia, increasing levels of dropout among boys has led to fewer boys than girls completing lower secondary education. In Brazil, the GPI for lower secondary attainment rose from 1.12 in 2000 to 1.18 in 2010. In Tunisia, parity in primary attainment and entry to lower secondary was achieved by 2010, where previously disparity existed at the expense of girls. However, fewer boys than girls now last to the final grade of lower secondary. In Viet Nam, a gender gap has largely disappeared.

At upper secondary, boys are more likely than girls to drop out. For the 78 countries with data for 2010, only 95 boys for every 100 girls completed upper secondary, indicating little change since 2000. In countries where boys were already disadvantaged in lower secondary attainment, such as Brazil, this further widened gender disparity.

Completion rates for adolescent boys have been a growing concern in OECD countries where, in 2011, girls' graduation rates from upper secondary exceeded those of boys in all countries except Germany. On average, 73% of girls compared with 63% of boys completed upper secondary education on time. Gaps were widest in Iceland and Portugal, where completion rates of girls exceeded those of boys by 20% or more (OECD, 2012b).

### **More women than men in tertiary education except in two regions**

More women than men were enrolled worldwide in higher education institutions in 2012. The average GPI was 1.04, a change from 1999 when men and women were at par in tertiary enrolment. However, there are regional variations. In 2012, on average, as few as 8 women for every 10 men were enrolled in tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa, while fewer than 9 men for every 10 women are studying at this level in North America and Western Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean (Figure 13).

Only 4% of countries achieved parity in tertiary education in 2012, a percentage that has remained unchanged since 1999. In addition, the percentage of countries where there are fewer than 90 males enrolled for every 100 females has been increasing constantly from 53% in 1999 to 60% in 2005 and 64% in 2012 (Figure 1).

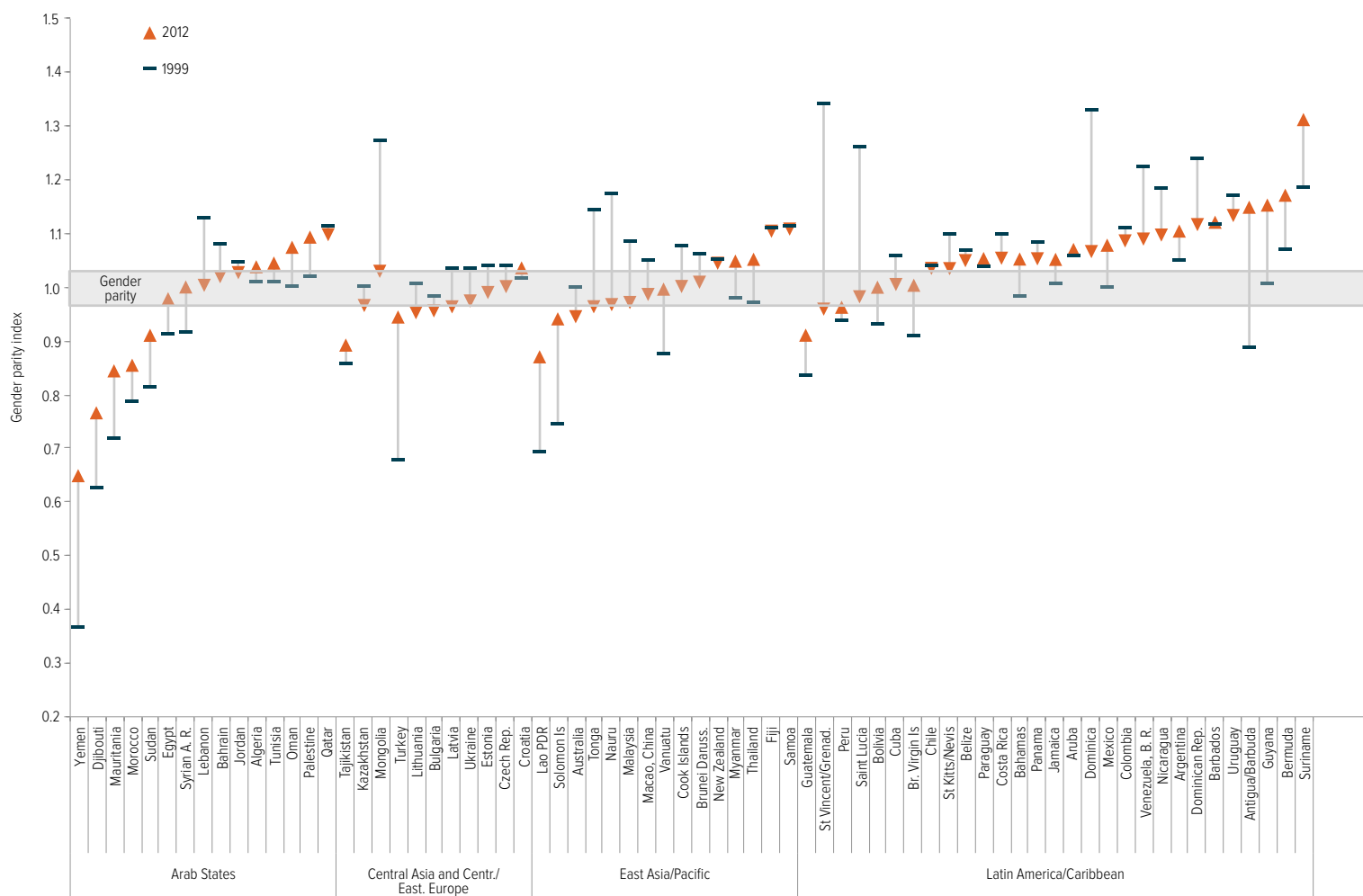
### **Gender parity in learning outcomes yet to be achieved**

Achieving gender equality in education requires not only that girls and boys have an equal chance to access and participate in education, but also that their educational achievements are not adversely affected by their gender. More research is needed to understand factors affecting gender gaps in performance across subjects and at key stages in the education cycle.

**Most disparity in lower secondary attainment is accounted for by initial disparities at the primary level**

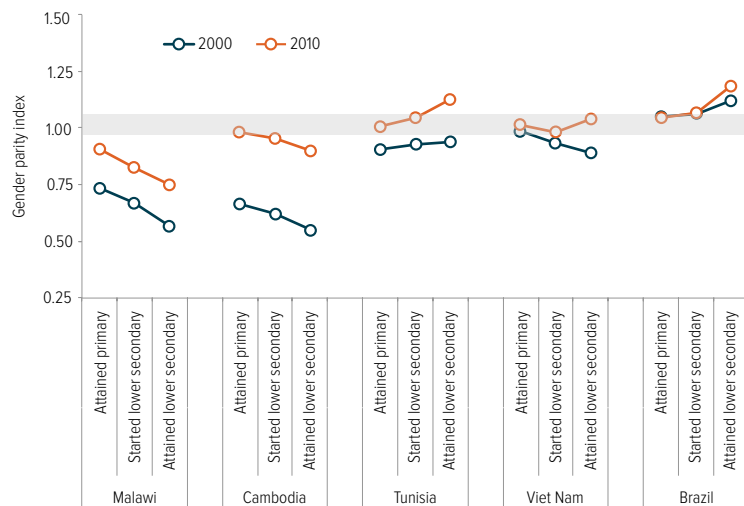


**Figure 11: Gender gaps in secondary education have improved, but remain wide in some regions**  
 Gender parity index of the secondary gross enrolment ratio, by region, 1999 and 2012

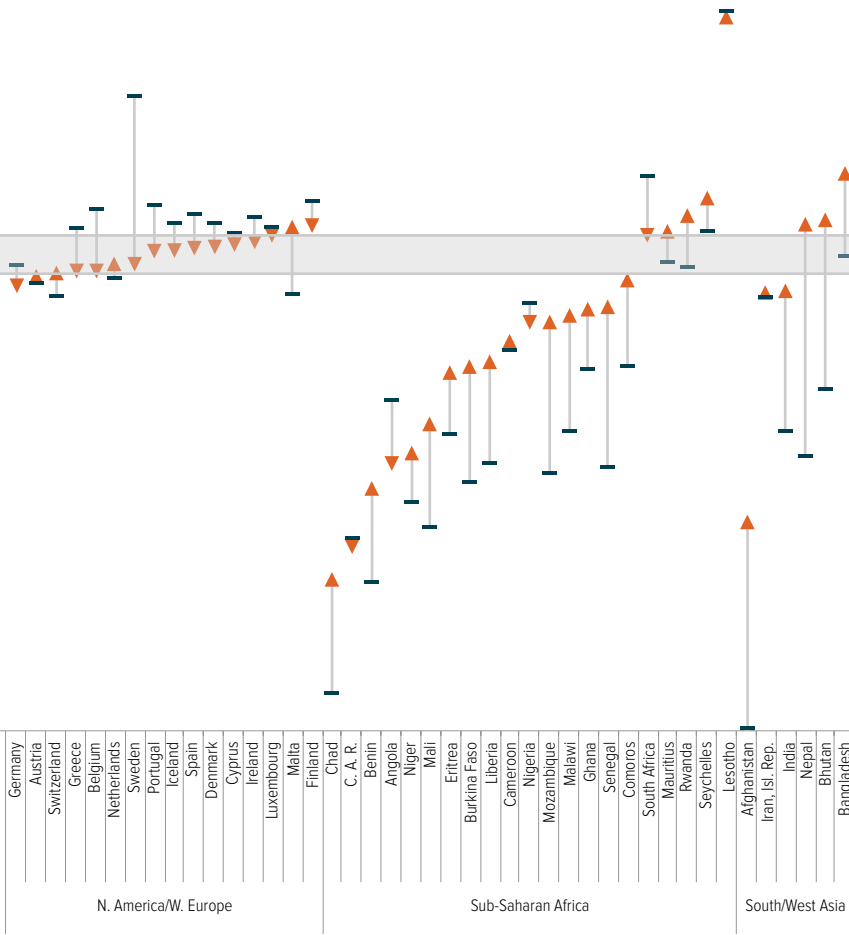


Source: UIS database.

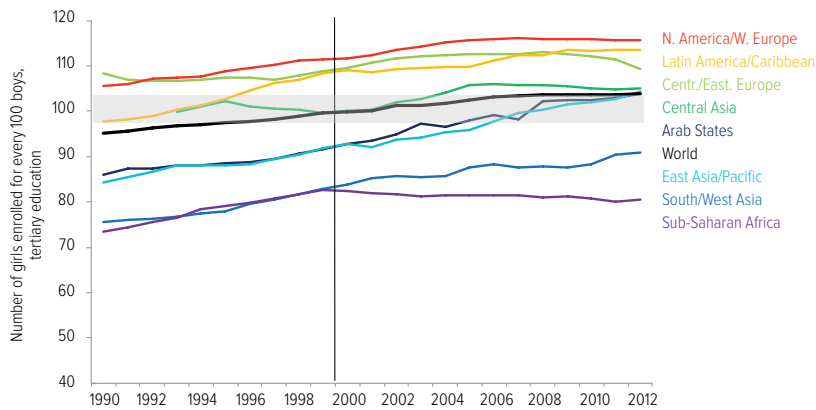
**Figure 12: Gender disparities are perpetuated and widen throughout lower secondary**  
 Gender parity index of the primary attainment, transition to lower secondary and lower secondary attainment rates, selected countries, circa 2000 and 2010



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team calculations (2014) using household survey data.



**Figure 13: Large disparities remain in tertiary education**  
Gender parity index, tertiary education, by region, 1990–2012



Source: UIS database.

### *Learning assessments highlight gender differences in subject performance*

Regional and international learning assessments at primary and secondary level, including PISA, TIMSS, Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and SERCE, indicate variation in subject-specific achievement by gender. Analysis presented in the 2012 GMR, using data from various international and regional learning assessments surveys over the period 2005–2009, shows that girls overall performed better in reading, and boys performed better in mathematics in most countries, although the gap was narrowing. Performance in science was more varied, with no significant difference between boys and girls in many countries (UNESCO, 2012b).

PISA surveys, which assess the performance of 15-year-old students, show a widening gap in reading, with girls performing significantly better than boys in all locations surveyed (**Figure 14a**). A comparison of the subset of locations that took part in both the 2000 and 2012 surveys shows that the gender gap in reading widened in 11 countries, including Bulgaria, France, Iceland, Israel, Portugal and Romania, largely due to a decline in boys' performance. Low-performing boys face a particularly large disadvantage, as they are heavily over-represented among those who failed to show basic levels of reading literacy (OECD, 2014a).

The PISA results also show gender differences in mathematics, with boys performing better than girls in the majority of locations, although the gap has narrowed in several countries, including Montenegro, Norway and Slovakia (**Figure 14b**). In the 2012 PISA survey, girls in OECD countries underperformed boys by an average of 11 points. The data show that girls were under-represented among the highest achievers in most locations, a possible challenge to achieving equal participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics occupations in the future (OECD, 2014a).

### *In poorer settings, girls continue to face disadvantage in achievement*

In some poorer countries where girls have historically faced barriers to equal participation in education, they continue to face disadvantage in obtaining important foundation skills. Further

analysis shows that gender disparities in learning can be underestimated when assessments only include children attending school. Analysis of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2014 Survey in rural Pakistan assesses literacy and numeracy skills of both those children aged 5–16 years who attend school and those who do not. It shows that gender gaps are small among school-going grade 5 students, sometimes favouring girls. However, girls' relative performance is worse among all the assessed children aged 10–12 years, whether they are in school or not, particularly in poorer, less developed provinces and territories. In Balochistan, the percentage of girls in grade 5 who can read a passage in Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto was, on average, almost the same as for boys in grade 5, but among all children aged 10–12 years, there was a gap of 5 percentage points between girls and boys. In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the gap was 14 percentage points at the expense of girls (**Figure 15**).

### *Girls may face disadvantage in national examinations*

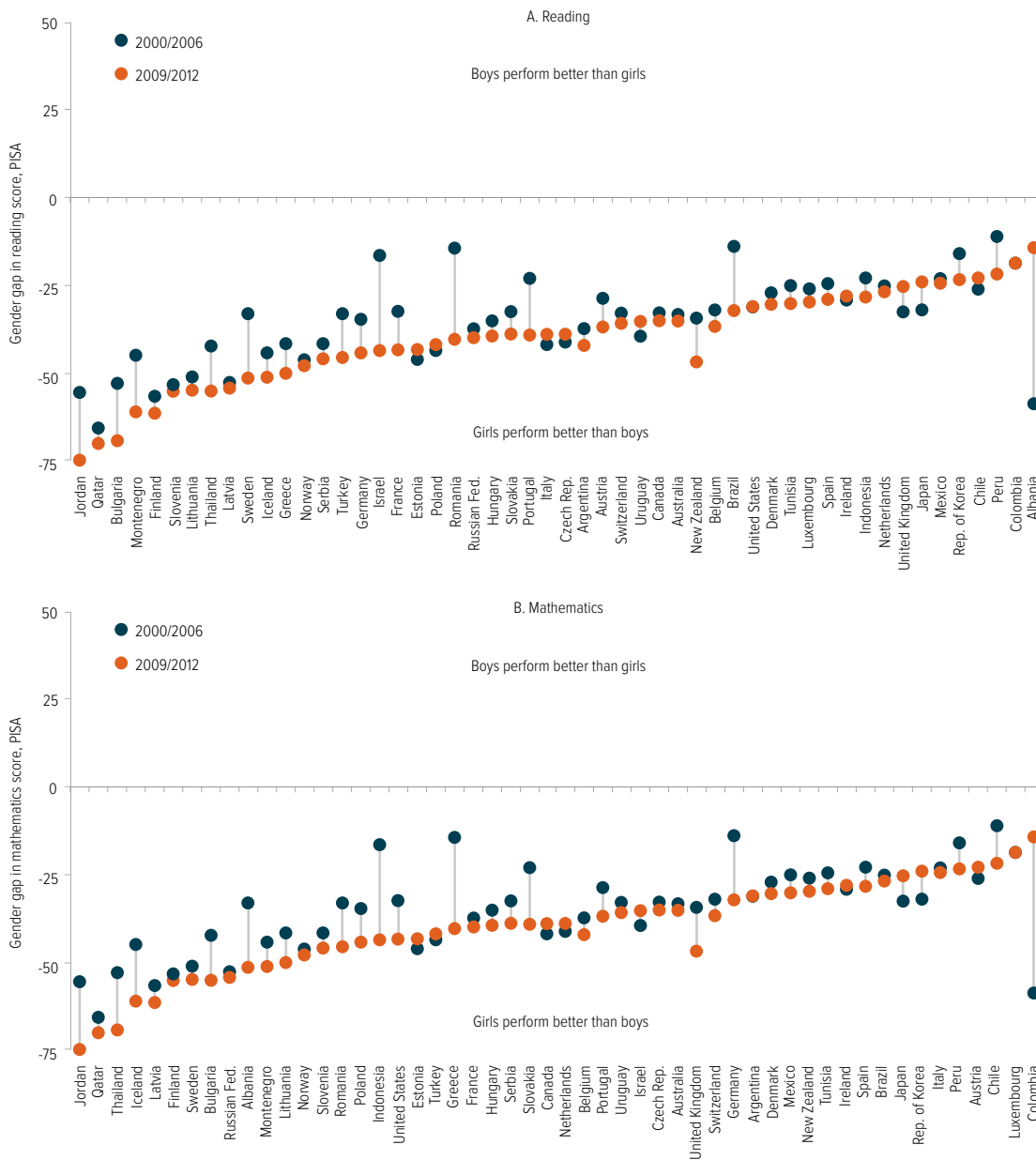
Limited research suggests that in some poorer countries, girls face greater disadvantage in national examinations than boys, raising obstacles to their continued schooling. Even though girls in grade 6 scored higher than boys in the 2007 SACMEQ III learning assessment, girls' pass rates in national examinations in Kenya and Zimbabwe were significantly lower than boys (Mukhopondhyay et al., 2012). National examinations at the end of the primary cycle can form part of high-stakes selection processes in which failure to pass or perform well prevents transition to lower secondary. In Kenya and Malawi, performance in exams for primary school leaving certificates determines entry into state-funded secondary schools (Mukhopondhyay et al., 2012).

### **Gender parity in literacy is poor**

Overall, nearly 781 million adults lacked basic literacy skills in 2012, of which nearly 64% were women, a percentage unchanged since 2000. Globally, the average adult illiteracy rate fell from 24% to 18% between 1990 and 2000. Yet the pace of decline has slowed, and estimates suggest the rate has only fallen slightly to 16% in 2012 and is projected to be 14% by 2015. This represents a fall of only 23% in the number of illiterate adults

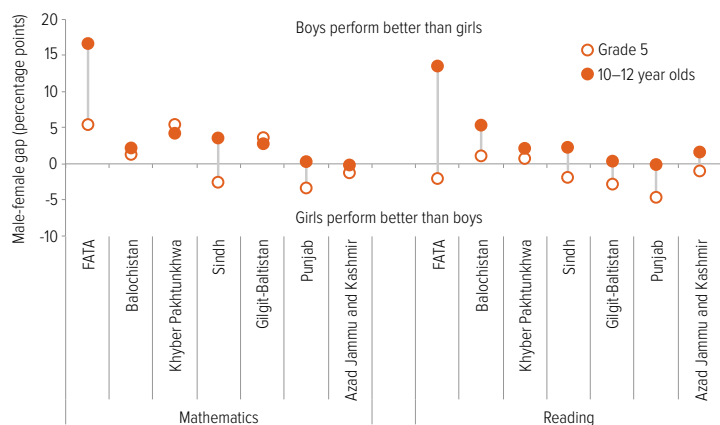
**Figure 14: Although learning gender gaps are narrowing, boys outperform girls in mathematics, while girls increasingly outperform boys in reading, by a wider margin**

Gender gap in scores, reading and mathematics, PISA, 2000/2006 and 2009/2012



Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report team calculations (2014) using PISA data.

**Figure 15: Girls in Pakistan generally perform worse than boys in mathematics and reading**  
 Gender gap in two learning indicators, grade 5 students and children aged 10–12 years, rural Pakistan, 2014



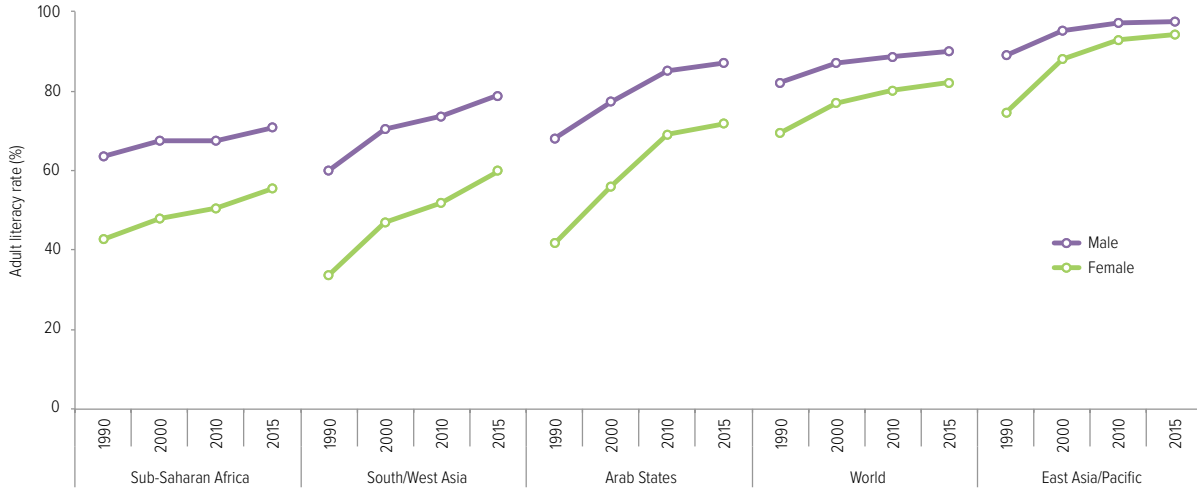
Notes: The indicator in mathematics is the percentage of children who could do a division; the indicator in reading is the percentage of children who could read a story in Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto. Both indicators have been calculated over two groups: (i) all students who were in grade 5 and (ii) all children aged 10–12 years.  
 Source: ASER Pakistan team calculations based on the 2014 ASER survey.

Youth literacy rates are higher than literacy rates among adults overall, which reflects recent gains in access to primary and secondary level education. The most up-to-date global youth literacy rate, estimated in 2012, stands at 89%. By 2015 in South and West Asia, the female youth literacy rate is projected to be 85% compared with 90% for males – a dramatic increase from 66% in 2000 and just 5 percentage points short of the global average. Strong progress and a reduction in the gender gap have also been seen in the Arab States, with the female youth literacy rate projected to reach 89% by 2015 compared with 94% for males. Progress has been much slower in sub-Saharan Africa, where only 69% of female youth are expected to be literate in 2015, an increase of just 11 percentage points since 1990 (Figure 17).

worldwide since 2000, which is well short of the 50% target set at Dakar, and with no change in the difference between males and females.

Progress has been uneven in the regions where women were lagging furthest behind. There was fast progress in the Arab States during the 2000s, as the female adult literacy rate increased from 56% in 2000 to 69% in 2010, while the gender parity index for literate women relative to men increased from 0.73 to 0.81. However, this progress is expected to have slowed down by 2015 (Figure 16). Sub-Saharan Africa was the region with the second lowest female literacy rate in 2010 – just 50% – and projected to reach 55% in 2015, when it was also projected that far fewer women would be literate: 78 women for every 100 men. South and West Asia remains the region with the biggest gender disparity, even though its female adult literacy rate is projected to have exceeded that of sub-Saharan Africa. The region’s adult female literacy rate increased from 47% in 2000 to 52% in 2010 and is expected to reach 60% by 2015, when the gender parity index is projected to be 0.76.

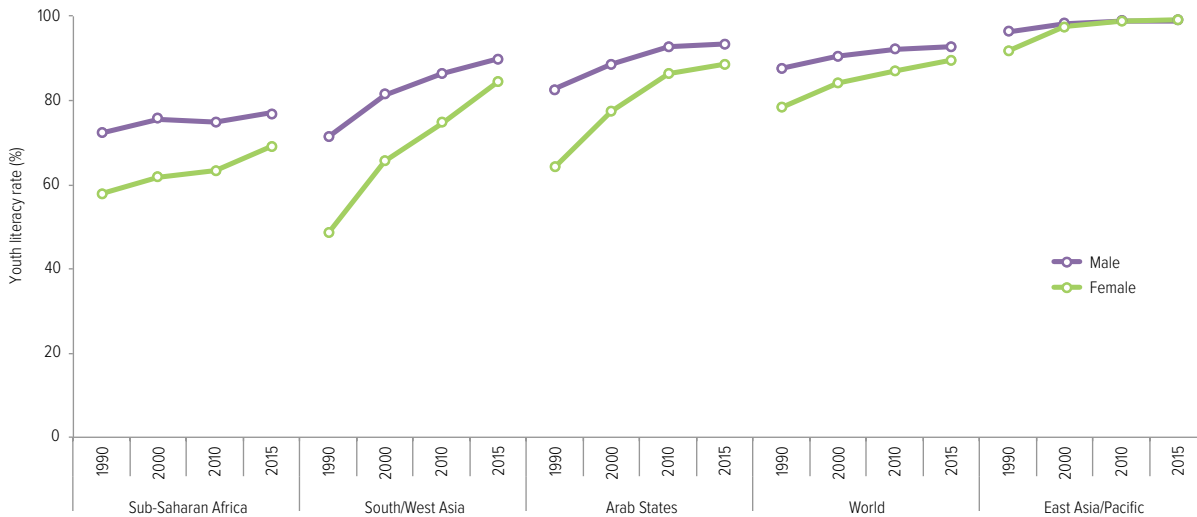
**Figure 16: Women’s literacy continues to lag behind that of men**  
 Adult literacy rate by gender, world and selected regions, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2015 (projection)



Note: Literacy data are not collected annually. Regional and global data therefore refer to census decades. 1990 refers to data from the 1985–1994 census decade; 2000 to 1995–2004, and 2010 to data from the period 2005–2012.

Source: UIS census.

**Figure 17: Only two-thirds of female youth in sub-Saharan Africa will be literate in 2015**  
 Youth literacy rate by gender, world and selected regions, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2015 (projection)



Note: Ibid. Figure 16.

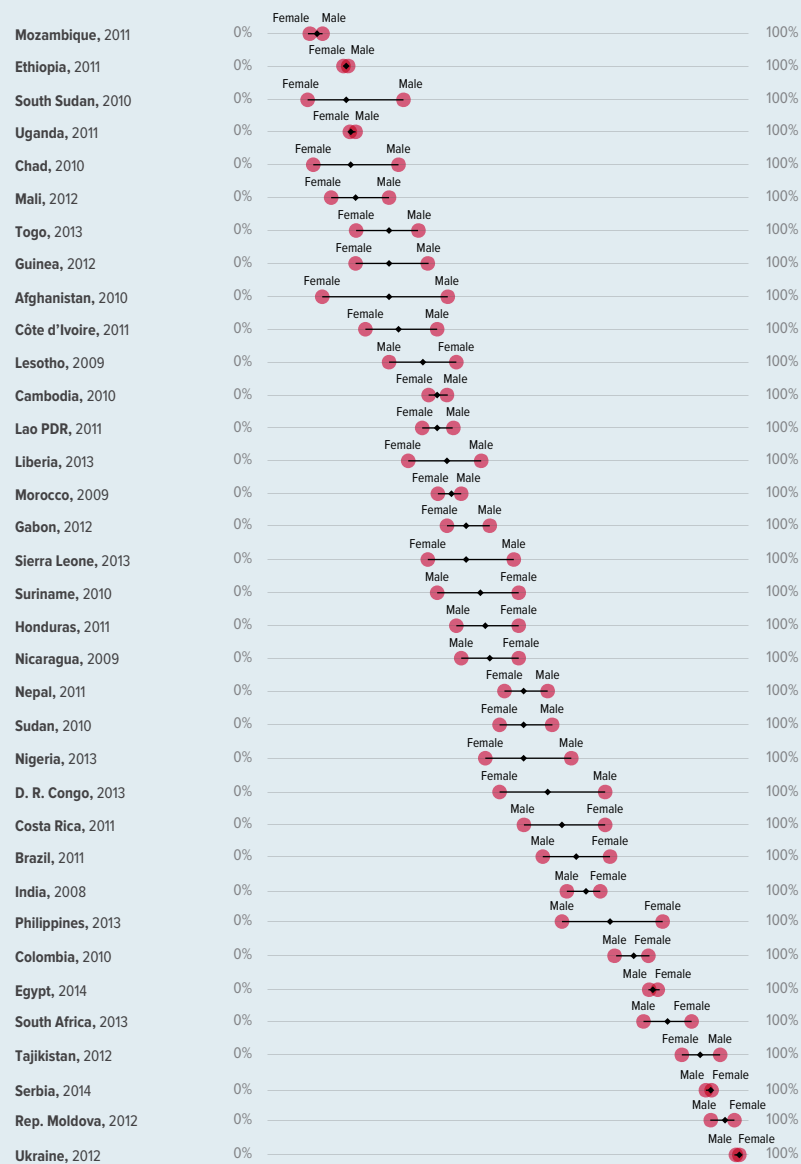
Source: UIS census.



The EFA Global Monitoring Report Team has continued to develop and update an interactive website that shows the scale of education inequality within countries. The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) brings together the latest data from Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and other national household surveys as well as school-based learning achievement surveys.

## Gender disparities continue to be high in several countries

Lower secondary school completion rate, by gender (%)



The figure shows the percentage of young men and women who have completed lower secondary education in 35 selected low and middle income countries. It shows that disparities by gender exist in many countries – but they are not inevitable. By clicking on the dots on the website, the percentages appear. For example, Chad and Uganda have the same rate of lower secondary school completion (17%). However, while there is no gender disparity in Uganda, the male completion rate is three times as high as the female completion rate in Chad. Gender disparities can also move in the opposite direction: in Mali there is a 12 percentage point gap at the expense of young women – but in Nicaragua the same gap is at the expense of young men.

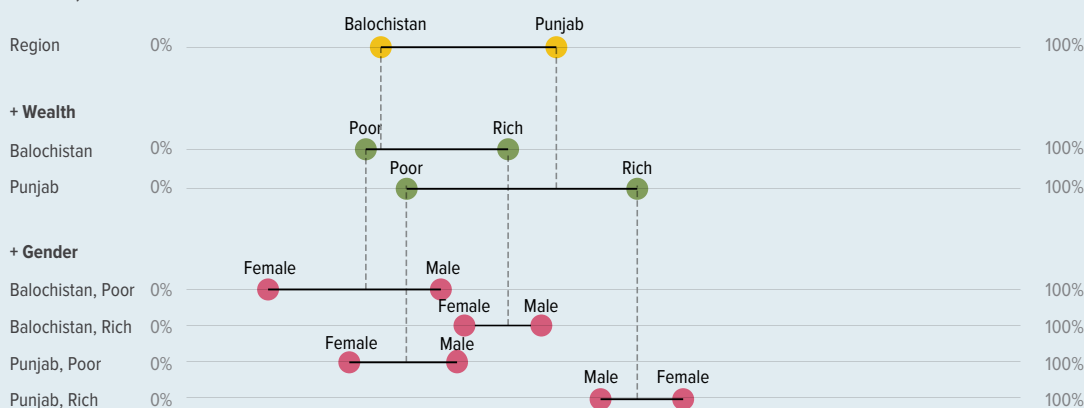
# Database on Education (WIDE)

Visitors to the website can compare groups within countries according to various education indicators, and according to the factors that are associated with inequality, including wealth, gender, ethnicity, religion and location. Users can create maps, charts and tables from the data, and download, print or share them online. The site was designed by InteractiveThings.

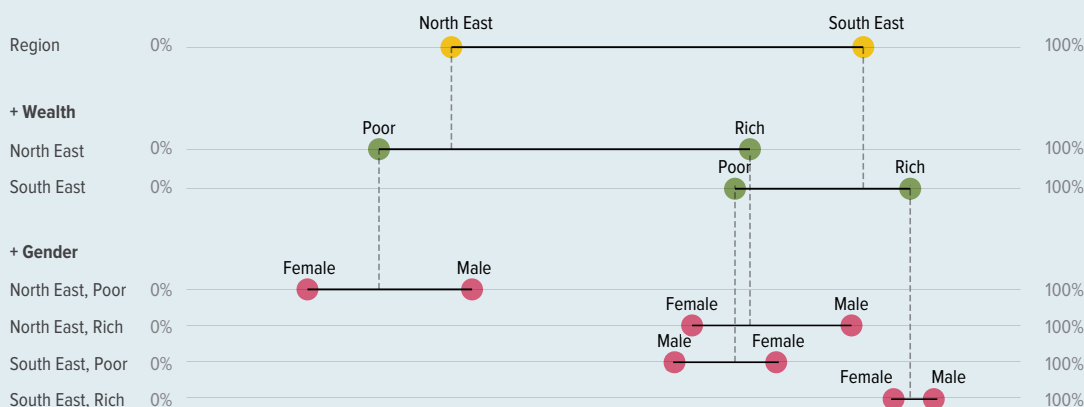
## Wealth disparities are further aggravated by gender disparities

Lower secondary school completion rate, by region, wealth and gender (%)

### Pakistan, 2012



### Nigeria, 2013



On the WIDE site, the user can look in detail at intersecting patterns of disadvantage within countries. In Pakistan, in the province of Balochistan, only 21% of the poor complete lower secondary school. However, gender disparities within this group are large: only 10% of poor young women complete lower secondary school compared with 31% of poor young men. In Punjab, the gender gap is in the opposite direction among the rich. In Nigeria, there is very large inequality between the conflict-ridden North East region and the prosperous South East region. In the North East, there are wide gender disparities among both the poor and the rich at the expense of young women; in the South East, gender disparities are lower – but among the poor they are at the expense of young men.



# Challenges and policy solutions to achieve gender equality post-2015

## Persistent barriers to achieving equality in education

Multiple and often intersecting barriers still prevent millions of children, young people and adults from accessing and attaining good quality, gender-equitable education. This section examines such constraints.

Social institutions – formal and informal laws, and social and cultural norms and practices – can help explain why gender parity and equality in education have not been achieved in some countries. Analysis based on the OECD's 2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) found that countries with higher levels of discrimination against women generally performed worse on development indicators, including education (OECD, 2012a).

Structural barriers and entrenched discriminatory social norms reduce demand for girls' education, restrict access and undermine the benefits of girls' and young women's improved access to education. These norms are reflected in practices such as early marriage, gender-based violence, traditional seclusion practices that restrict travel to schools, the favouring of boys in families' education investment and the gendered division of household labour. Once in schools or non-formal programmes, discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes – conveyed in teaching and learning resources and practices – can damage learners' self-esteem and limit their expectations and achievements, as well as reinforce inequalities in wider society. Social and gender norms also affect boys' education. Within certain communities and groups, continued education for boys and young men is undervalued, leading to their disengagement and dropout from school (Box 4). Poverty and the need or desire to work also underpin constraints on boys' completion of schooling.

## Early marriage and adolescent pregnancy limit girls' education

Early entry into marriage and pregnancy limits adolescent girls' access to and continuation in education. School attendance is often incompatible with the responsibilities and expectations of marriage and motherhood (Mensch et al., 2005; Omoeva et al., 2014). This is not a one-way relationship, however, for a lack of schooling opportunities and/or extenuating factors that result in some girls dropping out of school can also lead to early marriage (Lloyd and Mensch, 2006). As the 2013/14 GMR notes, a strong body of evidence indicates girls' participation in formal education is itself an important factor in delaying marriage and child-bearing (UNESCO, 2014c). Decisions about education, age of marriage and pregnancy can be a result of combined underlying factors, including poverty, gender norms, household composition, and the accessibility and quality of education provision (Psaki, 2015a). Conflict and humanitarian crises also exacerbate girls' vulnerability to early marriage (Lemmon, 2014).

### *Legislation has been strengthened but is not sufficient to eliminate child marriage*

International human rights law forbids child marriage. In the Programme of Action adopted at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, signatories agreed to enforce laws against child marriage. And regional treaties, including the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the African Protocol on the Rights of Women (2004), commit governments to prevent child marriage. Of 55 developing countries with data, the legal age of marriage increased between 1990 and 2000 for women in 23 countries, and for men in 20. As of 2010, 158 countries had laws that set 18 as the legal age of marriage for girls without parental consent (Loaiza and Wong, 2012).

**Entrenched discriminatory social norms undermine the benefits of girls' and young women's improved access to education**

#### Box 4: Boys' disengagement from schooling has broad repercussions for gender relations

The needs of millions of boys around the world are not adequately met by formal education systems; this is sometimes overlooked in light of girls' continued overall disproportionate disadvantages. But while girls remain less likely than boys to enter school in the first place, in many countries, boys are at higher risk of failing to progress and complete their secondary education.

It is important to note that an increased risk of boys leaving school early does not transpose to an advantage for girls' education, nor is it necessarily a result of improved educational opportunities for girls. Furthermore, it occurs in patriarchal societies where men continue to overwhelmingly occupy positions of power, including as head teachers, on school boards and in ministries of education.

Many boys leave school early due to poverty and the obligation or desire to work. This is often compounded by late entry, poor performance and a subsequent lack of interest in school – and additional factors such as ethnicity and other forms of marginalization.

A lack of motivation among boys to do well in school is not simply a matter of individual choice; boys' poor performance and

dropout can be linked to social norms and gender stereotypes that put pressure on boys to disengage from schooling. Research from OECD countries links boys' low achievement, particularly in literacy, to an ideology of masculinity that undervalues academic achievement and studying hard at school.

In addition to human rights implications for boys who, for whatever reason, suffer from inadequate access to education, disengagement and high dropout rates among boys have broader repercussions for gender equality. Results from the ongoing International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), conducted in 2009 and 2010 in Brazil, Chile, Croatia, India, Mexico and Rwanda, found that men with less education expressed discriminatory gender views, were more likely to be violent in the home, and were less likely to be involved in child care if they were fathers. Men with secondary education demonstrated more gender-equitable attitudes and practices.

*Sources:* Barker et al.(2011); Epstein and Morrell (2012); Hunt (2008); Jha et al. (2012); Kimmel (2010); OECD (2015).

Progress towards globally eliminating child marriage has been slow. In 2012, an average of 17% of women worldwide married between 15 and 19 years of age (OECD, 2012b). Household survey data for 2000–2011 indicated that in 41 countries, 30% or more of women aged 20–24 were married or in union by the age of 18 (Loaiza and Wong, 2012).

Recent analysis of household survey data found if existing laws on age of marriage were enforced, this would result in an overall 15% increase in years of schooling in South and West Asia and a 39% increase in sub-Saharan Africa (Delprato et al., 2015). However, there is currently insufficient evidence to show that legislation in itself is an effective deterrent to early marriage (Psaki, 2015a). In Bangladesh, while legislation limits the age of marriage to 18, the law allows for exceptions, and the prevalence of child marriage, an estimated 66%, is among the highest in the world (Brown, 2012; Loaiza and Wong, 2012). An evaluation of the 1974 National Marriage Act in Indonesia found no significant departure from the trend in child marriage following the act's introduction (Lee-Rife et al., 2012). In Yemen, a 2009 law set the minimum age for marriage at 17, but conservative parliament members and clerics objected and the law was not implemented (AlAmodi, 2013).

Incidences of child marriage have been reduced substantially in some countries including Bolivia, Ethiopia and Nepal. In Ethiopia, where education attainment levels also improved, it is estimated that the prevalence of early marriage fell by over 20% between 2005 and 2011 (Loaiza and Wong, 2012). This was achieved through a comprehensive framework of legislative change, advocacy and community mobilization campaigns.

#### *Adolescent mothers face challenges in continuing their education*

Adolescent pregnancy and early child-bearing are concerns for both developed and developing countries, but rates are higher in middle and low income countries. In 2010, 36.4 million women in developing countries aged 20–24 reported having given birth before age 18, and 2 million before age 15 (UNFPA, 2013a).

An estimated 90% of adolescent pregnancies in the developing world are to girls who are married (UNFPA, 2013a). Married girls face higher exposure to sex and lower probability of using contraception than their unmarried peers, along with pressure to conceive quickly after marriage (Presler-Marshall and Jones, 2012). Reducing adolescent pregnancy

**Pregnancy is a key driver of dropout and exclusion among female secondary school students in sub-Saharan African countries**

can thus be addressed through effective policies and programmes to delay marriage.

Globally, the risk of early and unintended pregnancy outside marriage has increased (Hindin and Fatusi, 2009; Mensch et al., 2006; Presler-Marshall and Jones, 2012). While the prevalence of child marriage declined in sub-Saharan Africa between 1994 and 2004, the prevalence of premarital sex before age 18 increased in 19 out of 27 countries analysed (Mensch et al., 2006).

Pregnancy has been identified as a key driver of dropout and exclusion among female secondary school students in sub-Saharan African countries (Makamare, 2014), including Cameroon (Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004) and South Africa (Geisler et al., 2009). In Latin American countries, the high rate of pregnancy among adolescents is a serious concern for public policy. In Chile, being a mother reduces the likelihood of secondary education completion by 24% to 37% (Kruger et al., 2009).

Since the late 1990s, several sub-Saharan African countries have introduced policies supporting the readmission of girls following the birth of a child (Makamare, 2014). But even where policies exist, uptake is often limited, with education providers and communities unaware of re-entry policies or unsupportive of girls' return. In schools, stigma and discrimination against pregnant girls and adolescent mothers are common (UNESCO, 2014b). In South Africa, legislation forbids schools from excluding pregnant girls, but only about one in three return after childbirth. Those who do return often face negative attitudes and practices from teachers and peers (Bhana et al., 2010).

### **Children's work affects their schooling**

Child labour is a deeply entrenched obstacle to Education for All and the gendered dimensions of children's work are important to note. In most of the world, paid work by children and adolescents is associated with household poverty, and incidences of child labour are higher in poorer countries. Having to work can prevent children accessing school in the first place. While combining work and school is an improvement over not going to school at all, it still has impacts on children's education. The more hours children work per week, the less likely they are to attend school, and those who do attend are more likely to lag in the levels of schooling they attain (Understanding Children's Work, 2015). Average grade-for-age data show that children

aged 13 who work and attend school trail their non-working peers in terms of grade progression in almost all countries, likely due to repetition arising from poorer performance, later entry and greater absenteeism. Unpaid work is also a serious obstacle that affects the education of millions of children.

In many countries, girls spend more time on domestic work than boys (Lyon et al., 2013), while boys are more likely than girls to be engaged in the paid labour force. Girls are also more likely to combine schooling and household chores (Lyon et al., 2013). In countries with high levels of child labour, like India, girls are more likely than boys to combine employment with household chores, leaving them doubly disadvantaged and at greater risk of repeating grades or dropping out of school. And in many countries, girls who combine household chores and employment seem at particular risk of early marriage (Lyon et al., 2013).

Domestic labour interferes with schooling, and girls typically spend more time performing chores than boys (UNICEF, 2013a). Analysis of household survey data from 13 countries in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa shows that girls were more likely than their male peers to be assigned household chores across all countries (Understanding Children's Work, 2015). In resource-poor countries such as Ghana, Kenya and Malawi, hours spent in fuel collection and water haulage are negatively associated with the likelihood of girls' attending school (Dreibelbis et al., 2013; Nankhuni and Findeis, 2004; Nauges and Strand, 2013). A reduction in time by one hour for collecting water increased girls' enrolment rates by about 8-9% in Yemen and 18-19% in Pakistan (Koolwal and van de Walle, 2010). In the absence of affordable and safe child care, older children's attendance at school – particularly girls' – carries a high opportunity cost for poorer families (Keilland, 2015). In countries severely affected by HIV/AIDS, women and girls are likely to be the main caregivers for chronically ill relatives, impeding their participation in school or education programmes (Evans and Becker, 2009). But in general, child domestic work is socially tolerated, nearly invisible and unlikely to be reached by child labour laws, and receives little attention from policy-makers (ILO, 2013a; UNESCO, 2008).

The need for or desire of many boys to engage in paid work leads to their early exit from education (Barker et al., 2012). In southern African countries, including Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia, boys are taken out of school to herd cattle (Jha and Kelleher,

2006). In Mongolia, boys in herder families have historically experienced high rates of dropout and continue to be the most educationally disadvantaged rural group (Steiner-Khamsi and Gerelmaa, 2008). In Brazil and Jamaica, boys in low income urban settings often drop out of school because they see education as offering no guarantee of future employment, and manual labour, construction or other semi-skilled jobs do not require completion of secondary education (Barker et al., 2012). Poorer families may also respond to economic shocks by withdrawing boys from school to work. In Brazil, the likelihood of boys from poor households dropping out of school following a sudden fall in family income was 46% higher than for boys from non-poor households (Duryea et al., 2007).

### **School-related gender-based violence must be tackled**

The Dakar Framework for Action called on governments to make comprehensive efforts to eliminate gender bias and discrimination. It required stakeholders to ensure students' personal security, and noted that girls are especially vulnerable to abuse and harassment, both at school and on the journey there and back.

School-related gender-based violence is one of the worst manifestations of gender discrimination and seriously undermines attempts to achieve gender equality in education (Leach et al., 2014). School-related gender-based violence is defined as acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools and educational settings as a result of gender norms and stereotypes and unequal power dynamics (Greene et al., 2013). It includes explicit threats or acts of physical violence, bullying, verbal or sexual harassment, non-consensual touching, sexual coercion and assault, and rape (Leach et al., 2014). Corporal punishment and discipline in schools are often manifested in gendered and discriminatory ways. Other implicit acts stem from everyday school practices that reinforce stereotyping and gender inequality, and encourage violent or unsafe environments.

Both girls and boys can be victims or perpetrators of school-related gender-based violence, but to what extent and which forms differ. Distinctions are not clear-cut, but evidence suggests girls are at greater risk of sexual violence, harassment and exploitation, perpetrated to varying degrees by male students and teachers (Pinheiro, 2006; UNICEF,

2014), while boys are more likely to experience frequent and severe physical violence. Boys are also more commonly perpetrators of physical bullying, and girls more likely to use verbal or psychological forms of violence (Pinheiro, 2006). Yet girls also commit violent acts (Bhana, 2008) and boys also experience sexual abuse (Nandita et al., 2014). Homophobic bullying and harassment, and cyberbullying, are areas of concern (Fancy and Fraser, 2014; UNESCO, 2012a).

School-related gender-based violence has short- and long-term health and social consequences for both boys and girls. In addition to physical and psychological trauma, unsafe and violent school experiences can have a negative impact on boys' and girls' achievement and attainment in education (Mullis et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2008). Analysis of TIMSS 2011 data found that grade 8 students in many countries scored lower in mathematics if they had reported being bullied compared with those who had not. In Jordan, Oman, Palestine and Romania, grade 8 boys who were bullied were the least likely to reach at least a level 1 proficiency in mathematics; in Chile, Ghana and the Islamic Republic of Iran, girls subjected to bullying, on average, performed the poorest (UNESCO, 2015b). Qualitative studies have shown that gender-based violence contributes to girls' poor performance and dropout (Dunne et al., 2005b). Rape or forced or coerced sex can lead to early and unintended pregnancies and, as a consequence, an increased risk of girls' education being curtailed (Psaki, 2015b).

Since 2000, a growing body of research has emerged of widespread gender-based violence in school settings, much of it based in sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence indicates that sexual violence is entrenched in authoritarian and highly gendered school environments (Dunne et al., 2005a). Older male students take advantage of their position to abuse female students. In Cameroon, 30% of sexual violence experienced by girls going to school was committed by male students (Devers et al., 2012). Teachers also commit sexual abuse and exploitation, often with impunity. In Malawi, 20% of teachers surveyed reported being aware of colleagues forcing or coercing female students into sexual acts (Burton, 2005). In Sierra Leone, male teachers had perpetrated almost one-third of reported cases of girls being forced or coerced into sex in exchange for money, goods or grades (ACPF, 2010).

**School-related gender-based violence seriously undermines attempts to achieve gender equality in education**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, studies have largely focused on physical violence, including the spillover effects of gang violence in schools (Jones et al., 2008). In Brazil, boys and young men in poorer neighbourhoods are more at risk, as both perpetrators and victims of violence (Parkes, 2015). Broad social tolerance for family and community violence, especially against women, provides the social context for sexual violence against girls by male students and teachers (Leach et al., 2014). A study concerning female adolescent victims of sexual violence in Ecuador found that 37% of perpetrators were teachers (Jones et al., 2008).

Social taboos make researching school-related gender-based violence difficult in Asian countries and incidences of abuse often go unreported. Yet small-scale studies in South and West Asia report sexualized behaviour by teachers towards girls (Pawlak, 2014). Findings from a recent study of five countries in Asia highlight incidences of sexual violence against both boys and girls. In Viet Nam, 21% of girls and 17% of boys aged 12–17 reported experiencing sexual violence at school (Nandita et al., 2014).

Physical violence, including corporal punishment, also has gendered dimensions (Parkes, 2015). In some countries, boys are perceived as tough and undisciplined, and consequently more likely to be subject to physical punishment, while girls are likely to be victims of psychological and verbal forms of punishment (Pinheiro, 2006). A recent study from Andhra Pradesh state in India, where corporal punishment is banned, found 41% of boys and 27% of girls aged 14 and 15 had been physically punished in the previous week (Morrow and Singh, 2014). In Indonesia, 27% of boys aged 12–17 reported having been physically punished by a teacher in the previous six months, compared with 9% of girls (Nandita et al., 2014).

Children in conflict-affected countries are at particular risk from gender-based violence. Moreover, the direct and indirect effects of widespread sexual violence can continue long after conflicts end (**Box 5**). Children's vulnerability to school-related gender-based violence also increases if they live with a disability, express a sexual orientation different from the mainstream, or are part of an already disadvantaged group. In Thailand, 56% of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students had reported being bullied in the past month (UNESCO, 2014d). Poverty, gender

### Box 5: Conflict leaves a legacy of gender-based violence in Liberia

The 14-year-long civil war in Liberia has left a legacy of high levels of violent crime and gender-based violence. A 2012 study highlights how school-related gender-based violence affects boys and girls. Over 20% of students reported being abused by teachers or school staff, and 18% of girls and 13% of boys reported being asked by teachers for sex in return for receiving a higher grade. Boys' and girls' views on gender-based violence reflect entrenched societal attitudes, with almost 50% of boys and 30% of girls agreeing that sexual abuse and violence were a normal part of relationships. A culture of impunity exists in Liberia: only around a third of students who stated they were victims of gender-based violence also reported the incident.

Sources: IBIS et al. (2014); Postmus et al. (2014).

inequalities and disability interact to place girls at particular risk. One survey of 3,706 primary schoolchildren aged 11–14 in Uganda found that 24% of disabled girls reported experiencing sexual violence at school compared with 12% of non-disabled girls (Devries et al., 2014).

School-related gender-based violence is not confined to poorer countries. An early survey of over 2,000 secondary students across the United States showed over 80% had experienced sexual harassment at school (Harris Interactive, 2001). A recent study in the Netherlands found 27% of students had been sexually harassed by school personnel (Mncube and Harber, 2013). In countries such as Japan and New Zealand, access to online technology is driving new forms of gender-based violence, including cyberbullying (Pawlak, 2014).

## Achieving gender parity and equality in education: Key strategies and policies

At Dakar in 2000, the need to develop a multifaceted and integrated approach to achieve the goals of EFA was emphasized, and key strategies were laid out in the Dakar Framework (**Box 6**). Since 2000, there has been increased global, regional and national engagement with gender issues in education, including legislative and policy reform, gender mainstreaming, and increased civil society and community mobilization and support.

**Children in conflict-affected countries are at particular risk from gender-based violence**

Many countries' policies have paid particular attention to girls' education. In UNESCO's recent overview of measures supporting the right to education, 40 of the 59 reporting member states refer explicitly to guaranteeing girls' and women's right to education or to forbidding gender-based discrimination in national constitutions, legislation or specific policies (UNESCO and UN Women, 2014).

Progress towards greater gender equality in education has been supported by policy commitments that aim to tackle the barriers that prevent girls and boys accessing and attaining good quality education. This section looks at efforts to achieve gender equality in education made since Dakar by various stakeholders at the international, national and local levels.

### International coordination and campaigns have pushed for gender equality

At the global level, the Dakar Framework called for coordinating bodies, initiatives and campaigns to sustain political commitment to EFA; promote the exchange of ideas, evidence and expertise; influence and strengthen national policy and practice; mobilize financial resources; and provide independent monitoring and reporting of progress (see the 2015 GMR). This report highlights many examples of interaction between global interventions and national processes which indicate that actions by EFA partners at the global level have helped keep gender concerns high enough on the EFA agenda to contribute to progress towards gender equality in education.

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), a multistakeholder partnership established at Dakar in 2000, has been the most visible global initiative associated with gender equality and EFA. Its activities have included: advocacy to raise awareness of the importance of girls' education and to influence policies and education sector plans; identification and dissemination of good practices; and institutional development of the partnership approach at the global, regional and country levels. A 2011 evaluation of UNGEI acknowledged its significant contribution to policy, dialogue and advocacy at the global level and its engagement with national partnerships at the country level (UNGEI, 2012). UNGEI has developed strong links with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE, previously the Fast Track Initiative) in order to translate globally agreed priorities into country-

### Box 6: Dakar strategies to achieve gender equality in education

As part of the push to implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education that recognize the need for change in attitudes, values and practices, the Dakar Framework for Action called for the following:

- Achieving EFA demands that high-level commitment and priority be given to gender equality. Schools, other learning environments and education systems usually mirror the larger society. Efforts in support of gender equality must include specific actions to address discrimination resulting from social attitudes and practices, economic status and culture.
- Throughout the education system, there must be a commitment to the development of attitudes and behaviours that incorporate gender awareness and analysis. Education systems must also act explicitly to remove gender bias. This includes ensuring that policies and their implementation are supportive of girls' and boys' learning. Teaching and supervisory bodies must be fair and transparent, and rules and regulations, including promotion and disciplinary action, must have equal impact on girls and boys, and on women and men. Attention must be given to boys' needs in cases where they are disadvantaged.
- In the learning environment, the content, processes and context of education must be free of gender bias, and encourage and support equality and respect. This includes teachers' behaviours and attitudes, curriculum and textbooks, and student interactions. Efforts must be made to ensure personal security: girls are often especially vulnerable to abuse and harassment on the journey to and from school, and at school.

level initiatives. The GPE specifically supports girls' education as one of its five objectives (GPE, 2012).

Other notable international initiatives promoting gender equality in education include the Because I am a Girl Campaign launched by Plan International in 2006, the Girls' Education Challenge funded and launched in 2012 by the UK Department for International Development, and the Global Clinton Initiative CHARGE – the Collaborative for Harnessing Ambition and Resources for Girls' Education – launched in September 2014 to improve learning and leadership opportunities for young women and girls.

In addition to education-specific initiatives, recent high-profile international campaigns have brought attention to gender equality concerns more broadly. These include the Preventing Sexual Violence initiative, launched by the UK government in 2012, and the UN Women's HeForShe campaign launched in 2014 to help eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and

girls by actively engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality. Such campaigns provide significant support to improving gender equality in education by working to address societal gender norms and discriminatory attitudes that impact on the educational experiences of girls and boys.

### **Gender mainstreaming is a key strategy**

Tackling gender parity and equality in education requires governments and other stakeholders to integrate gender issues into all aspects of policy and planning. One key policy framework is that of gender mainstreaming. The Dakar Framework called for government commitment to mainstream gender throughout education systems, in recognition of the fact that attempts to achieve gender equality in education will not succeed if social institutions, norms and practices are discriminatory. Legal change is not sufficient in itself. Gender mainstreaming aims to make gender equality a central ideal embodied in the structures and practices of institutions and society as a whole. This must involve systematically integrating a gender equality perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all education policies and programmes (UNESCO, 2013; United Nations, 1997).

### *Comprehensive policy frameworks have supported progress in girls' education*

Prior to Dakar, the Beijing Platform for Action had endorsed gender mainstreaming as a crucial tool for achieving commitment to gender equality, with the key aim to integrate a gender perspective in policy, programming and budgeting across ministries (UN Women, 2002; United Nations, 1995). Since Beijing, policies towards gender mainstreaming in the education sector have been widely adopted (Unterhalter et al., 2010). In Burkina Faso, the government's education plan for 2001–2010 put in place strategies to strengthen the Directorate for the Promotion of Girls' Education, part of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (UNESCO, 2008). In Yemen, the Community Participation Unit was established in 2003 and the Girls' Education Sector in 2006, both created within the Ministry of Education to enact their National Girls' Education Strategy (Kefaya, 2007). In Burkina Faso, girls' primary gross enrolment ratio increased by 47% between 1999 and 2005; in Yemen, it increased by 46%.

Several countries that have reduced wide gender gaps in education, including Burkina Faso, Ghana and Morocco, integrated a gender perspective into national education plans, strategic plans or policies, including the promotion of girls' right to education and targeted responses to girls' low enrolment (UNESCO and UN Women, 2014). Analysis of national education sector plans in 30 countries, carried out for the 2015 GMR, found that countries that included a gender goal in their plans in both 2000 and 2012 made substantial gains towards gender parity in primary enrolment. Such countries include Mozambique and Sierra Leone. In the Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal, girls' enrolment rose during this period to over half of total primary enrolment, effectively reversing the gender gap (UNESCO-IIEP, 2014).

Other countries have made substantial progress in narrowing wide gender gaps in education through comprehensive policy frameworks underpinned by legislative reforms that combine a variety of measures to improve education access, especially for girls, such as reducing the costs of schooling and employing more teachers. Effective policies address barriers through multiple strategies.

In India and Turkey, gender gaps in primary and lower secondary education have closed. In India, multiple strategies helped improve the accessibility and quality of girls' schooling at primary and lower secondary levels. These include free textbooks for girls, back-to-school camps and bridging courses, recruitment of female teachers, and national programmes to increase demand for schooling among rural and disadvantaged girls (Govinda, 2008). In Turkey, legislative reform and school construction to expand participation in primary and lower secondary education have been complemented by incentives for girls from poor households and a national awareness campaign to increase girls' enrolment (Sasmaz, 2015a).

Burundi and Ethiopia have significantly improved gender parity at the primary level while making rapid progress on overall enrolment. Both countries provided incentives for girls' enrolment in grade 1 at the official age to allow for primary education completion before puberty; in Burundi, parental contributions were waived for girls in the first year of primary school. Interventions to promote girls' education have included mothers' groups in Burundi (Vachon, 2007) and community sensitization campaigns in Ethiopia (Bines, 2007). In Ethiopia,

**Legal change is not sufficient in itself to tackle gender parity and equality in education**

legislative change to reduce child marriage has supported an enabling policy environment (Psaki, 2015a).

### *Budgets can be used to promote gender equality*

UN Women promotes gender-responsive budgeting in over 60 countries (UN Women, 2012b). The approach scrutinises government budgetary practices for their differing effects on men and women, girls and boys. It also enables civil society groups to hold governments accountable for their commitment to gender equality (Global Campaign for Education and RESULTS Education Fund, 2011). In the United Republic of Tanzania, the Gender Budgeting Initiative has helped recognize and reduce girls' household labour time by providing better community water facilities (Plan International, 2012; UN Women, 2012a). Research suggests that investing adequate resources throughout the education system for gender mainstreaming strategies helps ensure gender equality in educational institutions (Unterhalter, 2014).

### *Policy frameworks can face challenges*

Yet, in many countries, gender mainstreaming initiatives have been constrained, and achieving transformative change in institutional settings remains an enormous challenge. Resources to effect change have been inadequate, gender units marginalized within institutions, advocacy support insufficient, and implementation limited by entrenched forms of discrimination (Subrahmanian, 2006; Unterhalter et al., 2010). The success of the Shiksha Karmi Project in Rajasthan, India, which aimed to involve men and women from remote communities in improving children's access to education, was undermined by persistent discriminatory attitudes towards girls and women among some project leaders (Jain, 2003).

Meanwhile, education policies specifically targeting boys' education remain scarce, and rarely form the comprehensive, multilevel frameworks developed for girls' education. Yet distinct policies for girls and boys are needed to support the enrolment and completion of all children and young people.

Developing countries' education policies often pay little attention to improving boys' enrolment in and completion of primary or secondary education, even in countries where boys are particularly

disadvantaged (Jha et al., 2012). For example, no strategies to reduce the gender gap and tackle barriers to boys' attainment are evident in policy documents in Lesotho or Swaziland (Lesotho Ministry of Education, 2002; Swaziland Ministry of Education and Training, 2011). Yet Lesotho's extreme gender disparity at the secondary level, with more than 140 girls enrolled for every 100 boys, is largely unchanged since 1999. In the Philippines and Thailand, where disparity in enrolment at the expense of boys emerges in secondary education, gender equality mechanisms and policies largely focus on women and girls (Hepworth, 2013). While it is important not to undermine gains made in girls' education, it is necessary to also develop policies that address the problems many boys face.

### **Civil society and community mobilization is necessary**

In order to promote education as a human right and to increase demand for schooling, particularly for girls, awareness must be improved of education's economic and sociocultural value to individuals, families, communities and societies. National advocacy and community mobilization campaigns have been used as part of wider policy frameworks to change community and parental attitudes and build a groundswell of support for girls' education. Efforts are also needed to garner support for adult literacy and early childhood education.

At the global level, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) was founded in October 1999 by ActionAid, Oxfam International, Education International and the Global March against Child Labour in the lead-up to the Dakar conference. They help 'mobilize public pressure on governments to fulfil their promises to provide free, quality education for all people, particularly for women' (Culey et al., 2007). The GCE has since been at the forefront of the civil society movement for EFA, now working in 150 countries, and actively campaigns for gender equality in education (Global Campaign for Education, 2014).

At the national level, early large-scale social mobilization campaigns in the 1990s, in Burkina Faso (Hickson et al., 2003), Ethiopia (Bines, 2007) and Malawi (Rugh, 2000), helped build extensive community support for girls' education. In Tajikistan, the National Strategy for Education Development (NSED) 2015 included television and radio campaigns to promote girls' education. The

**Burundi waived parental contributions for girls in the first year of primary school to improve parity**



more recent NSED 2020 continues the use of media campaigns, but aims specifically at improving the particularly low enrolment of girls in post-compulsory secondary education (UNICEF, 2013b), 90 girls for every 100 boys in 2012.

National education coalitions, representing civil society in political forums, can support advocacy for girls' education and gender equality. The GCE works with over 80 national education coalitions (Global Campaign for Education, 2014; Verger and Novelli, 2012). Its 'Make it Right' campaign calls for robust government plans to be drawn up in collaboration with civil society and backed by resources to achieve gender equality in education (Global Campaign for Education and RESULTS Education Fund, 2011). One of its members, the Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign, obtained a pledge by its Ministry of Education to develop a gender education policy as part of the government agenda for 2012 (Global Campaign for Education, 2012) to address gender disparity at the secondary level, where 91 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys.

Community mobilization strategies have also been integrated into many non-government programmes and small-scale projects supporting girls' education. In Burkina Faso, community mobilization strategies were part of a project to provide quality, girl-friendly schools (Kazianga et al., 2013). In India, the District Primary Education Programme supported early initiatives to increase girls' enrolment by mobilizing and organizing women through a women's advocacy project (Unterhalter, 2007).

Campaigns that have proved particularly effective engage partners from multiple sectors, are supported by national planning and policy, and directly involve grass-roots organizations and communities (Parkes and Heslop, 2013). In Turkey, the inclusion of multiple stakeholders in a national campaign to promote girls' education resulted in increased enrolments in the targeted districts (**Box 7**). However, despite the increased levels of schooling among young women supported by this campaign, attitudes toward gender equality have not improved more broadly (Dincer et al., 2014). Women's rights are still not fully protected in Turkey's constitution and penal code. High levels of domestic violence against women persist and women's participation in the political arena and the labour market remains poor (Pasali, 2013).

### Box 7: Multiple stakeholders support campaign to promote girls' education in Turkey

In Turkey, the Hey Girls, Let's Go to School! campaign supported government efforts to expand access to education and increase girls' enrolment. The campaign was launched in 2003 in the 10 Turkish provinces with the most gender disparity in access to basic education.

Since the Ministry of National Education lacked accurate information on out-of-school children, a steering committee sent consultants to the 10 provinces to assess needs and inform local stakeholders about the campaign. This met with limited success due to the hierarchical structure of the Turkish education system: consultants were perceived as inspectors, and uptake of the campaign was poor.

Following a shift in approach, the campaign established a new model of relationships between a wide range of central and provincial stakeholders: officials met frequently to solve problems faced by local teams. Both state officials and teachers were heavily involved in home visits – an effective strategy in persuading families to send girls to school. And local civil society organizations were made part of the campaign.

In the end, the 10 provinces selected at the beginning of the campaign were found to have made better progress than the other Turkish provinces in closing gender gaps in enrolment. It is estimated that up to 350,000 children were enrolled in school during the four years of the campaign.

Sources: Beleli (2012); Sasmaz (2015b).

### Reducing costs of schooling is effective

Throughout the EFA era, global attention has been directed towards redressing gender disparities in enrolment and attainment by lowering direct and indirect costs of education to families, predominantly at the primary and secondary school levels. Reducing costs can be particularly advantageous for girls because, where family resources are limited, they tend to be allocated to boys first. Measures to reduce costs include fee abolition, scholarships and stipends.

Fee abolition has been the main strategy of governments for increasing enrolment of both girls and boys at primary and secondary levels. And the decade after Dakar saw large increases in enrolment.

In principle, most countries now have primary schooling free of tuition fees. Based on GMR research, progress has been particularly impressive in sub-Saharan Africa where, since 2000, 15

countries have adopted legislation abolishing school fees for primary education: 7 through constitutional guarantees and 8 through other forms of legislation. An additional 8 did so through non-legislative policy measures. By 2014, 40 countries had also instituted compulsory pre-primary education, although some have yet to expand public provision and still charge fees. In Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, laws require pre-primary sections to be attached to all primary schools, but fees are being charged in both countries (World Bank, 2012).

In Benin, the government abolished school fees for all girls in public primary schools in rural areas in 2000 (Benin Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, 2000). This measure, combined with community mobilization strategies to increase demand for girls' education, saw gender gaps at primary level reduced substantially, with the GPI increasing from 0.64 in 1999 to 0.89 in 2012. In Uganda, research found that fee abolition for primary education reduced delayed entry to schooling, incentivized enrolment and reduced dropout, particularly of girls and children in rural areas (Deininger, 2003; Grogan, 2009; Nishimura et al., 2009). In 2006, Yemen introduced a school fee and uniform waiver for all primary girls (Kefaya, 2007).

At the lower secondary level, as for primary, the abolition of school fees has led to increased enrolment. Analysis of documents in the UNESCO Right to Education Database indicates that 94 of 107 low and middle income countries have legislated free lower secondary education (UNESCO, 2014b). Of these, 66 have constitutional guarantees while 28 enacted other legal measures. As of 2015, only a few nations charge lower secondary school fees, including Botswana, Guinea, Papua New Guinea, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Despite widespread fee abolition at primary and lower secondary levels, schooling is rarely free. There are many other indirect costs to families such as school uniforms, transport to and from school, and school lunches. GMR analysis shows that among 50 low, middle and high income countries in all regions with data for 2005–2012, household education spending accounted for, on average, 31% of the total national spending on education. In almost one-quarter of the countries, households spent more on education than governments; in general, the poorer the country, the larger the burden on households.

### *There is some success with scholarships and stipends*

The Dakar Framework stated, 'Wider social policies, interventions and incentives should be used to mitigate indirect opportunity costs of attending school'. Strategies to increase parental demand for schooling through incentives, particularly for girls' education, have included targeted fee waivers and scholarships to offset direct school costs to families in countries where these still exist and cash stipends to reduce additional costs.

Well-targeted scholarships and stipends have been effective at improving girls' education. In Cambodia, scholarships for girls to transition from primary to lower secondary schooling, conditional on regular attendance and grade progression, increased girls' enrolment in the targeted secondary schools by between 22 and 32 percentage points; the positive impact of the programme was strongest on girls from the most disadvantaged backgrounds (Filmer and Schady, 2008). In the province of Punjab in Pakistan, the Female School Stipend Programme, established in 2003, targeted girls in grades 6–8 in government schools in districts with the lowest literacy rates. This led to increased enrolment rates ranging from 11% to 32% for all cohorts during the first four years of the programme (Independent Evaluation Group, 2011). In contrast, in Nepal, scholarships have not always been sufficient to cover all school costs, such as educational materials, and have thus failed to provide an incentive for the poorest families to send girls to school (Ridley and Bista, 2004).

While attempting to redress disparities in school access, other forms of inequity may arise from scholarships, stipends or school-fee reduction. In Pakistan, evidence shows that in families where girls are eligible for stipends restricted to government schools, boys are more likely to be enrolled in private schools, which often provide a better quality of education (Independent Evaluation Group, 2011). In India, analysis of household expenditures found families spend less on girls: girls are more likely to be enrolled in fee-free government schools and boys in private schools (Azam and Kingdon, 2013). Inequality as a result of fee reduction can also occur. In Bangladesh, an acclaimed secondary school stipend programme for rural girls, introduced in 1991, increased girls' enrolment but appeared to disproportionately benefit girls from wealthier, landowning households (Khandker et al., 2003). Boys may

also be disadvantaged: a primary education stipend programme which ran from 2000–2006 in Bangladesh had a negative impact on grade progression for boys from poor households. As boys were ineligible to receive an additional stipend available to girls at the secondary level, families had an incentive to keep boys in primary school for longer (Baulch, 2011).

### *Cash transfers and school-feeding programmes are generally positive*

Since 2000, cash transfers to vulnerable households have been a popular initiative in several Latin American and low income countries. Research indicates that programmes specifically targeting children most in need and conditional on school attendance are more effective than unconditional transfers at improving children's enrolment, particularly girls (Akresh et al., 2013; Baird et al., 2013; Unterhalter et al., 2014). However, a direct comparison of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) in Malawi found that while CCTs outperformed UCTs in improving attendance and enrolment, UCTs were much more effective at preventing teen pregnancy and early marriage, since girls who lost their CCT through dropping out of school were more likely to marry (Baird et al., 2011). In Jamaica, a government programme providing education grants to poorer households introduced higher payments for boys enrolled in secondary school. This aimed to improve boys' attainment by reducing the risk of them dropping out (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009).

School feeding programmes are another strategy to improve attendance and attainment in schools and reduce dropout, but evidence is mixed on their effectiveness (Behrman et al., 2013; Lister et al., 2011). Although such programmes may increase enrolment, particularly of girls, as an initiative did in rural India (Afridi, 2011), a dramatic increase in enrolment can lead to crowded classrooms and a poorer learning environment, as in Bangladesh (Ahmed and Arends-Kuenning, 2006). A recent analysis of 12 rigorously evaluated studies of school feeding and take-home ration programmes, including from Burkina Faso, Chile, Jamaica, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Peru, the Philippines and Uganda, found a positive impact on enrolment ranging from 6–26 percentage points for a number of countries, with larger effects for girls. Meanwhile, Uganda's school feeding programme reduced boys' repetition by 20 percentage points (Behrman et al., 2013).

### **Expanding and improving school infrastructure benefits both girls and boys**

Progress towards gender parity and gender equality in education has also been directly and indirectly supported by policies that support investment in school infrastructure. Increasing the supply of schools and improving school facilities benefits boys' and girls' education alike, but in some contexts can particularly benefit girls.

### *Building more schools reduces the barrier of distance*

Building schools in underserved communities has been an obvious and effective strategy for mitigating distance-related barriers to schooling. In Egypt, the Education Enhancement Programme, initiated by the Government of Egypt between 1996 and 2006 with additional funding from the European Union and the World Bank, included significant investment for new schools, targeting deprived rural areas where girls' enrolment in particular was traditionally low (Iqbal and Riad, 2004; World Bank, 2015). In 1990, 84 girls for every 100 boys were enrolled in primary education in Egypt; in 1999, this rose to 92 girls and by 2012, 96. In Ghor province, Afghanistan, in a project run by the Catholic Relief Services and funded by USAID, villages that lacked easy access to government-run schools were randomly selected to receive a community primary school in 2007. As a result, overall enrolment in these villages increased by 42 percentage points, with girls' enrolment increasing by 17 percentage points more than boys, thus closing an existing gender gap (Burde and Linden, 2012).

Governments facing declining school-age populations, however, have made policy decisions to reduce the numbers of schools in remote areas. This can have unintended effects on gender disparity. In China, a study of 102 rural communities in 7 provinces found the presence of a local primary school increased girls' completion of lower secondary by 17 percentage points (Li and Liu, 2014). And yet, a government policy to merge rural primary schools reduced the numbers of rural schools from 440,000 in 2000 to 253,000 in 2008.

Research indicates that the availability of post-primary schools can influence the effectiveness of other strategies to improve gender parity at primary and secondary levels. A longitudinal study of Pakistan found a strong positive relationship between the availability of post-primary schooling

and girls' retention in primary school (Lloyd et al., 2006). And in Bangladesh, where stipends for girls have driven enormous growth in secondary school enrolment, the government's action a decade earlier to bring Islamic schools into the formal education sector increased the availability of places (Asadullah and Chaudhury, 2009).

### ***Water and sanitation must be addressed for gender equality***

The provision of safe and separate sanitation facilities for girls was a key strategy emphasized in the Dakar Framework for promoting more equitable school environments and improving girls' attendance. The Focusing Resources on Effective School Health task force, launched at Dakar, advocated for adequate water, hygiene and toilet facilities in schools as particularly relevant for adolescent girls (Joerger and Hoffmann, 2002; UNESCO, 2015). In recent years, the WASH in Schools global partnership has continued to promote these efforts. Critical to the push for improved sanitation in schools has been understanding that adolescent girls' concerns over privacy, particularly during menstruation, influence their education decisions and can act as an obstacle to school attendance (Adukia, 2014).

School water and sanitation provision in many developing countries has improved since 2000, but progress has been slow. Many children still go to school in conditions that are not conducive to learning, lacking potable water, handwashing facilities and safe, clean toilets. Of 126 countries with data, the average percentage of primary schools with adequate sanitation rose from 59% in 2008 to 68% in 2012; in 52 of the least developed and other low income countries, the share rose from 35% to 50% (UNICEF, 2013d).

A review of 44 national education plans for developing and transition countries from 2005–2009 found that 25 included strategies to improve water and sanitation in schools, with 11 specifically linked to gender-related objectives. Primarily, this involved building separate latrines for girls and boys (UNESCO-IIEP, 2009). In 2012, 60% of the funds in the Punjab Education Sector Reforms Programme in Pakistan were earmarked for improving facilities for girls' schools, with provision of toilets a top priority (ASER Pakistan, 2014).

Data are limited on the extent of separate facilities for girls and whether they are well maintained or

even functional. And surprisingly little evidence is available on the impact of single-sex toilets on girls' enrolment and completion, and the effectiveness of their provision as a stand-alone strategy to improve girls' attendance (Birdthistle et al., 2011). Existing evidence is mixed. In Kenya, research suggests that cleanliness and good maintenance of primary school toilets may be more important in improving attendance than their quantity (Dreibelbis et al., 2013). In India, however, research based on a school latrine construction programme in the early 2000s indicates that provision of latrines, whether sex-specific or not, substantially benefited boys and girls of younger ages. And provision of single-sex toilets significantly increased adolescent girls' enrolment, which suggests privacy and menstruation issues may well be a key factor affecting girls' attendance in India. The construction of single-sex toilets also had a positive impact on the share of female teachers at schools, which may also indirectly benefit girls (Adukia, 2014).

More research is needed to assess the impact of toilet availability within interventions that combine infrastructure with training, outreach and hygiene education, including menstrual hygiene. Nevertheless, whether a significant factor in girls' attainment or not, access to better facilities and support are likely to have positive effects on girls' dignity and the overall quality of their school experience (Unterhalter et al., 2014).

### **Recruiting female teachers has a positive effect on girls' schooling**

As the 2013/14 GMR noted, the teaching profession often fails to attract the right balance of men and women, and people with disabilities or from different ethnic backgrounds (UNESCO, 2014c). In countries where girls experience significant difficulty participating in education due to cultural and social barriers, increasing the presence of female teachers has been shown to have a positive effect on girls' schooling.

The presence of women teachers can allay parents' concerns over safety and help increase demand for girls' schooling. A study in 30 developing countries found that increasing the proportion of female teachers in a district increased girls' access and retention in education, particularly in rural areas (Huisman and Smits, 2009a, 2009b). In Tunisia, where gender parity in primary enrolment was achieved in 2012, the greater numbers of female teachers in schools in recent years was positively

associated with girls' grade averages and their scores on primary school-leaving examinations (Balioune-Lutz, 2011; Lockheed and Mete, 2007). In contrast, research has failed to find any causal link between boys' underachievement or low participation in school and the gender of their teachers (Kelleher, 2011).

Between 1999 and 2012, substantial progress towards achieving a gender balance among primary teachers was made in several countries where female teachers were a minority. In Nepal, where explicit policies were implemented to recruit women, the share of female primary teachers rose from 23% in 1999 to 42% in 2012; similarly in Morocco, the share rose from 39% to 54% (Figure 18).

The increasing proportion of women among new entrants into primary teaching in countries including Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mozambique and Nepal reflects genuine effort: they now make up the majority of new teachers. On average, between 2009 and 2012, 60% of new teachers in Nepal and 62% in Mozambique were women. With more women

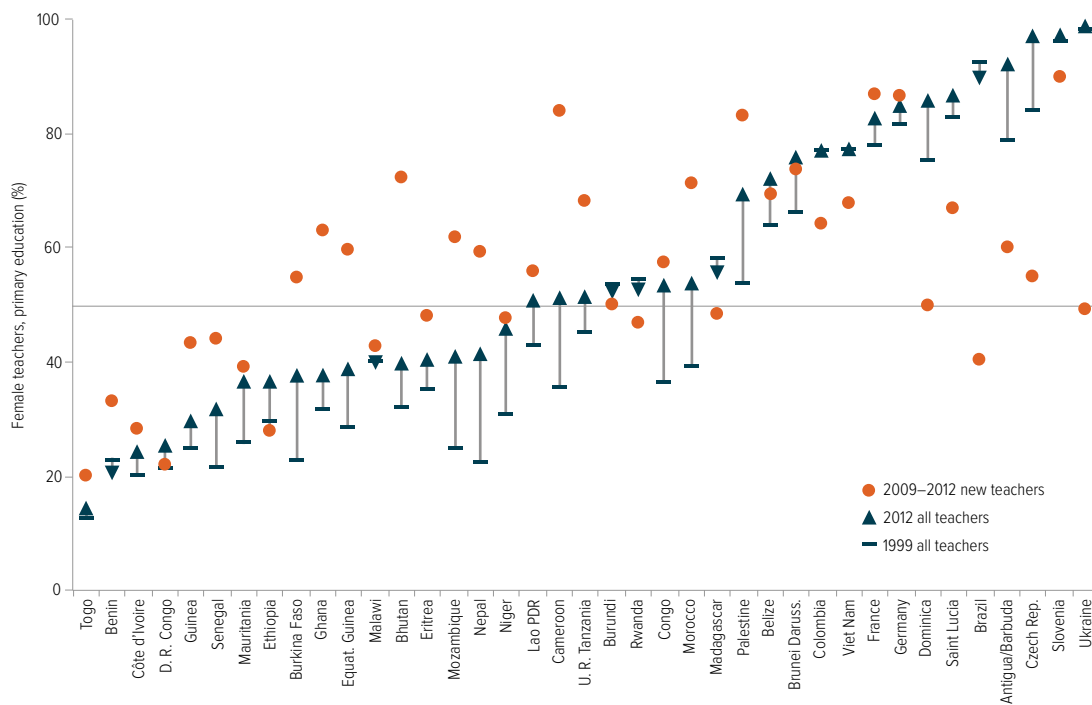
entering the profession, the chance of achieving gender balance among primary teachers by 2015 is greatly improved.

In Afghanistan, where conservative communities do not allow girls to be taught by men, two national plans have included clear targets on female teacher recruitment to address low levels of girls' enrolment. These included strategies to increase the number of female primary and secondary teachers by 50% by 2010 (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2007) and to recruit and train 50,000 grade 12 graduates, of whom 45% were to be women (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2014). Until recently, the lack of girls' education meant very few women qualified to become teachers. Opportunities are improving, however, and between 1999 and 2012, the percentage of female primary school teachers rose from 10% to 31%.

The growing influence of non-state providers has been a significant international trend in teacher recruitment. Growth in non-formal schooling and private provision has expanded female recruitment. In low income countries where women's mobility

**Figure 18: Since 1999, women's share of the primary teaching force has increased, and they make up a substantial proportion of new entrants in several countries**

Percentage of women teachers in primary education, 1999 and 2012; percentage of female teachers as new entrants 2009–2012



has traditionally been restricted, this has produced alternative routes for women to become teachers, particularly in rural areas. In Afghanistan, the NGO BRAC has hired mainly married women, recruited locally, and trained them to teach lower primary grades (Anwar and Islam, 2013). In Pakistan, low-fee private primary schools employ young, untrained, unmarried women from local communities (Andrabi et al., 2008).

### *Female representation in the teaching force falls as the level of education rises*

Gender equality should be ensured in the teaching profession, attracting and retaining good female teachers for all levels of education. To do this, policy-makers need to encourage recruitment from different sectors of society, deploy teachers more fairly in both rural and urban areas, provide incentives in the form of appropriate salaries and create career paths free from gender bias.

Across OECD countries, an average of two-thirds of teachers are women, but the proportion decreases as the level of education increases: from 97% at the pre-primary level to 82% at the primary level, 68% at the lower secondary level and 56% at the upper secondary level (OECD, 2013a).

In Ghana, where gender gaps in secondary enrolment remain, despite achieving parity at the primary level, women made up less than one-quarter of secondary teaching staff in 2013. In Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea and Mali, which have severe gender disparities in education, less than 12% of secondary teachers were women in 2012.

Gender inequality in the teaching force relates to gender equality concerns more broadly. The preponderance of female teachers at pre-primary and lower primary levels in both developed and developing countries can be linked to stereotypical notions of gender that view the care of young children as women's work. This translates in most countries to lower pay and less professionalization and respect (Kelleher, 2011). A study in Jordan, where women represent 88% of the workforce in private schools, found that female teachers employed in private schools earned 42% less than their male counterparts (ILO, 2013b).

Improving the status of teaching is associated with better motivation and job satisfaction, which increases teacher retention and performance,

as well as student learning. When the status of the teaching profession is low – at any level of education – this conversely leads to difficulties in recruitment and retention. At the pre-primary level, staff turnover is often high, teachers' living conditions are poor, well-qualified teachers are hard to attract, and untrained staff are frequently employed, thus perpetuating the low status of pre-primary teaching (Mathers et al., 2014).

Research on women's literacy programmes shows that the status of adult literacy educators is also low, with recruitment and training widely considered the weakest point in literacy programmes. Literacy educators – the majority of whom are women – often lack opportunities for career progression, because most programmes are run on a short-term basis, which compounds their low status (Robinson-Pant, 2014). Many systems also continue to rely on volunteers, such as the Brasil Alfabetizado programme or the National Literacy Programme in Ghana.

Gender equality through education will not be achieved if gender inequality in education systems, including school management and leadership, is not addressed. Gender discrimination is widely evident in school management structures in both rich and poor countries where women are seriously under-represented in senior management. Women are still also acutely under-represented on school boards and in ministries of education; in 2014, just 69 education ministerial positions were occupied by women (UN Women, 2014).

Even in contexts where the majority of teachers are women, proportionally fewer women than men ascend to leadership positions. In OECD countries, men are more likely to be school principals than regular teachers. In Portugal and the Republic of Korea, less than one-third of lower secondary teachers are men, yet men make up 61% and 87%, respectively, of school principals (OECD, 2014b). A considerable bias in favour of promoting male teachers to school managerial positions was shown in data from 12 countries surveyed in the SACMEQ III project. In Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, while almost half of all primary teachers were female, women made up less than 20% of school principals (UNESCO-IIEP, 2011).

### **Gender-sensitive classroom practices should be promoted**

Promoting gender-sensitive classroom practice provides a hugely important framework for achieving gender equality. Initial and ongoing teacher education regarding inclusion and gender-sensitive pedagogy and classroom management can reduce teacher bias and build more supportive school environments. Teachers at all levels of the education system from pre-school upwards play a critical part in shaping young people's understanding of gender roles. Teacher attitudes, practices and different expectations of boys and girls in school can reproduce gender stereotypes and affect girls' and boys' motivation, participation and learning outcomes. Teachers who understand gender dimensions can challenge gender discrimination and violence so schools are safer and more equitable places for all children.

From a very young age, children actively incorporate gender messages into their daily practices and develop an understanding about what it means to be a boy or a girl in society (Kelleher, 2011). In many settings, classroom observations show teachers of both sexes interacting more often with boys, thus encouraging passivity among girls (Eurydice, 2010). Research in the Republic of Korea found male students in both elementary and junior high schools dominating interactions with teachers by being called on more often to answer questions or calling out in class (Jung and Chung, 2006). In other settings, teachers have been shown to subject boys to harsher punishments, as boys are perceived as tough and undisciplined. A recent case study in Mongolia links the higher likelihood of violence against boys in schools with boys' dropout, especially for those already disadvantaged by economic pressures (Hepworth, 2013).

Gender-sensitive training that equips teachers to improve diversity in teaching and assessment styles and promote positive attitudes and behaviour among students can ensure that girls and boys participate equally in class (Postles, 2013). Research indicates learner-centred collaborative teaching methods can help improve learning for both boys and girls (Jha et al., 2012; Oloyede et al., 2012).

Before 2000, education reform relating to classroom practice tended to concentrate on improving teaching methods for subject-related student performance. Relatively little attention was paid to gender-sensitive training, even in countries that

made efforts to address gender inequality more widely, such as Belgium, France and Switzerland (Baudino, 2007). Change has been slow. A 2010 review found that gender-sensitive teaching as a class management tool had been implemented in about one-third of European countries (Eurydice, 2010). A separate review of education policy in 40 developing countries indicated that policies to integrate gender training into teacher education remained scarce (Hunt, 2013).

Gender-sensitive training in developing countries has been largely funded by donors or international NGOs either through add-on programmes or as part of wider sector reforms. The Gender Responsive Pedagogy model, for example, is an add-on training model developed by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) that has reached over 6,600 teachers since 2005 (FAWE, 2013). In Indonesia, under the USAID-supported Decentralized Basic Education reform, gender-sensitive training was introduced as a strategy to improve the quality of education (USAID, 2008). The Commonwealth of Learning, in partnership with UNICEF, supports mainstreaming of gender-sensitive, child-friendly schooling approaches in pre-service and in-service teacher education in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zambia (Umar et al., 2012).

Some governments have made efforts to include training on gender in formal teacher education policy and programmes. A 12-month certificate of education course for teachers in Bangladesh includes a unit on gender issues, which gives teachers ways to explore their own practices and develop more inclusive approaches (Heijnen-Maathuis, 2008). Kenya's Education Sector Support Programme 2005–2010 included explicit strategies for gender-sensitive teacher training (Kenya Government, 2005). Mexico's 2013–2018 national education plan promotes a gender-sensitive approach to teacher education (Mexico Government, 2007); in-service programmes can support gender-sensitive classroom practices, but are optional. Papua New Guinea's 2009–2014 Gender Equity Strategic Plan calls for gender equity to inform all pre-service and in-service teacher education (Papua New Guinea Department of Education, 2009).

Even where such strategies exist, however, a lack of clarity, inadequate resources, and poor implementation, supervision and evaluation frequently limit their effectiveness. In addition, there

is still a lack of knowledge about the extent to which teachers and teacher trainers draw on training in gender issues and how learners respond to it.

### **Gender equality can be promoted through teaching and learning materials**

The Dakar Framework highlighted the need for learning content and materials to encourage and support equality and respect between genders. In 2010, UNGEI reiterated the importance of eliminating gender bias in school teaching and learning materials and called for greater attention to this policy issue (UNGEI, 2010).

In schools at all levels of education, gender-responsive teaching is guided not only by pedagogic approaches but also by curriculum content, textbooks and other learning materials, which serve as vehicles for socialization (Brugeilles and Cromer, 2009). Schools can be powerful entry points for promoting equitable gender relations and diverse possibilities for male and female roles. Curricula can encourage children to question gender stereotypes and promote equitable behaviour. Conversely, discriminatory gender norms conveyed in textbooks or other curricula resources can damage children's self-esteem, lower their engagement and limit their expectations (Esplen, 2009).

### *Gender-sensitive curricula should be developed*

Gender-sensitive curricula acknowledge and address issues of inclusion, promote gender-equitable learning and help girls and boys challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Gender reviews of curricula have helped raise awareness and support change towards more gender-responsive content and resources. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the national secondary school syllabuses, revised in 2010, contain gender-related topics. In civics, nearly 25% of form 2 lessons are devoted to gender, form 4 includes gender in the study of culture, and the 2010 civics exam included questions on gender inequality (Miske, 2013).

Gender-responsive curricula that develop transferable skills have potential to support learning and promote gender relations. The Gender Equity Movement in Schools, a project in Mumbai, India, developed an add-on curriculum including content on gender roles, violence, and sexual and reproductive health for standard 6 and 7 children. Graduates demonstrated greater problem-solving

skills and self-confidence alongside improved attitudes and gender awareness (Achyut et al., 2011). An interdisciplinary curriculum developed for the Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial, a secondary school programme for rural girls in Honduras including those who are indigenous, uses student-centred and inquiry-based learning that emphasizes dialogue. Its content questions dominant power structures and challenges gender stereotypes (Miske, 2013).

### *Comprehensive sexuality education, including HIV and AIDS, is important*

In 2000, at the time of Dakar, AIDS was a grave and growing danger. In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) adopted a Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and established a core indicator (indicator 11) for monitoring life skills based on HIV education in schools (UNESCO, 2014a). Progress was assessed in 17 countries in sub-Saharan Africa by comparing household survey data in which young people were asked about their HIV and AIDS knowledge, suggesting this knowledge had improved among young men in 9 countries and among young women in 13 countries. However, inadequate treatment of human rights and gender equality in school curricula has been identified as a problem in educational responses to HIV (UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education, 2006).

In the years since Dakar, comprehensive sexuality education has gained widespread support as a platform for HIV prevention, and there is growing international pressure to consider receiving such education a basic human right (UNESCO, 2014a). Comprehensive sexuality education empowers young people to make informed decisions about their sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health (UNFPA, 2014). It is a critical area of curriculum for promoting greater gender sensitivity and equality among young people. Its current emphasis on healthy sexuality rather than the risks associated with sex is an evolution from earlier moralistic approaches, based on fear and considering learners passive recipients of information (UNESCO, 2014a).

As yet, however, many schools still deliver narrower sex education programmes which fail to deal with the gender dynamics that accompany sexual and reproductive health (Stromquist, 2007; UNICEF, 2013c). A review of sex education curricula in 10 countries in eastern and southern Africa showed



all but 2 had moderate to serious gaps in topics relating to gender. Discussion of gender-based violence was overlooked in many curricula, and the overall approach to gender was considered weak and sometimes contradictory (UNICEF, 2013c). Sweden, by contrast, has a long-established curriculum that teaches sexuality in the context of its psychological, ethical and social dimensions and personal relationships, and supports the equal sharing of sexual decision-making by girls and boys (Stromquist, 2007).

### *Eliminating gender bias in textbooks is challenging*

Gender bias has long been a problem in school textbooks. Around 2000, despite prior widespread revisions, textbooks worldwide continued to show distinct patterns of gender bias: females were often under-represented or absent, and depictions of males and females in both the professional and domestic spheres relied on traditional gender stereotypes (Blumberg, 2007). Women were depicted in half as many images as men in Spanish language and literature textbooks (González and Entonado, 2004). Social studies texts used in China in 2000 showed all scientists as male (Yi, 2002).

The EFA movement provided new impetus for donors and governments to address gender bias in education. One of three strategies in Pakistan's 2001–2015 EFA action plan to improve gender parity and equality was a call for curricula and textbooks to be free of gender bias (Mirza, 2004). International agencies have promoted policies and initiatives to tackle gender bias in textbooks in low income countries. Between 1998 and 2005, the World Bank shifted the focus of its expenditure on girls' education interventions towards improving the quality of educational resources, including eliminating gender bias. Several large education initiatives – including in Bangladesh, Chad, Ghana, Guinea and Nepal – had explicit components aimed at eliminating gender bias from curricula and/or textbooks (Blumberg, 2007). UNESCO has funded gender audits of textbooks, including in Jordan (Alayan and Al-Khalidi, 2010) and Pakistan (Mirza, 2004). In China, the Ford Foundation funded research to investigate gender bias in textbooks and supported the development of education plans, activities and reference materials to promote gender equality (Blumberg, 2007).

However, recent studies show that despite attempts to provide greater gender balance in textbooks,

bias remains pervasive in many countries, including Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan (Asatoorian et al., 2011; Foroutan, 2012; Mustapha, 2012; Shah, 2012) and some high income countries such as Australia (Lee and Collins, 2009). A lack of political will and support within wider society limits the enactment of policy reform to eliminate gender bias in education resources. In some instances, policy recommendations from the global level have failed to find sufficient national support, resulting in slow progress. While the findings of the Ford Foundation research were widely disseminated in China, some stakeholders were sceptical about the importance of advocating for change (Blumberg, 2007). In Pakistan, resistance within institutions responsible for curriculum reform and textbook production has contributed to the low political priority given to textbook revision; this has been reinforced by a lack of public support (Blumberg, 2015). Another challenge, as found in Georgia, is that key professionals responsible for providing guidelines for textbook production, and approving textbooks for use, lack adequate knowledge regarding gender sensitivity (Asatoorian et al., 2011; Blumberg, 2007).

Programmes working directly with young people have shown positive effects at challenging gender norms and social practices. Girls' only clubs – and those working with boys – can offer a safe space in which issues relating to gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health, child marriage and early pregnancy, gender-based violence and human rights, can be discussed (Bandiera et al., 2014). Research suggests that regular attendance at such clubs can help girls feel more empowered, encouraging girls to be more confident and assertive in challenging inequalities and gender discrimination (Leach et al., 2012).

Well-organised clubs with fair membership criteria, which are run by well-trained mentors and are in-step with the broader school culture and local context, seem to offer the greatest potential. Research shows that out-of-school formal and informal activities such as drama, debates and workshops can have a positive impact on learning for girls when linked with formal school experiences (Unterhalter et al., 2014). There is also evidence of the positive influence of girls' club-related training, gender sensitisation and management workshops for school staff, as well as opportunities for club members to engage in advocacy and community outreach work (Parkes and Heslop, 2013).

An evaluation of ActionAid's Stop Violence Against Girls' in School project found that girls' clubs had positive effects on girls' knowledge, attitudes and practices in identifying violations and managing violence. Clubs worked with communities and schools to improve relationships among boys, girls, teachers, parents and other community members, and ensure that channels were in place to report incidences of gender-related discrimination and violence (Parkes and Heslop, 2013).

The Abriendo Oportunidades project for indigenous girls in Guatemala engages with community leaders and trains girls to run community girls' clubs, which provide life-skills and leadership training to girls aged 8-18. By 2011, the project had reached 3,500 girls with positive results. A 2010 evaluation found that all participants had completed sixth grade, compared with less than 82% of their peers nationally, and that 97% remained childless during the programme, compared with 78% of non-participants (Catino et al., 2013).

### **Violence in schools can be addressed by advocacy and policy responses**

Campaigns, reports, advocacy and lobbying can help efforts to prevent violence in schools by raising awareness and promoting better knowledge of children's rights to a safe education. The 2006 UN World Report on Violence Against Children documented violence against children in school settings as a global phenomenon (Pinheiro, 2006). After its publication, there was an acceleration of global and regional initiatives to address school-based violence. Other notable high profile campaigns have included the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children launched in 2001, Plan International's Learn Without Fear campaign, launched in 2011, and the Council of Europe's One in Five campaign to protect children against sexual exploitation and abuse, begun in 2010. The Don't Hit, Educate campaign in Brazil uses discussion groups, music and theatre to raise community awareness. In 2014, Brazil became the 38th country to ban all forms of corporal punishment (Instituto Promundo, 2015).

Attempts to address school-related gender-based violence, described earlier in this summary, build on these more general campaigns. Some countries in sub-Saharan Africa have enacted policy development to tackle gender-based violence, especially sexual violence. Liberia, a country

emerging from conflict, has advocated for the development of a syllabus on gender-based violence for use by trained educators in schools (Antonowicz, 2010). In South Africa, strategies to address gender-based violence are supported by a strong legal and policy framework, and by guidelines for schools on preventing sexual harassment and abuse (Parkes, 2015).

In many other sub-Saharan African countries, international NGOs have worked with governments to strengthen legislation and guidelines on tackling gender-based violence in schools (Parkes, 2015). The Kenyan government and ActionAid collaborated with teachers' unions to draft a bill to reinforce mechanisms for reporting sexual violence, and ensuring that guilty teachers are discharged, not transferred to other schools (Leach et al., 2014). In Ghana and Malawi, the Safe Schools project used national advocacy networks to lobby for revisions to the Teachers' Code of Conduct and to call for stronger enforcement of regulations relating to teacher misconduct (DevTech Systems Inc., 2008).

However, to ensure accountability measures are effective, they must be reinforced by legal and policy frameworks at government, district and school levels; be widely disseminated; and be enforced through effective leadership. In South Africa, strategies to address school-related gender-based violence are supported by a strong legal and policy framework and detailed guidelines for schools. Yet schools are not legally required to adopt the national guidelines and school leaders have been reluctant to report abuse of students by fellow staff members (Brock et al., 2014). A recent national survey in the country found that 7.6% of girls had experienced severe assault or rape at secondary school (Burton and Leoschut, 2013).

Overall, there is little evidence that increased awareness of the prevalence of school-related gender-based violence over the last decade is translating into effective action to change behaviour and reduce levels of violence. Enforcement of laws is often poor, reporting and referral systems weak, and policy implementation patchy, partly because of deep-seated social and gender norms at the district, community and school levels. There also remains a lack of knowledge about what works in reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence in schools, and interventions are usually small, short-term projects which are difficult to scale up (Leach and Dunne, 2014).

### Effective initiatives exist to support equality in learning outcomes

Concern over boys' underachievement in learning outcomes, particularly reading and languages, has grown since 2000. Recent OECD research shows that boys spend an hour less per week doing homework than girls, are not as likely to read for pleasure, and are twice as likely to report school being a waste of time (OECD, 2015). Yet to address this, only a few countries with marked gender gaps have comprehensive policy frameworks. European countries and economies, such as the Flemish Community of Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom, have made reducing boys' underachievement a policy priority. Government concerns have largely been driven by results of national and international assessment tests, such as PISA, which have highlighted the widening gender gap in reading skills and have received significant media attention in some countries. The 'PISA shock' in 2000 – when countries were surprised at the relatively low scores of their students – led to Austria mainstreaming initiatives that promote reading and boys' achievement (Eurydice, 2010; OECD, 2012b). In England (United Kingdom), a series of projects has targeted gender-related performance in schools (Batho, 2009; Eurydice, 2010; National Literacy Trust, 2012).

Some strategies and small-scale interventions in teaching and learning have potential to tackle boys' low achievement. They include a transferable skills emphasis, classroom approaches that foster active learning, individual mentoring and target-setting, and a school ethos promoting respect and cooperation (Jha et al., 2012). In Seychelles, the very large gender differences in reading performance in the SACMEQ II and III assessments – boys underperformed girls by 48 points in SACMEQ III – were attributed to 'within-school streaming' (Hungu, 2011), a practice said to negatively label those in lower classes and reinforce poor performance (Leste et al., 2005). Efforts to 'de-stream' classes so student groupings were of mixed ability and gender-balanced were reported to have met with some initial success (Reid, 2011). A recent study from the United States indicates that both boys and girls achieve better in classrooms where more girls are present (DiPrete and Buchmann, 2013).

### *Girls' participation and performance in mathematics and science can be encouraged*

A global agenda to enhance gender equality in education and improve labour market opportunities for females has meant focusing on increasing girls' achievement and participation in mathematics and science. With gender gaps in mathematics performance declining in international assessments and those in science largely eliminated, a key challenge since 2000 has been to address girls' motivation and subject choice. PISA 2012 results show that even when girls perform as well as boys in mathematics, they tend to report less motivation to learn mathematics, less belief in their ability and greater anxiety about the subject. They are also more likely than boys to attribute failure in mathematics to themselves rather than to external factors (OECD, 2013b).

This phenomenon appears to stem from cultural norms and discriminatory practices present from an early age. A cross-country analysis of mathematics test scores in 10 low and middle income countries found evidence of a clear gender gap in mathematics performance favouring boys, and the gap nearly doubled when comparing fourth and eighth grade students. Lower performance was strongly associated with girls' self-reported expectations of their abilities in mathematics – they were more pessimistic than boys. Gender stereotyping and societal expectations lead girls to be less confident in their own mathematics ability, which in turn affects learning outcomes (Bharadwaj et al., 2012). A study of girls in grades 1 to 5 in the United States found that anxiety about mathematics could be reduced if female teachers received more training in teaching mathematics and addressed stereotypical beliefs about gender differences in students' ability (Antecol et al., 2012).

In South Africa, the National Strategy in Mathematics and Science, launched in 2001, was dedicated to increasing participation and performance in grade 12 examinations in these subjects, focusing on female students. Incentives for girls included preferential access to schools dedicated to good quality teaching of mathematics and science (South Africa Department of Education, 2001). In three years, achievement in participating schools increased by 30% in physical science and 22% in mathematics (South Africa Department of Education, 2004).

International agencies and NGOs have supported initiatives to improve girls' participation and performance in mathematics and science in several developing countries. The Capacity Building in Scientific and Technological Literacy programme in Nepal, supported by UNESCO, aimed to raise awareness and promote gender-inclusive approaches to teaching mathematics and science (Koirala and Acharya, 2005). Several smaller programmes have also been implemented, such as the USAID-funded 2006 Girls Science Camp in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Aga Khan Foundation (USAID, 2008). But information regarding the uptake and impact of such initiatives remains scarce.

Providing vocational guidance with a gender perspective can challenge gender stereotyping in school cultures, and among students and employers regarding study and career options. Making provision for work-related learning at secondary school can build students' interest in particular subjects (Rolfe and Crowley, 2008).

### **Young people who are out of school should be able to access alternative education opportunities**

Improving secondary education for all young people can help mitigate problems such as early marriage and early pregnancy and is crucial for achieving greater gender equality in the family, the labour market and society more generally (Lloyd and Young, 2009; UNESCO, 2012b). As the 2012 GMR notes, unequal access to secondary schooling locks many young people, particularly young women from poor households and/or marginalized communities, into a life of disadvantage (UNESCO, 2012b).

In the absence of inclusive secondary education, alternative education can help young people who are out of school to continue their education. Non-formal second-chance programmes in Angola and Malawi allow adolescent mothers to bring their children with them to classes (Jere, 2012; Save the Children, 2012). In Jamaica, where pregnant adolescent girls were routinely excluded from school until a change in legislation in 2013, the Adolescent Mothers Programme has provided education, counselling, skills training and contraceptive advice to mothers under the age of 17 and helped reintegrate them back into the formal education system (UNFPA, 2013b).

In India, the Pratham Open School of Education (POSE) aims to reach young girls and women who have been marginalized from the mainstream education system and give them a second chance to complete their schooling. Founded in 2011 as a residential programme, it has expanded to seven states and provides a 6 month condensed foundation course to bridge the gap between basic concepts and the secondary school curriculum (Pratham Education Foundation, 2015).

The Ishraq ('Sunrise') second-chance programme in Upper Egypt provided literacy and life-skills training to girls aged 12–15 in girl-friendly 'safe spaces' to prepare them to re-enter the formal education system. A 2013 evaluation found that young women who participated in the programme had acquired greater self-esteem and confidence in decision-making than peers who did not participate. They had also developed different attitudes about desired family size and were more likely to want to delay marriage until at least 18 years of age. The programme's community outreach work was also successful at garnering parental support for girls' education (Selim et al., 2013).

## **A greater push for gender equality and empowerment**

As detailed in this report, there has been progress since 2000 towards gender parity and gender equality in education around the world. This progress is crucial for ensuring the rights of all children to good quality education that will provide them with solid foundations for the rest of their lives. Progress has been supported by mainstreaming gender in education institutions, through increased civil society support and advocacy, and through community mobilization. This has been underpinned by increased government policy and legislation, as well as the allocation of greater resources to ensure that laws and measures are implemented at district, school and community levels.

However, as this report has also highlighted, serious and enduring obstacles to gender equality in education remain. Gender-based violence and discrimination in schools and classrooms negate positive schooling experiences and education outcomes, and perpetuate inequality in gender relations. And even in countries where girls and

boys have similar levels of educational achievement, women continue to be under-represented and face disproportionate disadvantage in political, economic and civic life.

The absence of women in leadership and decision-making positions, including as education ministers and head teachers, is a consequence of inequity in society; it is a serious barrier to progress and must be addressed. Men who currently hold positions of power must provide critical leadership for gender equality through their roles as decision-makers, public figures and opinion-makers in speaking out about violence and discrimination against women. To move forward, both men and women need to be engaged in the process of change.

Education can and must play a significant role in addressing gender biases and empowering women and men to live better lives. With better education, both women and men have more access to different choices, are more equipped to question and challenge traditional gender norms and inequalities, and are thus better positioned to make different decisions about their lives and those of others. Education must also play a role in empowering boys and men to think of alternative possibilities and futures that are less violent, more caring and more gender equitable. Education for women also helps their families: consistent evidence shows that with better education, women are more likely to promote the importance of good nutrition, health and education for their own children.

Increasing the availability and accessibility of education by reducing school costs and improving infrastructure has helped expand girls' enrolment and reduce gender gaps. Overall, however, EFA targets, including those on gender equality, suffered from lack of clarity on their parameters or expected results. Serious gender inequality in educational attainment remains and, in the case of boys' disadvantage, continues to emerge. And related notable failures include the fact that millions of adults, especially women, continue to be denied their right to literacy and numeracy.

Education can be part of a social transformation process involving men, women, boys and girls towards developing a more gender-just society. The proposed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 that calls for 'inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all' has maintained a specific target for eliminating gender disparities in access to education (target 4.5). However, if the proposed SDG 5 on gender equality and empowerment is to be met, education must play a powerful role. Moving forward into the post-2015 sustainable development era, transformative approaches to ensure gender equality in education – and in society more widely – are needed, encompassing formal and non-formal educational provision for learners of all ages **(Box 8)**. In the new agenda, it is crucial that boys' and girls', and men's and women's interests are allied and not pitted against one another.

In the Beijing Declaration of 1995, the full and equal participation of men and women in society was recognized as crucial for peaceful societies and peaceful societies as crucial for sustainable development. Achieving gender equality in education will go a long way to realizing this aim and must be a central goal of the new SDG agenda.

## Box 8: Gender equality and the 2016 sustainable development agenda

Leading up to the UN Summit on Sustainable Development in New York City in September 2015, statements on gender equality in education have been included in major international meetings of the education community. Examples include:

*'We affirm that the post-2015 education agenda should be rights-based and reflect a perspective based on equity and inclusion, with particular attention to gender equality and to overcoming all forms of discrimination in and through education.'* (Muscat Agreement, 2014)

*'We recognize the importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all. We are therefore committed to supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools.'* (World Education Forum, Incheon Declaration, 2015)

*'The private sector, civil society, parents and local communities are encouraged to establish new partnerships to ensure that girls enrol in school and complete higher levels of education. We are committed to eliminate differences in the quality of education given to girls and to boys. We recognize the need for gender-sensitive education policies, learning environments and curricula. Furthermore, there are untapped synergies especially for girls in combined interventions in the health and education sectors, not least in the field of sexual and reproductive health.'* (Oslo Summit, Chair's Statement, 2015)

The movement to eliminate all forms of discrimination and bias towards girls and women is gathering new momentum in the post-2015 development agenda. The proposed gender equality goal addresses violence against women, expanding women's choices and capabilities, and ensuring that women have a voice in their households and in public and private decision-making spheres. In the proposed final draft of the Outcome Document, to be agreed upon at the UN Summit, gender equality is mentioned in the following ways:

*'We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.'* (para. 3)

*'We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.'* (para. 8)

*'Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels. All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls will be eliminated, including through the engagement of men and boys. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda is crucial.'* (para. 20)

Of critical importance is the fact that gender equality is enshrined as one of the 17 main SDGs (SDG 5), whose aim is to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.' This goal contains six targets and three means of implementation.

In the proposed education goal (SDG 4), gender parity is explicitly mentioned in several targets as well as the equity target. It is clear that even in countries where notable reductions in gender disparities in education have occurred, this has rarely translated more widely into gender equality. The 2016 *Global Education Monitoring Report* will aim to identify which underlying mechanisms influence gender equality in education, and how these can be addressed most effectively by political leaders and policy-makers. It will also describe education settings that create gender-responsive school environments; promote gender-empowering knowledge, attitudes and transferable skills through appropriate curricula and teaching; address discrimination and gender-based violence; and contribute to healthy life choices, including sexual and reproductive health. The 2016 *GEM Report* seeks to disentangle the complex links among policies, practices and processes in formal and non-formal education that influence progress towards gender equality.

References to this report can be found here: [bitly.com/genderref](http://bitly.com/genderref)

# Recommendations

*PARITY: We must strengthen efforts to maintain or achieve gender parity at all education levels from pre-primary through to tertiary.*

## **1 Education should be free. Really free.**

School fees should be abolished, and costs covered for textbooks, uniforms and transport. Hidden, voluntary or school administration charges as well. Incentives, such as school stipends and scholarships, especially at the secondary level, can help offset direct school costs to families and improve girls' education. Conditional cash transfers and school-feeding programmes can help target girls most in need.

## **2 Policies must be developed to address the problems that many boys face, as well as girls, in accessing and completing education. The disadvantages boys face in education are more complex to understand and address.**

Policy solutions can include an emphasis on transferable skills, as well as classroom approaches that foster active learning, individual mentoring and target-setting. Providing vocational guidance with a gender perspective can help with career options.

## **3 Alternative secondary education options should be provided for those who are out of school.**

For those who have exited early from formal schooling due to poverty, child marriage, early pregnancy and other challenges, 'second chance' options should be developed to support them to continue their education. Such programmes can also help young women without even the most basic literacy skills to have an education.

*EQUALITY: Greater emphasis should be placed on gender equality in education.*

## **1 Governments should integrate gender issues into all aspects of policy and planning, not just in education but in all sectors.**

For example, they should improve the content, quality and language appropriateness of instructional materials; and provide transport, if necessary, for children to travel safely to school. This should be complemented with gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated to actions that contribute to gender equality. This might mean –building more schools, and ensuring adequate and good quality water and sanitation facilities

## **2 A comprehensive framework of legislative change, advocacy and community mobilization campaigns is needed to eliminate child marriage, reduce early pregnancies and build a groundswell of support for girls' education.**

In addition, policies to support the readmission of girls following the birth of a child must be enforced by education providers and communities.

## **3 Governments, international organizations and education providers must work together to tackle school-related gender based violence in all its forms.**

A comprehensive and internationally agreed definition of School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is needed. Research and monitoring on the issue should be strengthened and harmonized. Effective solutions must involve school leaders,

teachers, parents, communities and government officials. Governments must show commitment and leadership on the issue by incorporating it into national policies and action plans. Clubs and associations can empower girls and encourage them to challenge inequalities and different forms of gender discrimination.

**4 Governments should recruit, train and support teachers effectively to address gender imbalances in school.**

They should improve the remuneration and training of teachers and ensure there is an equitable balance of female to male teachers in schools at all levels, including in school leadership. All teachers should receive good quality pre- or in-service training in gender-sensitive practices so they can challenge social norms and their own gender attitudes. Training should be designed so it is relevant to local contexts and include comprehensive sexuality education. Teachers should also be supported with teaching and learning materials that question gender stereotypes and promote equitable behavior.



# GENDER AND EFA 2000-2015: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The vision agreed upon at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 was clear and transformational: long-standing gender bias and discrimination undermine the achievement of Education for All (EFA). Until all girls and women exercise their right to education and literacy, progress in achieving EFA will be stymied, and a dynamic source of development and empowerment will be squandered. Fifteen years later, the road to achieving gender parity and reducing all forms of gender inequalities in education continues to be long and twisting.

This publication by the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* provides detailed evidence of how much has been achieved in the past 15 years but also where considerable – some quite intractable – challenges remain. It highlights notable progress in gender parity in primary and secondary education, particularly in South and West Asia, while underscoring the persistent barriers to achieving gender equality in education. The lack of progress in literacy among adult women is especially stark: in 2015 an estimated 481 million women, 15 years and over, lack basic literacy skills, 64% of the total number of those who are illiterate, a percentage virtually unchanged since 2000.

This report describes an array of country efforts, some quite effective, to achieve and go beyond gender parity in education. Many of these policies and programmes focus on the immediate school environment in which girls learn. Others focus on the informal and formal laws, social norms and practices that deny girls their right of access to, and completion of, a full cycle of quality basic education. The analyses and key messages in *Gender and EFA 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges* deserve careful scrutiny as the world embarks on a universal, integrated and even more ambitious sustainable development agenda in the years to come.

The *EFA Global Monitoring Report* is an editorially independent, evidence-based publication that serves as an indispensable tool for governments, researchers, education and development specialists, media and students. It has assessed education progress in some 200 countries and territories on an almost annual basis since 2002. This work will continue, throughout the implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, as the *Global Education Monitoring Report*.

*In the rural areas, early marriage and other forms of discrimination like sending girls to learn a trade continue to put pressure on girl child education. While the boys in the village can easily combine herding and farming with school, the girls on the other hand have to be attending to their trade all day all year round.*

– Daniel, teacher in Nigeria

*One of the good changes that the education sector has seen in the last 14 years is that girls are now generally encouraged to go to schools; although in some of the rural areas of the country, things can be further improved in this regard.*

– Abdullah, teacher in Pakistan

*Since 2000 it is noticeable in the classroom that the number of girls is becoming more and more important than the boys, and this even at the university level. Women are being more and more socially considered, more and more politically given responsibilities and this helps to modify the negative sociocultural complexes of inferiority.*

– Hassana, teacher in Cameroon

*There are no more courses which seem to be designated for males or females only. For example, we now have a lot of males taking nursing or midwifery as a profession.*

– Eunice, teacher in Botswana



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