While many educational authorities are fully aware of the need to expand literacy and non-formal education, these sub-sectors still suffer from lack of recognition. They are often perceived as ‘second-class’, and thus are rejected by some parents and communities. Moreover, both national and external funding to EFA tend to favour primary formal education to the detriment of adult and NFE. As a consequence, most adult and NFE activities are run by NGOs and non-profit organizations rather than government agencies.

The development of this educational sub-system is also hampered in many countries by lack of reliable information as well as weak policy and planning. Such a situation makes the monitoring of progress difficult and thus contributes to a waste of resources.

Other goals

The following goals do not have a specified time table, but it is understood that they fit into the overall 2015 objective of education for all.

Expand early childhood care and education

Early childhood care and education embraces the full range of activities intending to provide for the healthy growth and developmental needs of children, from birth to starting school. Experiences also show that this period is generally broken into two stages. The first stage is from birth to three years, when children may be accommodated in day-nursery centres or in other health and social care institutions. This first EFA goal is currently monitored and assessed mainly through the access to pre-primary education, generally intended for children between the ages of three to six years. Such preschool activities are designed to foster learning as well as emotional and social development, thus preparing young children for primary education.

Access to pre-primary education is still very limited in most developing countries, as shown in Figure 5. Available data show that, except for Latin America, pre-primary schools in developing regions accommodate less than half of the eligible young children. The lowest enrolment ratios are observed in sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 5. Gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education, 1998 (mean and variation within regions)

Note: The figures in parenthesis indicate: number of countries with available data/total number of countries in the region.