

primary education

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2005

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A chance for every child?

The second Millennium Development Goal aims to ensure universal primary school education by 2015. The World Bank assesses the likelihood of this happening and presents the policy reforms and domestic and international financing required to achieve universal completion of primary school.

During the 1990s the average rate of primary school completion in the developing world rose from 72 to 77 percent, far short of what is needed to ensure universal completion of primary school by 2015. The global average hides major regional differences. In sub-Saharan Africa barely half of school-aged children finish primary school. The Middle East and North Africa show a pattern of stagnation over the 1990s.

The World Bank reports that:

- 37 of 155 developing countries have achieved, or have almost achieved, universal completion of primary school, with 32 countries on track to reach the goal on trend rates of progress achieved during the 1990s.
- 86 countries are at risk of not achieving universal completion of primary school.
- 27 nations – on current trends – will reach half the target by 2015.
- Trends in the poorest sub-Saharan states and others suffering war and conflict will have to rise drastically to achieve universal completion of primary school.

In order to quantify what must be done before 2015 the authors focus on the 55 largest low-income countries – home to three quarters of children worldwide who don't attend school. A few countries within this group have achieved or are close to achieving universal completion of primary school, by devoting a higher share of their gross domestic product (GDP) to public primary education, paying teachers an average annual wage of about 3.3 times per capita GDP, maintaining an average pupil to teacher ratio of 39:1 and keeping average repetition rates (pupils having to repeat an academic year) below 10 percent.

World Bank projections assume that developing countries will increase their domestic funding for Education for All (EFA) and that they will finance 90 percent of the

costs of achieving the goal by themselves. In the run-up to 2015 the gap between domestic finance capacity and total education spending needs will peak at 15 percent of total expenditure. The bulk of required external support will be needed in sub-Saharan Africa.

The World Bank estimates that achieving Universal Primary School Completion (UPSC) in low-income countries by 2015 would require about US\$3.7 billion per year in

external aid – more than a trebling of the current level of aid to primary education in these countries. To achieve UPSC in all developing countries, including middle-income countries where education costs are higher, would require about US\$5.7 billion a year in external aid

for primary education.

Other changes are needed, including:

- better targeting of aid to EFA priority countries
- more flexible, combined donor assistance in support of sector-wide approaches
- more effective monitoring of key outcomes and wider sharing of knowledge
- reducing unit costs by shifting to community-based construction of classrooms
- supporting the global EFA Fast-Track Initiative launched in 2002 to assist low-income countries in scaling up implementation of donor-funded education sector plans.

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'Achieving universal primary education by 2015: a chance for every child', Report No. 26605, World Bank, by Barbara Bruns, Alain Mangar and Ramahatra Rakotomalala, August 2003

www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDS_IBank_Servlet?pcont=details&eid=000094946_03082204005065



Botswana financing UPE

Botswana signed up to the goal of Universal primary education (UPE) in 1980. Although facilities have improved, many more teachers have been recruited and enrolment rates have risen dramatically, many argue that the introduction of UPE has led to low quality education; poor rural districts have high drop-out and repetition rates.

A report from the Botswana Institute of Development Policy Analysis examines how primary education is funded. The study suggests that increased spending on primary education may have led to higher enrolment rates and improved pupil to teacher and pupil to classroom ratios, but has not had the impact on quality or outcomes that was hoped for.

Unlike many sub-Saharan countries, Botswana has allocated substantial resources to education. Since UPE was adopted, education expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) has risen from 6.8 to 10.9 percent and from 19.1 to 24.5 percent as a percentage of total government expenditure.

Botswana's latest education statistics suggest that UPE has almost been

achieved. These need to be viewed with caution given previous inconsistencies between education statistics and national population figures. Other findings include:

- Donors have significantly financed expansion of facilities, yet the budget (three quarters of which goes to teachers) remains Botswana's responsibility.
- Teachers' salaries have declined in real terms: whereas the disparity between a primary teacher's income and that of a senior civil servant was 1:5 in 1978, by 2000 it had increased to 1:13.
- There is a lack of legal action against defaulting contractors. Companies are being awarded tenders and then slipping out of them; there are also continuous delays building classrooms and teachers' quarters.
- Some policy-makers have expressed commitment to UPE but undermined it by a strategy assigning university graduates to the central government at the expense of understaffed local authorities.
- Scheduling the achievement of projects is often made up, by under-financing: projects continue into subsequent financial years which demands costly bureaucratic procedures to prepare supplementary estimates to address the shortfalls.

In Botswana, high economic growth

persists alongside high levels of income inequality.

In urban areas school enrolment rates among the poorest 20 percent are higher than in rural areas but remain low

compared to those for higher income groups. To achieve UPE policy-makers in Botswana need to:

- tackle urban bias and recognise that efforts to increase school enrolments must be accompanied by efforts to reduce poverty in marginalised rural districts
- ensure that those who enrol in the first year are not allowed to quit until they have completed seven years of primary education
- improve the quality of primary school teaching and the skills and morale of teachers
- address the negative attitudes of parents to education in those districts with high drop-out and repetition rates.

Increased spending on primary education may have led to higher enrolment rates, but has not had the impact on quality that was hoped for

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'Financing primary education for all: Botswana', UK Institute of Development Studies, by Lisenda Lisenda, 2004
(available free from bookshop@ids.ac.uk)

UPE by 2015 Is spending more enough?

One of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. How is public spending helping to achieve this aim? A survey of recent literature and performance data by the UK's Overseas Development Institute shows that other factors are also important: simply spending more will not be enough.

Progress towards UPE is slow but it has stopped in some of the poorest countries. Many pupils repeat years and are often over the average class age which distorts enrolment figures. Many children still drop out or never attend school. Population ageing makes UPE easier to achieve but there is a backlog of over-aged, unschooled children.

Evidence of the economic benefits of education is mixed, showing returns at the individual level, but limited impact on overall economic growth. Other findings include:

- Developing countries' expenditure on education, relative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), has increased slowly and erratically since 1970. Spending varies widely and bears no strong relationship to primary enrolment and completion rates.
- Quality and efficiency are low in poorer areas. Low standards and the effects of poverty on demand are the greatest threats to achieving UPE by 2015.
- Most countries outside Africa could, with extra funding, achieve UPE.
- In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS is reducing the supply of education (numbers of teachers) more than the demand for it (numbers of children).
- Nationally, strategies to increase primary enrolment include:
 - committing more resources to primary education, by increasing

Many pupils repeat years and are often over the average class age which distorts enrolment figures

public expenditure where it is a low share of GDP and/or by redirecting it to the primary sector

- reducing waste and excessive costs to increase efficiency of schools
- improving quality including training and motivating teachers and providing learning and teaching materials
- reducing, for poor people, the private costs of sending children to school.

Donors have an important role to play. International support focuses on mobilising extra resources for the poorest countries and supporting budget reforms. Sector-wide approaches have introduced performance-based planning, budgeting and management. But donors may need to maintain some sector-level involvement to ensure long-term sustainability. The study concludes that donors should:

- support poverty reduction strategies in partner countries with flexible aid tools
- use local expenditure management procedures
- support capacity-building and lesson-learning, particularly at the sector level
- engage in national and sectoral dialogue and follow up on strategies, implementation and performance
- try to understand the specific conditions in each country and assess the value of sector and national strategies and institutions
- work with other partners to build a performance culture among programme managers and service providers.

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'Poverty reduction outcomes in education and health: public expenditure and aid' ODI Working Paper 210, by John Roberts, 2003
www.odi.org.uk/publications/working_papers/wp210_web.pdf

Grim future for girls in Africa?

Africa: in 2000 the probability of a child attending primary school was the same as it was in 1980. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest primary enrolment of any major region in the developing world; the number of African children not attending school is rising faster than in any other part of the world. Can Africa meet the Millennium Development Goals of primary schooling for all and gender equity by 2015?

Collaborative research between nine African governments, the Forum for African Women Educationalists and the University of Sussex assesses the challenges in improving school enrolment and promoting gender equality. Sub-Saharan Africa will soon be home to over 50 percent of children who don't attend school – most of these 60 million unschooled children are girls.

The authors argue that, although public finances are limited, schooling for all is both affordable and achievable. Although

most sub-Saharan African governments substantially increased financial allocations to primary schooling in the 1990s, Africa's economic decline has been so severe that their absolute value has fallen sharply.

The relationship between wealth and levels of primary enrolments is weak. Countries with similar income levels have notably different enrolment ratios – those of Malawi and Mali are over three times greater than those of Ethiopia. Other key findings stress that:

- gender inequality in primary schooling varies substantially among equally poor African states
- countries in Anglophone African countries spend more on primary education, pay teachers less and have significantly lower unit costs and higher enrolment ratios than Francophone states
- indirect costs of school attendance and gender relations in households, families, schools and workplaces disproportionately affect girls' prospects of getting educated
- lack of latrines, chairs and desks denies educational opportunities for girls.

Annual rates of expenditure growth to achieve schooling for all over fifteen years range from four percent in Senegal to more than nine percent in Ethiopia. Although, in principle, these resources could be

domestically generated by reorganising expenditure and economic growth, external assistance is also needed.

World Bank projections about resources to be released for education as a result of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative and the extent to which households can be expected to cover schooling costs are optimistic. The researchers call for governments to commit to increasing recurrent expenditure allocated to primary education. Other recommendations include:

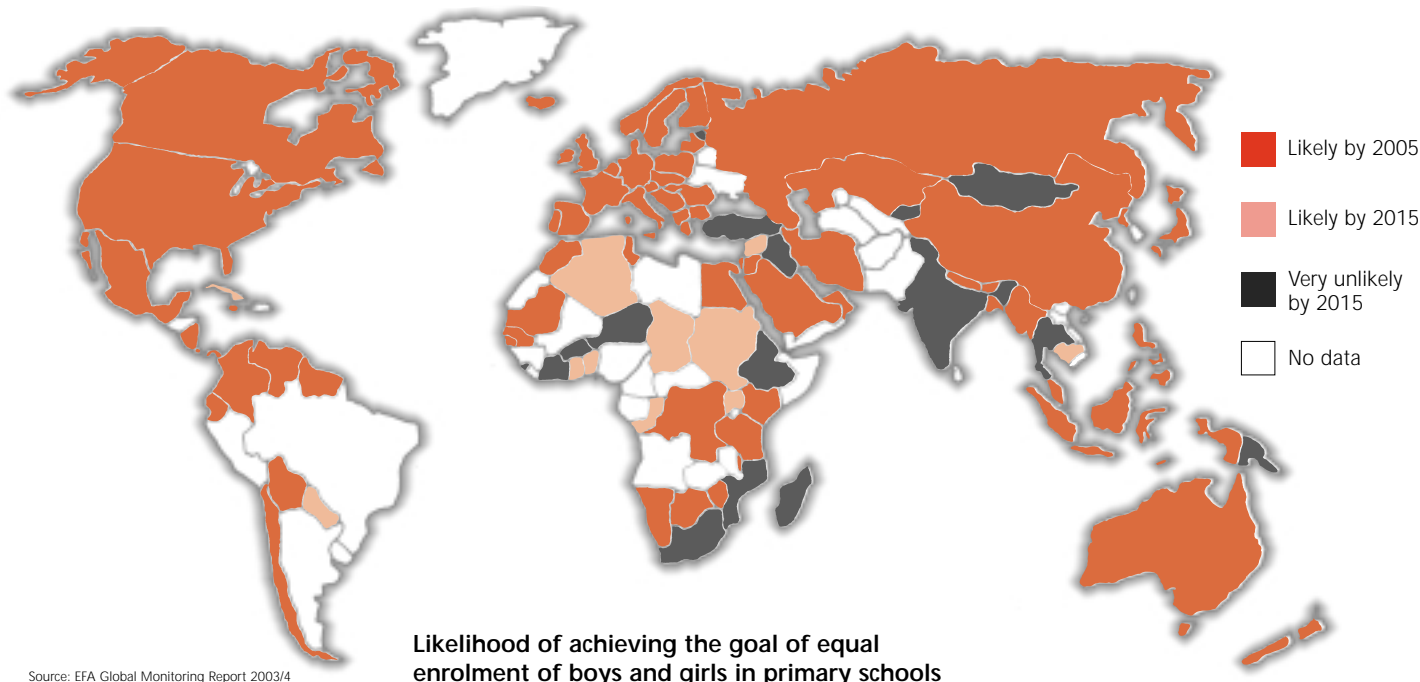
- a two-to-three fold increase in education aid and an end to donor bias towards giving education grants and loans to those states with less acute needs
- governments and aid agencies to work together to promote gender mainstreaming and ensure sector-wide approaches reflect a shared understanding of gender objectives in education policy
- more generous mechanisms for debt rescheduling and debt forgiveness.

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'Achieving schooling for all in Africa: costs, commitment, and gender', Ashgate Publishing, by Christopher Colclough, Sameer Al-Samarrai, Pauline Rose and Mercy Tembon, 2004



Educating more in Uganda But is quality suffering?

In 1997 Uganda resolved to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE). Within five years, the number of children attending primary schools almost trebled. However, pupil to teacher, pupil to textbook and pupil to classroom ratios have worsened. Many parents spend more than the state on their children's education.

Ugandan leaders have promised seven years of primary education for every child. As a result, primary school enrolment increased from 2.5 million in 1996 to 7.3 million by the end of 2002.

Although education expenditure rose dramatically, due to the sheer number of pupils, expenditure per child has declined. Spending favours wealthier parts of Uganda, where parents are able to contribute more to their children's education.

If UPE is to succeed in Uganda, policy-makers must:

- ensure that disadvantaged regions get a fair share of teachers, classrooms, furniture and textbooks – this would involve ensuring uniform expenditure per pupil in all areas of the country, i.e. public and household expenditure
- expand secondary and vocational schools to absorb the 'bulge' of additional primary school-leavers

- clearly account for how education resources are allocated
- improve payroll management to ensure teachers are not demotivated by delayed salary payments
- deal with fraud and reform inefficient tendering processes.

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'Financing primary education for all: Uganda', UK Institute of Development Studies, by Lawrence Bategeka, Milton Ayoki and Ashie Mukungu, 2004 (available free from bookshop@ids.ac.uk)

How good is primary schooling in Ghana?

Ghana has made considerable progress in enrolling more boys and girls in school. The progress made is sufficient to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015 and hence gender equality at primary level. However, reaching this goal cannot be taken for granted as there are many disadvantaged schools in poorer areas. Nearly one in five pupils completing primary schooling is illiterate, for example. Achieving UPE will require increased focus on schools in remote areas and help for schools that need it.

A report from the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department assesses the impact of four education projects in Ghana supported by the World Bank since 1986. It examines trends in attendance and learning, identifies which educational interventions have been most cost effective and evaluates the extent to which improved education supports better welfare outcomes.

The authors had access to data enabling them to analyse school-level changes over 15 years from 1988. They reveal major

successes. Fifteen years ago, nearly two-thirds of pupils completing primary school were illiterate while today this is the case for less than a fifth. Improvements in learning are strongly linked to better welfare – measured by higher income, better nutrition and reduced mortality. Most children now benefit from attending school, both educationally and economically. While analysis shows that there is no economic return from simply attending school, there are benefits from learning achievements.

The impact of the eight thousand classroom blocks and 35 million text books provided by the World Bank over the last 15 years shows that increasing the availability and quality of classrooms and teaching materials directly contributes to educational achievement. Getting enough classrooms and ensuring they remain in decent shape are vital ingredients for a successful educational strategy in countries yet to achieve UPE.

Other key lessons drawn from the study are:

- Supervision of teachers is vital – both by head teachers and external supervisors.
- Schools in poorer communities remain poorly resourced: reliance on district and community-based financing has introduced a bias in favour of wealthier schools.
- It is perhaps too early to judge but evidence of benefits from community management is weak.

- Variations in the quality of education are not simply a matter of regional differences: there are also deprived schools in wealthier districts.
- Learning is enhanced when teachers are able to speak the local language. The report calls for greater efforts to:
- retain trained teachers, improve teacher morale and offer relevant in-service training
- solve salary payment problems: teachers' morale could be raised and they would not be absent so often if paid on time
- initiate programmes in disadvantaged schools
- address disparities in the availability of resources by assisting powerless communities which lack the political connections to attract district finance
- encourage private sector participation in education: as private primary education grows, it is clear that not all private schools are for the elite.

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'Books, buildings and learning outcomes', An impact evaluation of World Bank support to basic education in Ghana, Report No. 28779, Operations Evaluation Department, World Bank, by Howard White and Edoardo Masset, April 2004

[http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/928A136DEB347B3485256E8A0061BC8D/\\$file/report_28779_basic_education.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/928A136DEB347B3485256E8A0061BC8D/$file/report_28779_basic_education.pdf)

useful websites

Millennium Development Goals: Achieve universal primary education

www.developmentgoals.org/Education.htm

UNESCO primary education

http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30859&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Eldis primary education

www.eldis.org/education/primary.htm

World Bank primary education

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXT/TCY/0,,contentMDK:20246187~menuPK:565293~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:396445,00.html>

The State of the World's Children Report 2004

www.unicef.org/sowc04/sowc04_primary_education.html

Australian Development Gateway primary education resources

www.developmentgateway.com.au/jahia/Jahia/lang/en/pid/177

Academy for Educational Development primary education

www.aed.org/Education/International/primary.cfm

'Class struggles: the challenges of achieving schooling for all'
id21 insights education #2

www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed02/index.html

Basic Education Coalition

www.basiced.org/

Canadian International Development Agency basic education

www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/education-e

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2005 ISSN 1746-8698
Printed on paper produced from sustainable forests



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