

PROGRESS FOR CHILDREN

**A REPORT CARD ON GENDER PARITY
AND PRIMARY EDUCATION**

NUMBER 2, APRIL 2005

1 Foreword
EDUCATION FOR ALL GIRLS AND BOYS
IS KEY TO DEVELOPMENT

2 Gender parity
A MOVING TARGET

10 Eastern/Southern Africa
STILL A WAY TO GO

12 West/Central Africa
EMERGENCY MEASURES NEEDED

14 South Asia
42 MILLION OUT OF SCHOOL

16 Middle East/North Africa
BEYOND THE AVERAGES

18 CEE/CIS
SHRINKING BUDGETS

20 Latin America/Caribbean
WIDE DISPARITIES

22 East Asia/Pacific
A COMPLEX STORY

24 Industrialized countries
NOT THERE YET

26 Endnote
A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES

9 Table
GENDER PARITY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

28 Table
GENDER PARITY AND
PRIMARY EDUCATION

The day in March 2002 when I was in Kabul, witnessing the return to school of what turned out to be 3 million Afghan children after years of war, was the source of some of my most indelible memories as Executive Director of UNICEF. If I had not known it by then, that dramatic day would have proved to me the central importance of education for the children of the world.

Education is about more than just learning. It saves lives: from the teenagers it protects against HIV/AIDS to the babies saved by their mothers' knowledge of health and nutrition. It transforms lives: from the adolescents given the opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty to the girls it gives a new sense of self-esteem and status in society. It enriches lives: from the refugee child given stability even in an emergency camp to 12-year-old Sadiqa in Kabul, who spent three months of her winter vacation studying in catch-up classes so she could make up for the years of missed opportunities, and who dreamed of one day being President of Afghanistan.

This report card – part of a series in which UNICEF will monitor progress for children in the lead-up to 2015 – measures the world's advances towards Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3, which pursue universal primary education and gender equality and women's empowerment. The report emerges at a vital time: 2005 is the year by which the first Millennium target – to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education – is to be met.

There is no time to lose. The report card shows that in many regions and countries, the target will not be met, notwithstanding the efforts of many governments, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, including UNICEF's own '25 by 2005' Initiative

EDUCATION FOR ALL GIRLS AND BOYS IS KEY TO DEVELOPMENT

and its work with partners in the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. The need to make further progress towards gender parity this year remains urgent, not least to demonstrate the international community's commitment to achieving gender equality in education. Without gender parity, after all, universal primary education will be impossible.

The manifold benefits of girls' education are now beyond dispute. It reduces child and maternal mortality, enhances economic productivity, improves health and nutrition and protects girls from abuse, exploitation and HIV/AIDS. It also contributes in the most meaningful way possible to gender equality.

Education is the right of all children: girls and boys, rich and poor. Investing in education – and girls' education in particular – remains our best hope of accelerating progress towards the wider goals in human development that the international community has pledged to meet.

I am hopeful that this community, which has shown itself so responsive in the aftermath of the Asian tsunami disaster, will find the way to mobilize as quickly and effectively in the cause of gender parity in education.



Carol Bellamy
Executive Director, UNICEF

Primary education and gender parity
Some 125 countries – 91 developing countries and 34 industrialized countries – are on course to reach the gender parity MDG in primary education, with as many girls in school as boys. Countries' positions in relation to the goal are based on primary net enrolment/attendance ratios in 2001. For complete data, see the tables on pages 28-30.



Total primary net enrolment/attendance ratios are below 85 per cent in the following countries:

Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Iraq, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

This map is stylized and is not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

GENDER PARITY: A MOVING TARGET

Girls' education has been expanding all over the world, but not fast enough.

Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 is the achievement of universal primary education: to ensure that by 2015 all children complete a full course of primary schooling. Goal 3, to promote gender equality and empower women, also has a vital educational dimension, as progress towards it is measured by the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

MDGs 2 and 3 are inextricably linked. Universal primary education by definition cannot be achieved without gender parity. Equally, gender parity in primary education is of limited worth if the participation of both girls and boys remains at very low levels.

UNICEF estimates and projections indicate that three regions – Middle East/North Africa, South Asia and West/Central Africa – will not meet the gender parity goal in primary education by 2005. And while there is some reason for optimism in that 125 countries – 91 developing countries and 34 industrialized countries – are on course, with as many girls in school as boys, some of these countries have

such low total enrolment that gender parity cannot be considered to be much more than a statistical quirk. Moreover, even in those countries that have achieved gender parity as part of a healthy total school enrolment, there is the further issue of how far this has contributed to gender equality and the empowerment of women – the real point of the third MDG.

Nevertheless, it is clear that substantial progress has been made. Girls' education has been expanding all over the world, but not fast enough, and not consistently enough to ensure a basic education for millions of girls still out of school or to ensure the progress of countries that lag behind.

In assessing progress towards these two MDGs, it is essential to go beyond the numbers of children enrolled in or completing school. Universal primary education, for example, will necessitate all children starting school at the right age and progressing through the levels with minimal or no repetition. This will entail improving the quality of education; it will also require an expansion and improvement of early

childhood care and education to prepare children for a smooth transition from home to school. These aspects of education are less easy to measure – although gathering and analysing more sophisticated data that will help efforts in the future is a priority. For now, though, progress towards gender parity and universal primary completion is measured primarily using 'headline' numbers such as enrolment/attendance.

THE BIG 'IF'

The world is making steady progress on enrolment/attendance. Joint work by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics shows that in 2001 the global primary net enrolment/attendance ratio (NE/AR)¹ was 82 per cent, meaning that a total of 115 million school-age children were out of primary school. Furthermore, UNICEF's projections based on primary net attendance in a sample of 81 developing countries show that in 2005 the percentage of primary-school-age children in school will rise to 86 per cent.

The achievement is significant – it means that **if** the world's primary-school-age population remains constant or decreases

between 2000 and 2005, as the UN has projected², it would be safe to say that *the number of children out of primary school may now be below 100 million for the first time since these data have been recorded.*

This level of progress, however, will not be sufficient to ensure that every child benefits from a full course of primary education by 2015. The pace must be stepped up. Energy and resources urgently need to be devoted not only to expanding the provision of schooling, drawing in all out-of-school children, but also to addressing the range of factors in schools as well as in homes and communities that impede children's completion of a primary education.

Analysis of household survey data from 1980 to 2001 shows a wide regional variation in the average annual rate of increase (AARI) in the NE/AR.³ Regional AARI varies from a high of 1.4 per cent per year for Middle East/North Africa to a low of 0.35 per cent for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS). In general the regions that had already attained high levels of participation demonstrated the lowest AARI, reflecting the fact that

they were starting from a high base, as well as the extra difficulty involved in achieving the last few percentage points for universal participation. At the same time, the regions with the lowest levels of school participation (South Asia, Eastern/Southern Africa and West/Central Africa) achieved very high AARI, indicating that the efforts and resources invested in expanding education have borne fruit, despite considerable barriers and obstacles. The progress made in these regions remains precarious, however, in the face of continued low levels of enrolment/attendance and multiple barriers to education.

A more significant sense of progress can be gauged from the projected AARI required to achieve the goal of universal primary completion by 2015.⁴ The world would have to maintain an AARI of 1.3 per cent over the next 10 years – approaching the rates achieved in Middle East/North Africa over the past two decades. The regions that are currently furthest from the goal will clearly have to achieve AARIs that are considerably higher: 3.2 per cent in West/Central Africa, 2.8 per cent in Eastern/Southern Africa and 1.9 per cent in South Asia.

The good news is that most of the countries in the Middle East/North Africa, East Asia/Pacific and Latin America/Caribbean regions appear to be on course for 2015 if they maintain their current AARI. Past gains need to be safeguarded against the eroding effects of problems such as child labour, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS and emergencies such as civil conflict and natural disasters. In CEE/CIS the AARI needs to improve, but the target can certainly be met. In all these regions, gains in enrolment/attendance need to be translated into improvements in children's completion of primary education.

At the other extreme, most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and to a lesser extent in South Asia, will need to increase their AARI substantially to reach the 2015 goals. In West/Central Africa, for example, the AARI will need to be four times its current rate. There are, furthermore, 37 countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa, where the AARI will need to be above 2.0 per cent in order to reach the goal.

Clearly, the regions that have made some of the highest gains in AARI over the past 20 years will have to make even greater improvements over the next 10 years if they are to achieve universal primary completion by 2015. This is a formidable challenge.

In the most disadvantaged regions and countries 'business as usual' will not deliver. Global policies and strategies for the future will need to help such countries achieve exponential growth in AARI, through a series of 'quantum leaps' in their enrolment rates.

GENDER BIAS STILL AN OBSTACLE

Gender parity in education is so central to achievement of the MDGs that it was the only area in which an earlier target date of 2005 was set. Eliminating gender disparity is clearly

a stepping stone towards the broader goal of education for all, which is impossible without gender parity. Even more significantly, it is also a platform for gender equality and the empowerment of women, which in turn are necessary for other MDGs such as reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and reducing poverty.

UNICEF projections based on attendance data for 81 developing countries show a global gender parity index (GPI)⁵ in 2005 of 0.96 – meaning that there are 96 girls for every 100 boys in primary school. This technically puts the world on track to meet the goal of gender parity in primary education. But in practice there is a long road still to travel, with three of the world's regions lagging way behind in terms of girls' primary participation. Globally, some 54 per cent of the children out of primary school are girls, meaning that for every 100 boys out of school, there are 117 girls in the same situation. (See page 8 for a discussion of gender differences in secondary education.)

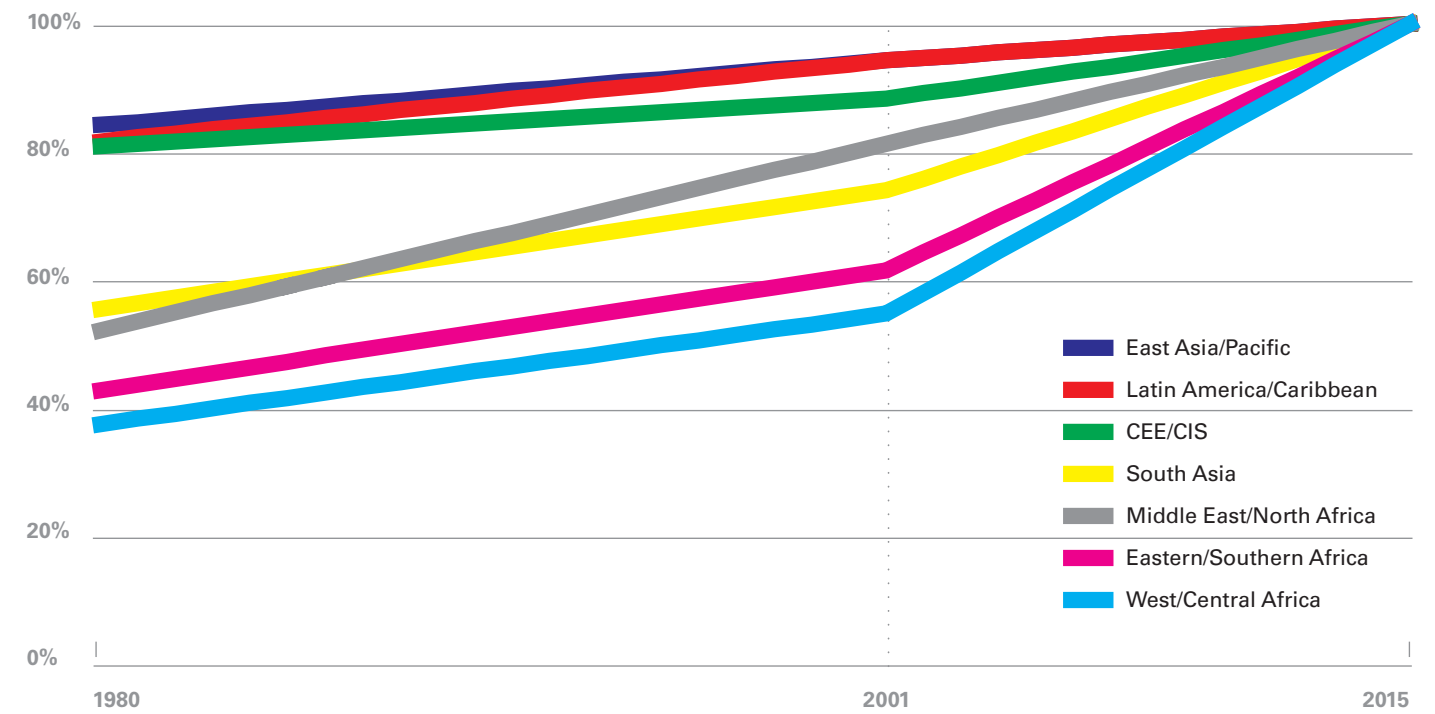
From this broad-brush picture, however, the detail needs to be distinguished at regional, national and even subnational levels in order to assess the achievements so far – and to measure the tasks ahead if gender parity is to be attained as soon as possible after the 2005 target date. The gender gap has been closing steadily ever since 1980: Girls have experienced greater gains in school participation than boys across all regions and in most developing countries.⁶ Without exception, all regions showed a higher AARI for girls than for boys over this period, reflecting the enormous ground girls' education had to cover since 1980 in order to close the gap. Despite this level of progress, the indications are that AARI for girls will have to grow much faster than for boys in most regions over the next decade if the world is to achieve gender parity as part of universal primary completion by 2015.

Two regions illustrate the complexity of the situation. In South Asia and West/Central Africa the gender gap is still a paramount concern, but the dimensions of the problem are different. The availability of education in the two regions is very different: In South Asia three quarters of girls attend school whereas in West/Central Africa only a fraction over half of the girls participate in education. But the sheer numbers of girls out of school in South Asia – around 23.5 million, which means there are almost 5 million more girls out of school than boys – ensures that the gender gap for the developing world as a whole remains wide. In West/Central Africa, meanwhile, girls have far less chance of realizing the manifold benefits of education than the girls of any other region. Closing the gender gap in these two regions – as well as pushing on towards universal primary education – should be an absolute priority for policy makers and development agencies over the next decade.

In general the gender gap yawns widest in the Middle East/North Africa, South Asia and West/Central Africa regions, in each of which the GPI in primary attendance is under 0.95 (where 1.00 would indicate parity between girls and boys). In Middle East/North Africa there have been remarkable

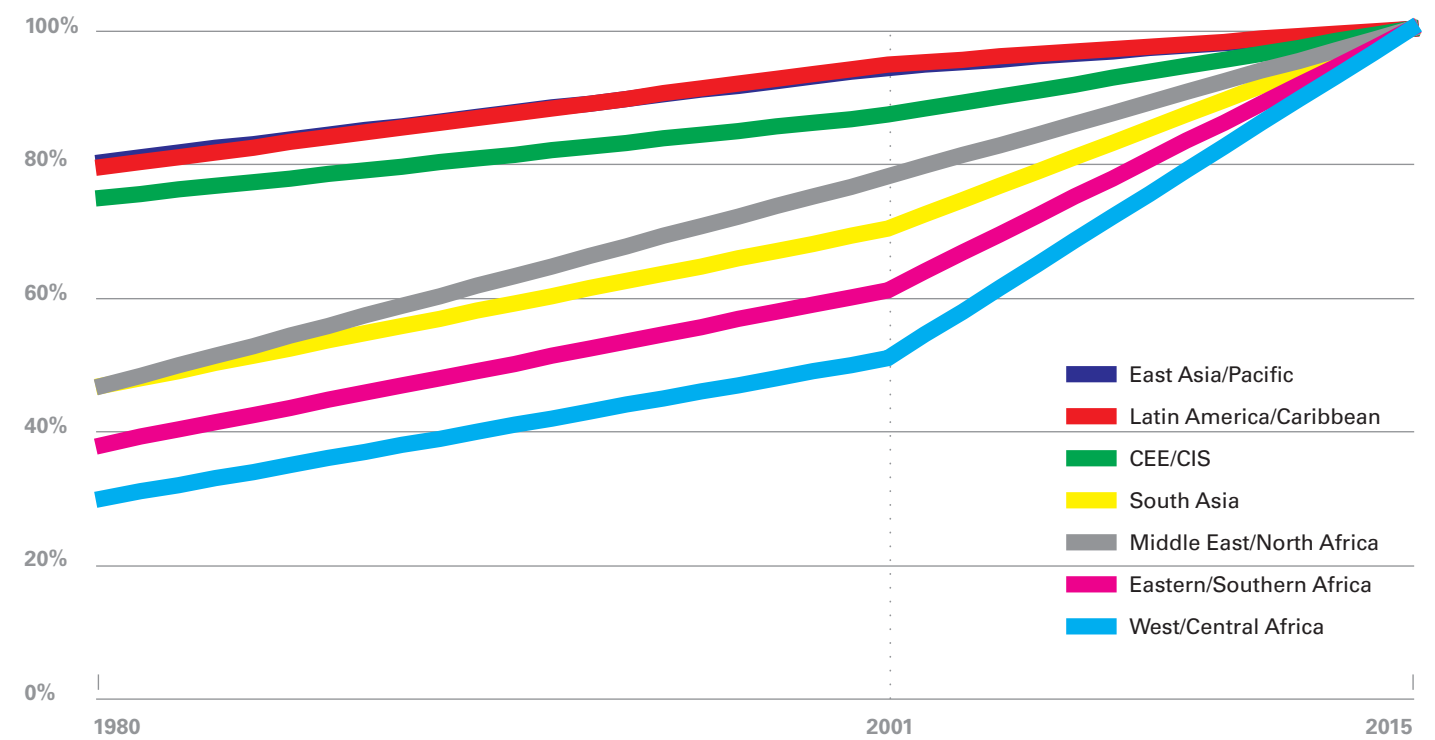
Total primary net enrolment/attendance ratios (1980-2015)

The chart shows the average annual rate of increase in total net enrolment/attendance ratios observed between 1980 and 2001 and required from 2001 in order to meet the universal primary completion goal in 2015.



Girls' primary net enrolment/attendance ratios (1980-2015)

The chart shows the average annual rate of increase in girls' net enrolment/attendance ratios observed between 1980 and 2001 and required from 2001 in order to meet the universal primary completion goal in 2015.



improvements in girls' educational participation in recent years: Over the period 1980 to 2001 the region has seen by far the largest expansion in educational opportunities for both girls and boys. But there are still only 94 girls in school for every 100 boys, indicating that there are still significant pockets of bias to overcome.

Conditions in individual countries often vary markedly from the regional average. In 26 of the 81 developing countries included in the UNICEF projections for 2005, the GPI dips below 0.96, i.e., there are fewer than 96 girls per 100 boys in primary school. The countries showing the lowest ratio of girls in school per 100 boys are Yemen (61), Niger (67), Chad (69), Burkina Faso (71), Mali (74), Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau (76), Benin (78) and Guinea (79).

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the gender gap concerns those countries and regions where gender disparity favours girls rather than boys. UNICEF projections of primary net attendance ratios (NAR) for 2005 show that in two developing regions – Latin America/Caribbean and East Asia/Pacific – there are marginally higher percentages of girls in primary school than boys. Moreover, in 12 of 81 countries, the GPI is 1.05 or more, indicating there are substantially more girls than boys in primary school.

It is important that girls' education remains a priority concern even in regions and countries with a reverse gender gap. There are two reasons for this. First, individual country statistics can reveal concerns even within regions where girls' school attendance is good. In Latin America/Caribbean, for instance, there are marginally more girls in school than boys, yet in Guatemala, UNICEF projections for 2005 show that only 97 girls per 100 boys attend school. Similarly, even when national averages show slightly higher numbers of girls in school than boys (as in Bolivia) there may be pockets of intense discrimination against girls, such as within indigenous populations or other minority groups.

The second reason for countries with a reverse gender gap to retain girls' education as a priority is that, as the MDGs make clear, gender parity is not just a basis for achieving universal primary completion but is also a platform for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Attention will need to be given to factors that ensure girls gain equality in and through education, leading to women's empowerment in the wider society.

It is imperative at this stage that the world's commitment to girls' education does not falter. Postponing meaningful gender parity by a few more years will be costly, not only for the individual girls whose lives are affected, but also for the whole Millennium Development enterprise. Investing in girls' education is a strategy that protects the rights of all children to a quality education and can jump-start all other development goals – beginning with gender equality and the empowerment of women.

BARRIERS, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Progress in achieving the education and gender MDGs depends not just on providing education but on addressing the barriers that prevent some children from starting or completing school. These disparities represent significant challenges for policy makers and development agencies; recognition of their importance presents clear opportunities for progress over the next 10 years.

Among the significant barriers are poverty, child labour, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS, remote geographic location, poor infrastructure, ethnicity, women's low social status and mothers' lack of education, civil conflict, natural disasters and violence. Since these disparities often overlap, it is not always easy to discern how they interact to impact on education. There is therefore a paramount need for gathering disaggregated statistics in these areas that can inform future policy and practice. Disaggregated statistics can illuminate, for example, the ways in which girls are affected by a combination of their gender, vulnerability to sexual exploitation and HIV/AIDS, and their origin from poor households or within rural areas.⁷

Poverty

Household survey data from all developing regions show that children from the poorest 20 per cent of households are 3.2 times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the wealthiest 20 per cent. This ratio masks wide variations among regions and between individual countries. For example, whereas in the CEE/CIS region the poorest children are 1.6 times more likely to be out of primary school, the ratio stretches to 4.5 in both Middle East/North Africa and Latin America/Caribbean. Yet even in the CEE/CIS region, individual countries show wide disparities: In both Kazakhstan and the Republic of Moldova children from the poorest households are at least 5.0 times more likely to be out of school.

In every region there are countries with similarly huge disparities, such as: Indonesia in East Asia/Pacific (5.6); Eritrea, Madagascar and Zambia in Eastern/Southern Africa (4.9 or more); Algeria and Bahrain in Middle East/North Africa (4.9 or more); India in South Asia (3.4); Nicaragua, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela in Latin America/Caribbean (6.0 or more) and Cameroon in West/Central Africa (5.0). Furthermore, 77 per cent of children out of primary school come from the poorest 60 per cent of households in developing countries, with much higher levels in Latin America/Caribbean (84 per cent) and Eastern/Southern Africa (80 per cent).

Ensuring that all children of primary school age are in school by 2015 will require programmes and interventions that are carefully tailored to the conditions of each country. For example, while in both Eritrea and Venezuela at least 90 per cent of children out of school come from the poorest 60 per cent of households, in Venezuela only 7 per cent of all children are out of primary school, while in Eritrea an alarming 37 per cent of children are deprived of an education.

In the same way, different strategies may be required to reach out to girls from poor backgrounds. The more a girl is subjected to multiple disadvantages, the more essential it is that the education system should reach out to her through special measures rather than just assume she will be drawn in as part of a general drive for education for all.

Mothers' education

Another key indicator as to the likelihood of a child attending school is whether or not the mother has herself benefited from some education. Children whose mothers have had no education are more than twice as likely to be out of school as children whose mothers have had some education – and the likelihood stretches to more than two-and-a-half times in Latin America/Caribbean and South Asia. In eight countries, children with unschooled mothers are at least three times more likely to be out of primary school: Venezuela (4.8), Suriname (4.4), Cameroon (3.9), Côte d'Ivoire (3.7), Guyana (3.4), Eritrea (3.4), India (3.3) and Guinea-Bissau (3.0).

In developing countries, 75 per cent of children out of primary school have mothers with no education. The regional variation hidden by this average is quite extreme: While 80 per cent of children out of primary school in West/Central Africa, South Asia and Middle East/North Africa have mothers with no education at all, the proportion in East Asia/Pacific shrinks to 28 per cent and in CEE/CIS to just 1 per cent, essentially because the historic levels of girls' education in those regions have been much higher. In Latin America/Caribbean only 20 per cent of mothers of primary-school-age children are unschooled, yet their children represent more than half the number of children out of school – an indication of the wide economic disparities within the region.

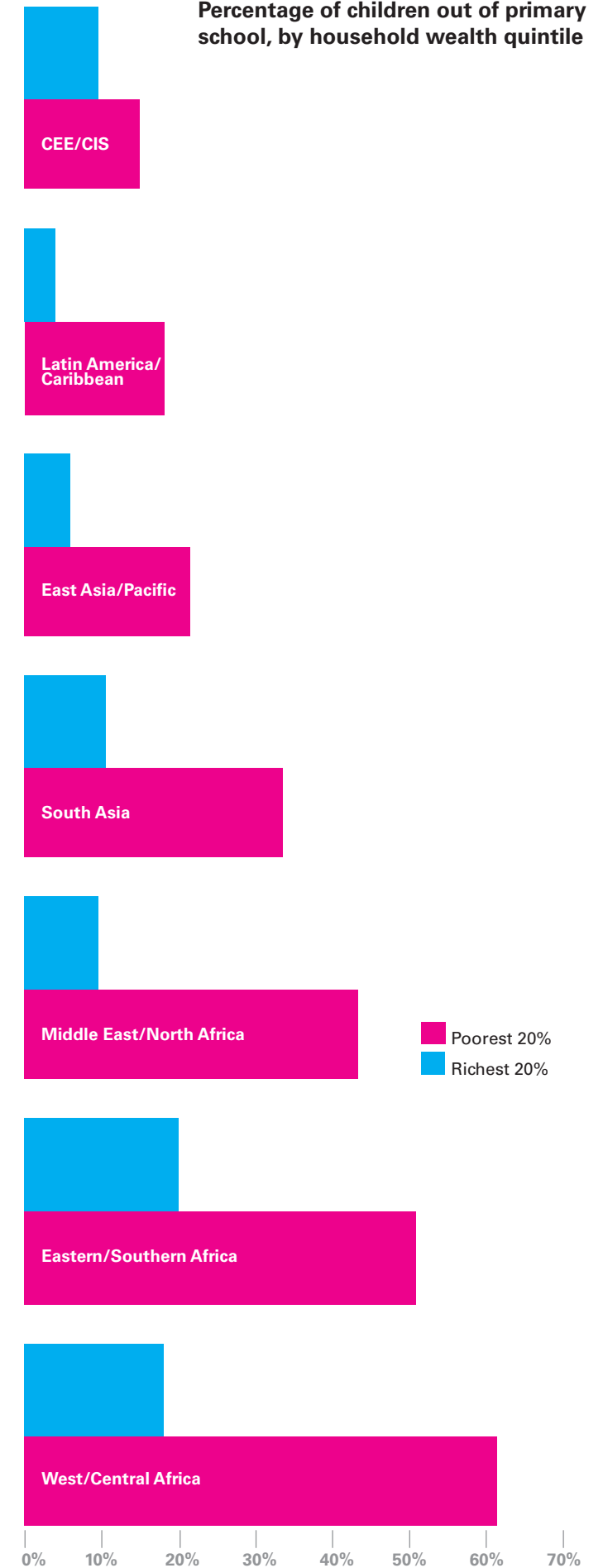
The education level of the mother clearly plays a major role in determining whether or not a child goes to school. This underlines the importance of getting as many girls and future mothers into school as soon as possible and encouraging them to stay on to complete their education.

Geographic location

Children's chances of going to school partly depend on where they live. Fully 30 per cent of rural children in developing countries are out of school compared with 18 per cent of those living in urban areas. Among the multiple contributing factors are that in rural areas children are likely to have to travel much further to reach the nearest school; their parents are less likely to have been educated and to value education; and it is often harder to attract good teachers to the countryside.

Globally some 82 per cent of children out of primary school live in rural areas. There is some regional variation, with Latin America/Caribbean showing the lowest rates (60 per cent of those out of school are rural children) and Eastern/Southern Africa the highest (87 per cent). The 84 per cent rural component of children out of school in India contributes

Percentage of children out of primary school, by household wealth quintile



hugely to the worldwide figure because of the country's large child population.

Among those children out of school who live in rural areas, girls are often the most deprived. For example, in Ethiopia, for every 100 boys in school in urban areas there are 97 girls; but for every 100 boys in school in rural areas there are only 76 girls. In Burkina Faso, there are 91 girls in urban areas and 57 girls in rural areas per 100 boys in school.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Recent UNICEF estimates of secondary school participation in the developing world⁸ indicate that no more than 39 per cent of children of secondary-school age are attending secondary school (as measured by the secondary net attendance ratio, SNAR). The analysis reveals that a further 27 per cent of secondary-school-age children attend primary school – either repeating courses they have failed or simply having started school late – which highlights how vital it is that children start school at the right age and progress through it with minimal repetition.

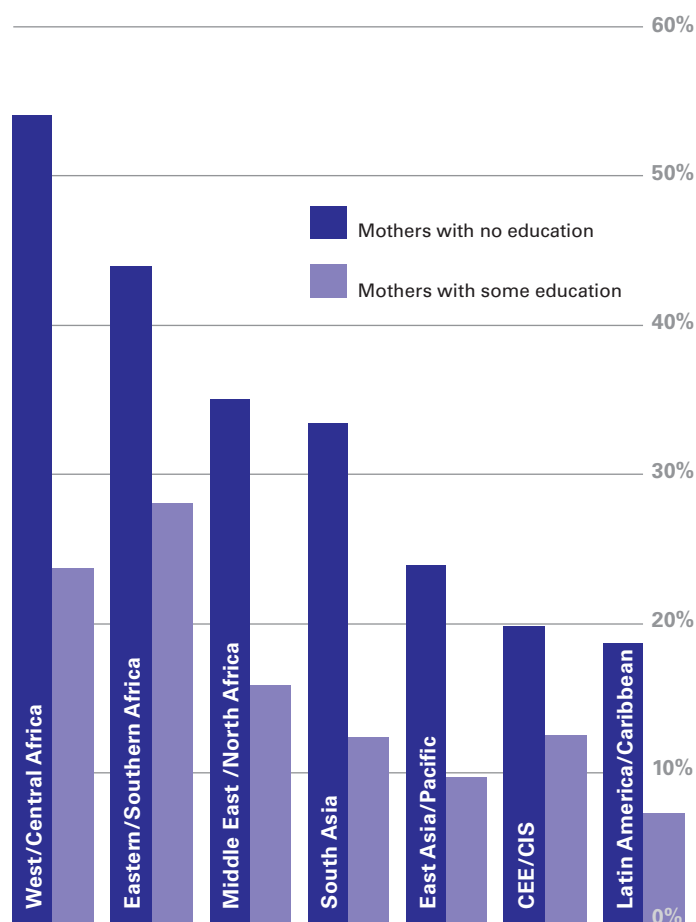
The experiences of different regions diverge even more at secondary than at primary level. In CEE/CIS, though there

has been a significant fall off in secondary participation since 1990, the SNAR is, at 70 per cent, still higher than in any other region. In sub-Saharan Africa, by contrast, a mere 20 per cent of children of the appropriate age participate in secondary school. In East Asia/Pacific and Middle East/North Africa broadly half of children are in secondary school while in Latin America/Caribbean and South Asia the ratios are 44 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively.

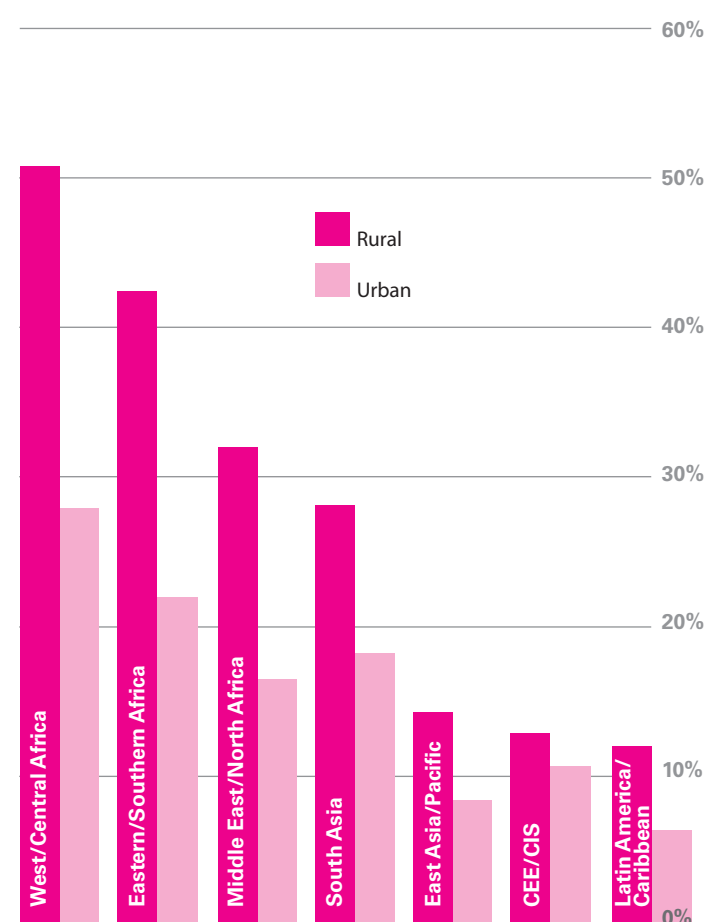
The most pressing concern in secondary education is to eliminate gender disparity by the end of 2005. Of 75 countries surveyed, 22 were on course to meet the goal of gender parity at secondary level and 21 needed to make an additional effort. Meanwhile, 25 countries were far from the goal, of which 15 were in the West/Central Africa region. The country with the lowest ratio of girls to boys in secondary school – 41 girls per 100 boys – was Yemen.

The gender gap at the secondary level is most pronounced in the South Asia and Middle East/North Africa regions. In South Asia, 44 per cent of boys of secondary school age are in secondary school compared with only 36 per cent of girls, while in Middle East/North Africa 54 per cent of boys and 43 per cent of girls are in secondary school.

Percentage of children out of primary school, by mothers' education



Percentage of children out of primary school, by area of residence



In Latin America/Caribbean the gender gap favours girls, with 47 per cent participating in secondary school compared with only 41 per cent of boys. This clearly exacerbates the regional gender trend evident at the primary level and highlights the need to better understand and address those factors that impede educational participation by boys.

Significant gains in terms of gender equality can be made at the secondary-school level. Through education, girls can become more empowered and self-confident as they acquire

the range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values critical for negotiating their place in society. In this regard, many of the benefits normally attributable to education issue from the secondary rather than primary level, which underlines the importance of building on any gains at the primary level with high secondary participation rates.

GENDER PARITY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary net attendance ratios^a

Countries and territories	Total	Boys	Girls	GPI ^b
Yemen	56.0	78.2	32.4	0.41
Guinea	36.8	48.6	23.8	0.49
Côte d'Ivoire	38.0	48.8	28.5	0.58
Mozambique	43.1	54.0	31.7	0.59
Benin	47.2	58.6	35.2	0.60
Mali	29.2	36.2	22.4	0.62
Niger	13.7	16.9	10.6	0.63
Senegal	29.6	36.2	23.6	0.65
Chad	46.0	56.0	36.6	0.65
Iraq	50.3	60.1	40.3	0.67
Burkina Faso	15.3	18.2	12.4	0.68
Central African Republic	47.3	56.3	38.4	0.68
Cambodia	50.4	60.0	40.6	0.68
Togo	64.6	75.4	51.8	0.69
Turkey	59.2	69.3	49.5	0.71
Sierra Leone	37.7	43.1	31.9	0.74
Gambia	47.5	54.9	40.4	0.74
Zambia	58.6	67.3	49.6	0.74
Guinea-Bissau	48.7	55.7	41.6	0.75
Nepal	71.3	80.4	61.8	0.77
Burundi	35.5	40.0	31.7	0.79
Congo, Dem. Rep. of the	64.3	72.0	56.6	0.79
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	66.1	74.0	58.1	0.79
India	63.7	70.6	56.2	0.80
Cameroon	61.3	67.2	55.3	0.82
Guatemala	51.4	55.7	47.4	0.85
Nigeria	68.6	74.0	63.0	0.85
Eritrea	73.0	78.5	67.3	0.86
Uganda	76.0	81.4	70.7	0.87
Mauritania	47.2	50.1	44.4	0.89
Zimbabwe	70.7	74.7	66.3	0.89
Angola	75.9	80.3	71.6	0.89
Tanzania, United Republic of	40.1	42.4	38.2	0.90
Malawi	73.4	77.0	69.6	0.90
Egypt	79.6	83.4	75.4	0.90
Tajikistan	76.3	79.9	72.7	0.91
Equatorial Guinea	79.9	83.3	76.1	0.91
Rwanda	39.4	41.0	37.8	0.92

Secondary net attendance ratios^a

Countries and territories	Total	Boys	Girls	GPI ^b
Ghana	70.5	73.5	67.3	0.92
Gabon	84.8	88.3	81.6	0.92
Kenya	80.3	83.1	77.3	0.93
Madagascar	48.9	50.3	47.4	0.94
Haiti	78.4	81.0	75.9	0.94
Bolivia	82.6	85.3	80.0	0.94
Sudan (Northern)	63.2	64.8	61.5	0.95
Peru	87.8	89.9	85.6	0.95
Swaziland	70.8	72.1	69.4	0.96
Viet Nam	79.0	80.6	77.5	0.96
Albania	46.7	47.4	46.0	0.97
Sao Tome and Principe	54.1	55.0	53.3	0.97
Bangladesh	60.0	60.9	59.1	0.97
Bosnia and Herzegovina	86.7	88.0	85.3	0.97
Comoros	37.9	38.4	37.5	0.98
Myanmar	68.5	69.2	67.8	0.98
Azerbaijan	95.1	96.1	94.1	0.98
Turkmenistan	85.4	85.6	85.3	1.00
South Africa	91.2	91.2	91.1	1.00
Uzbekistan	93.8	93.8	93.7	1.00
Indonesia	60.7	60.5	61.0	1.01
Dominican Republic	90.8	90.3	91.3	1.01
Colombia	73.9	73.1	74.8	1.02
Suriname	81.1	80.2	81.9	1.02
Kyrgyzstan	86.2	85.4	87.1	1.02
Kazakhstan	95.7	94.6	96.9	1.02
Brazil	81.7	80.5	82.9	1.03
Venezuela	87.7	86.2	89.2	1.03
Moldova, Republic of	86.3	84.6	88.1	1.04
Armenia	94.3	92.6	96.1	1.04
Guyana	85.8	83.9	87.8	1.05
Trinidad and Tobago	87.6	85.4	89.8	1.05
Namibia	84.0	81.5	86.3	1.06
Philippines	80.9	76.9	84.9	1.10
Nicaragua	62.0	58.2	65.9	1.13
Lesotho	73.0	68.6	77.6	1.13
Mongolia	76.5	71.6	80.8	1.13

^a Shaded countries and territories are on course to meet the goal of gender parity in secondary education (GPI from 0.96 to 1.04).

^a Secondary net attendance ratios are based on household surveys (Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys), 1998-2003.

^b Ratio of girls' to boys' secondary net attendance ratio (SNAR).

Policies to abolish school fees appear to have made an impact in the region.

Eastern/Southern Africa will require a massive rate of increase in the NE/AR – an average of 2.75 per cent per year – if universal primary education is to be realized by 2015. This despite a statistical gender parity for the region and having maintained the world's second-highest AARI – 0.9 per cent a year – in NE/AR over the period 1980 to 2001. Yet the region had only 62 per cent of primary-school-age children in school and, despite its relatively small population compared with Asia, it accounted for 19 per cent of the world's total number of children out of primary school.

In many countries of the region, progress towards the goal of education for all has been massively disrupted by HIV/AIDS. The pandemic has ravaged education systems in a multitude of ways. It has deprived schools of teachers and managers who were struck down in their prime. It has forced orphaned children to assume the burden of care for the family, making school attendance an impossibility. And it has undermined the traditional safety net of the extended family, straining community resources to the breaking point.

Against this background, and notwithstanding the long road yet to be travelled to education for all, countries in the

demand. The countries that have made such bold policy decisions deserve the extra encouragement and funds that debt relief and increased aid can provide; they have demonstrated to the rest of the developing world what is possible in the push towards universal primary completion.

Gender parity remains a vital issue in the region, despite UNICEF projections for 2005 showing the net attendance of girls and boys to be level at 65 per cent. In recent years there has been a strong movement to improve girls' educational opportunities in southern Africa and in most of eastern Africa through qualitative improvements such as child-friendly schools, life skills education that is gender responsive, school-feeding programmes, teacher development and child participation. The gains in gender parity owe much to these actions, including support to national efforts provided by the African Girls' Education Initiative and efforts by partners in the UN Girls' Education Initiative. The Girls' Education Movement (GEM) is a further manifestation of this, with girls themselves serving as activists for change. Girls' participation in school increased by an average of 0.5 percentage points a year over boys' during the period from 1980 to 2001.

EASTERN/SOUTHERN AFRICA: STILL A WAY TO GO

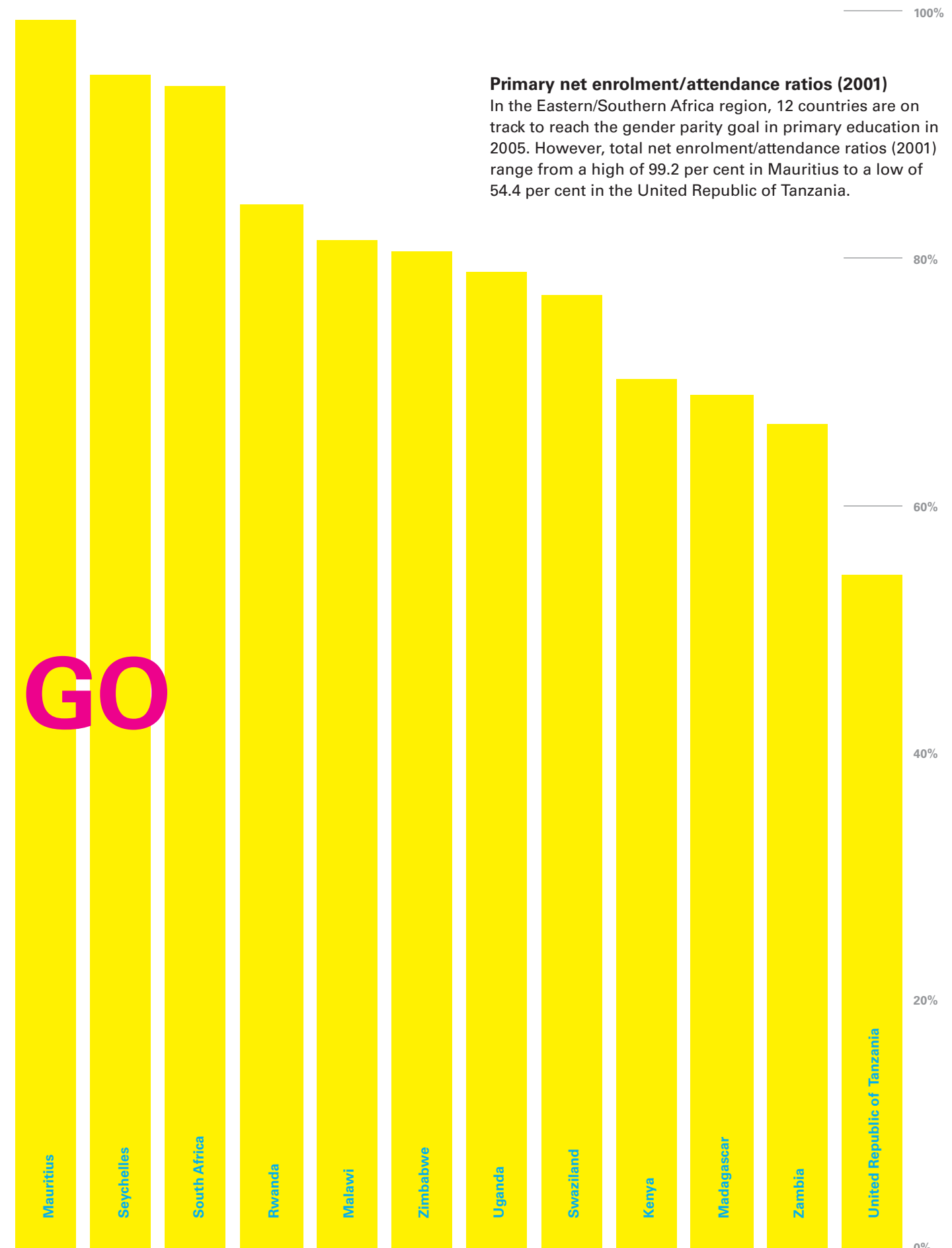
region have posted some notable achievements by showing strong political will and making universal primary education an absolute priority. Some of the measures that appear to have made an impact in the region include policies to abolish school fees and other charges. Indeed, the abolition of tuition fees has become more generalized in the region since the 1980s – a period of economic austerity – and has proved to be one of the keys to swift progress in primary enrolment.

Malawi's abolition of fees for primary education in 1994 stimulated an enormous demand from children, and the experience of other countries has been similar. In the United Republic of Tanzania in 2002 the abolition of school fees caused primary school enrolment to jump from 1.4 million to 3 million; in Kenya in 2003 it boosted numbers by 22 per cent in the first week alone. Uganda's variant of the model, offering free primary education to the first four children in each family, has also proved popular and successful.

For countries that have abolished school fees, the main difficulty has been to safeguard quality education through adequate classroom accommodation, supply of materials and sufficient numbers of teachers to cope with the extra

The region includes countries that are within touching distance of universal primary education, such as Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa (all well over 90 per cent in NE/AR in 2001). But it also includes three East African countries that are still a world away from seeing all their children in primary school and that make the overall regional statistics much lower. In 2001 the NE/AR in Eritrea was just 42.9 per cent, in Ethiopia 30.6 per cent and in Somalia an unimaginable 10.8 per cent. Ethiopia alone had 7.8 million of the world's children out of primary school in 2001, a number exceeded only by India.

It is encouraging that many countries that have made significant progress towards universal primary education are now facing a demand for secondary education from children who are ready to move on. In Kenya, for example, the massive response from children hungry for education is now feeding through to secondary level. There was an almost 12 per cent increase in the number of children sitting for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in 2004. Yet less than half of those who left primary school could be accommodated in the country's 4,000 public secondary schools.⁹



The gender gap in the region is particularly wide.

The challenge the world faces in order to meet the MDG of universal primary education by 2015 is greatest in West/Central Africa. In 2001 the NE/AR in the region was just 55 per cent, despite having increased at an average annual rate of 0.8 per cent since 1980. More than a third of the 21 countries worldwide in which net primary school participation is below 60 per cent are in the region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, moreover, contributed 5.3 million and 7.7 million, respectively, to the total number of children out of school in 2001, numbers only exceeded in three other countries: Ethiopia, India and Pakistan.

The only countries in West/Central Africa that are currently close to universal primary participation are among the smallest in terms of population: Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe. At the other extreme, in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Niger, fewer than two children in every five benefit from primary education.

The gender gap in West/Central Africa is particularly wide, with a GPI of just 0.90 according to UNICEF projections for 2005 based on attendance data. Only five countries –

Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Mauritania and Sao Tome and Principe – are on track to meet the gender parity goal in primary education in 2005. (Net enrolment/attendance estimates in 2001 showed Cape Verde also to be on track.) The countries in the region in which girls are most disadvantaged educationally are Chad and Niger.

High repetition and drop-out rates are common, and transition rates from the first to the fifth grade are very low. In Chad, for instance, only 1 child in 10 reaches the fifth year of school without repeating.¹⁰ Teacher shortages, low teacher salaries and few opportunities for professional development add to the poor quality of education in many countries of the region.

This region has also been disproportionately blighted by emergencies, with major armed conflicts having taken place between 1990 and 2003 in Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone.¹¹ The damage done by war to the educational prospects of children in these countries has been incalculable. Among the most notable marks of progress, however, have been the back-to-school

campaigns in the Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. In Liberia, for example, following the signing of the peace agreement in August 2003, a nationwide back-to-school campaign mobilized over 7,200 teachers and oriented them in rapid education response, thereby providing access to schooling for an estimated 830,000 children.

Some of the lessons learned in these back-to-school campaigns in West/Central Africa and other regions have been incorporated into essential learning packages. Using the same kinds of interventions in terms of logistics, services and supplies will help accelerate access to a basic education of good quality in stable countries of the region.

Another promising intervention is the child-friendly school model, used in most countries of the region; in Nigeria and Senegal it has been taken a step further towards the establishment of a national standard.

Estimates based on attendance data indicate that Sao Tome and Principe is the only country in the region to be on target

to meet gender parity at the secondary level, although just over one half of children in that country attend secondary school. Secondary net attendance rates are lowest in Niger (13.7 per cent) and Burkina Faso (15.3 per cent).

Governments in this region are constrained by poverty and heavy external debt repayments, often to the detriment of education spending. They struggle to keep pace with the demand for places in schools from a population in which fertility rates are still high and the numbers of children are still rising every year. In a region in which the AARI in NE/AR required to reach primary education for all by 2015 is 3.2 per cent, emergency measures are needed – along with emergency levels of international support and funding.

WEST/CENTRAL AFRICA: EMERGENCY MEASURES NEEDED

100% —

80% —

Primary net enrolment/attendance ratios (2001)

In 10 countries of the West/Central Africa region, the gender parity index is lower than 0.85.



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