Many individual countries have taken fruitful measures to address gender inequities in both their formal and non-formal education systems. For instance, the government of India has encouraged separate girls’ schools wherever necessary, provided special scholarships to girls in several states, and made education free for girls at all levels, including university education. India also supports teacher recruitment procedures in almost all the states seeking to ensure that at least 50% of the positions are filled by female teachers. In Pakistan, a Prime Minister’s project on non-formal basic education focuses on villages and hamlets where separate schools for girls are not available, or where girls’ participation rate at primary level is low or where female illiteracy is pronounced.

Table 2 classifies countries according to the gender parity index that shows the ratio between the girls’ and boys’ net enrolment ratios (NER). An index of 1 indicates parity between girls’ and boys’ enrolment. Countries for which data are available are classified into three main groups, from those with the high gender disparity in participation in primary education to those where gender equality has been achieved.

When envisaging the elimination of gender gaps in education by 2005, particular attention needs to be given to the countries belonging to the first group (column 2), where only 6 to 8 girls are enrolled for every 10 boys. Most of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa, and are characterized by the low level of their enrolment ratios.

The second group (column 3) comprises countries approaching gender parity in enrolments. For most of them the general levels of enrolment are still low, especially in the sub-Saharan African countries of this group.

The third group (column 4) comprises countries that have achieved (or are on the brink of achieving) gender parity in