2010 Global Monitoring Report
Reaching the marginalized

Gender Overview
Paper for Beijing + 15 Consultation

Key messages

- Progress has been made in narrowing gender gaps in education over the past decade. However, in many countries, girls are still being left behind in educational opportunities.
- The disadvantages that girls face are compounded by other forms of marginalization, including ones associated with poverty, ethnicity, language and location.
- Countries that have put in place reforms to tackle multiple forms of disadvantage, including reforms aimed at breaking down financial and cultural barriers, have made particularly large strides in narrowing gender gaps.
- Much more still needs to be done. This includes ensuring that education is a source of gender empowerment. This is important both to improve this generation's opportunities, as well as to overcome health and education disadvantages of the next generation.

Progress towards Education for All goals

Early childhood care and education

> *The health of newborn children – critical for later educational chances – is intimately related to the health of their mothers. Empowerment through education is one of the strongest antidotes to maternal risk.*

On a global scale, gender parity has been achieved in pre-primary school education, although pre-primary enrolment ratios remain quite low overall. The Arab States remains the only region with significant gender disparity favouring boys at the early childhood level: just nine girls are enrolled for every ten boys.

There are other gender-related challenges to achieving the goal of early childhood care and education. Women who are malnourished and suffering from micronutrient deficiency face far higher risks during pregnancy and childbirth, and are more likely to give birth to underweight babies. Restricted growth of the foetus during pregnancy is a major risk factor for maternal health and child survival – and is likely to lead to future educational disadvantage.

Undernutrition in utero, low birth weight and heightened vulnerability to sickness after birth can cause direct structural damage to the brain that impairs cognitive development and locks children into a future of underachievement. Wider health risks during pregnancy and childbirth also have consequences for education:

- Maternal iodine deficiency in pregnancy causes an estimated 38 million children to be born each year facing risks of mental impairment and congenital abnormalities (UNICEF, 2007b).
- Anaemia, which affects around half of all pregnant women, heightens the risks associated with pregnancy and reduces prospects for child survival (UNICEF, 2008b).
- Around half of the stunting observed in infants occurs in the uterus and the remainder during the first two years of life (Victoria et al., 2008).
- The absence of skilled health personnel during delivery costs lives and leaves children facing lifetime disadvantages. Asphyxia contributes to around one-quarter of newborn deaths and results in about 1 million children suffering learning difficulties and disabilities such as cerebral palsy (WHO, 2005).” (p. 45)

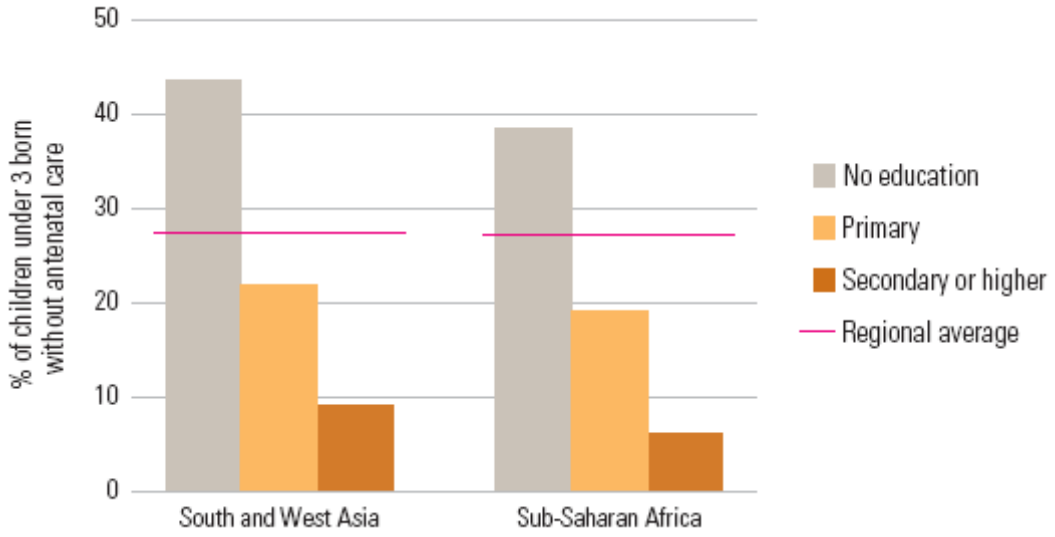
Access to health provision is not the only barrier to improved child and maternal care. Many underlying problems associated with pregnancy and childbirth reflect a failure to protect women’s rights. Low status, heavy workloads, a lack of voice in matters of sexual and reproductive health, early marriage and poor access to information all contribute.

The strength of the links between maternal health and education is often overlooked. Some of those links are very direct. Young women of middle to higher secondary school age, 15 to 19, account for one in seven deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth (WHO and UNICEF, 2003). The younger the age at pregnancy, the greater the health risks for mother and child. Being born to a mother under 18 increases the risk of infant mortality by 60% and the children who survive are more likely to suffer from low birth weight, undernutrition and delayed cognitive development (Lawn et al., 2006; UNICEF, 2008b; WHO, 2005).

Empowerment through education is one of the strongest antidotes to maternal risk. Women with higher levels of education are more likely to delay and space out pregnancies, and to seek health care support. In South and West Asia, almost half of women with no education give birth without having received antenatal care, compared with nearly 10% for women with secondary education (Figure 1). The ‘education advantage’ is even more pronounced when it comes to having a skilled birth attendant present during delivery. In Burkina Faso, mothers with primary education are twice as likely to have a skilled attendant present as those with no education, and women with secondary education are almost four times as likely. While the association between education and improved maternal and child indicators is not evidence of causation, the strength of the association points to the importance of the two-way link between investment in health and investment in education.

Successful policies to improve maternal and child health include scaling up maternal and child care services, achieving results through international aid partnerships, removing cost barriers to vital maternal and child health services, putting nutrition at the centre of the poverty reduction agenda, implementing effective social protection and assuring mothers’ access to education.

Figure 1: Educated mothers have better access to antenatal care
Children under age 3 born without antenatal care, by maternal education, South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, circa 2005



Notes: Figures presented are population weighted averages. The sample of countries used to estimate the South and West Asia average represents more than 90% of the total population of the region and the sample used to estimate the sub-Saharan Africa average more than 80%.
Source: Macro International Inc. (2009).

Universal primary education

> *There has been progress towards greater gender parity in primary school enrolment. Even so, being born a girl carries with it a significant education disadvantage in many countries.*

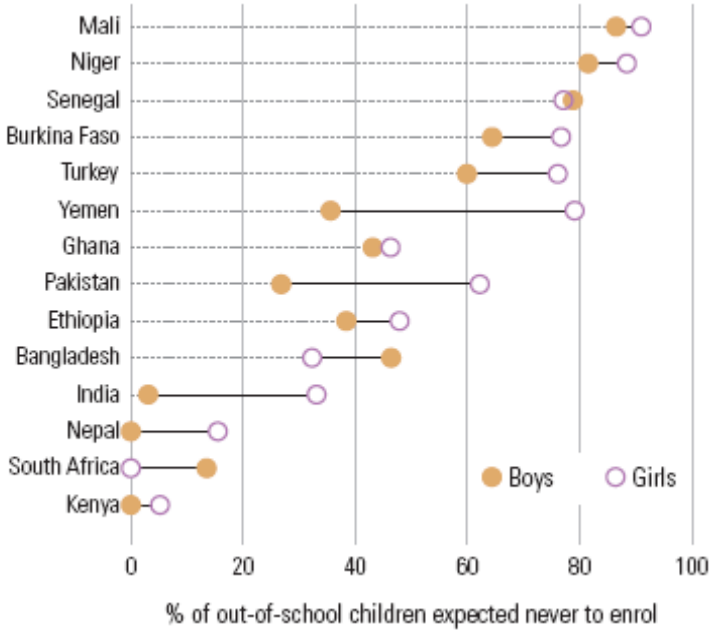
The gender disadvantage in primary schooling is reflected in the fact that girls still account for 54% of the 72 million out-of-school children in 2007. Gender parity would cut the number of girls out of school by over 6 million. In twenty-eight countries, there are fewer than nine girls in primary school for every ten boys. These countries have not yet achieved the goal of gender parity in primary schooling, set for 2005. Eighteen of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. Gender disadvantage is most pronounced in the Arab States, Central Asia, and South and West Asia. The largest gap is found in Afghanistan, with just 63 girls enrolled in school for every 100 boys.

The gender disadvantage at primary school is reflected further as children progress through the education system. Recent data analysis suggests that nearly 71 million adolescents were out of school in 2007 – almost one in five of the total age group. As with primary school age children, adolescent girls are more likely than boys to be out of school. Globally, 54% of out-of-school adolescents in 2007 were girls. In the Arab States the figure was 59% (Bruneforth and Wallet, 2009).

Not only are girls less likely than boys to be in school, they are far more likely than boys never to enter (Figure 2). In sub-Saharan Africa, almost 12 million girls are expected never to enrol, compared with 7 million boys. Countries in other regions face similar problems. In Yemen, nearly 80% of out-of-school girls are unlikely ever to enrol, compared with 36% of boys; in Pakistan the figures are 62% for girls and 27% for boys. Gender disadvantages can cut in the other direction: in Bangladesh, Brazil and South Africa, it is more likely that boys

will never enrol. However, it is clear that more rapid progress in getting children into school will require measures that target the social, economic and cultural barriers facing young girls.

Figure 2: Left behind: out-of-school girls are less likely ever to get into school
% of out-of-school children who are expected never to enrol, by gender, selected countries, 2007



Note: Countries included had more than 500,000 children out of school in 2007
Source: Bruneforth (2009)

Despite these gender disparities, progress has been made in getting more girls into school in many countries. Expansion of primary education has gone hand in hand with progress towards greater gender parity. In countries at low levels of enrolment in 1999, such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Yemen, moves towards gender parity from a low starting point have helped generate large increases in primary enrolment. The experience of Yemen demonstrates that rapid progress towards gender parity from a low base is possible and that sustained progress requires a strong political commitment to equity (Box 1).

Box 1: Yemen – making progress towards universal primary education and gender parity

In Yemen, one of the world's poorest countries, primary enrolment increased from 2.3 million in 1999 to 3.2 million in 2005 and gender disparities shrank. These achievements are all the more remarkable given Yemen's deep poverty, rapid population growth and dispersed rural population.

Girls have benefited from both the overall expansion of education and targeted interventions. Improvement in enrolment in recent years can be traced to policy measures introduced in the late 1990s, including the use of low-cost standardized school designs and consultation with communities on school location. Basic education (grades 1 to 9) has been compulsory and free in principle since the early 1990s, though learners continued to pay for uniforms and textbooks. In 2006/2007 the Ministry of Education made uniforms optional and eliminated textbook fees for girls in grades 1 to 6 and for boys in grades 1 to 3. It has also taken measures to get more female teachers in rural schools.

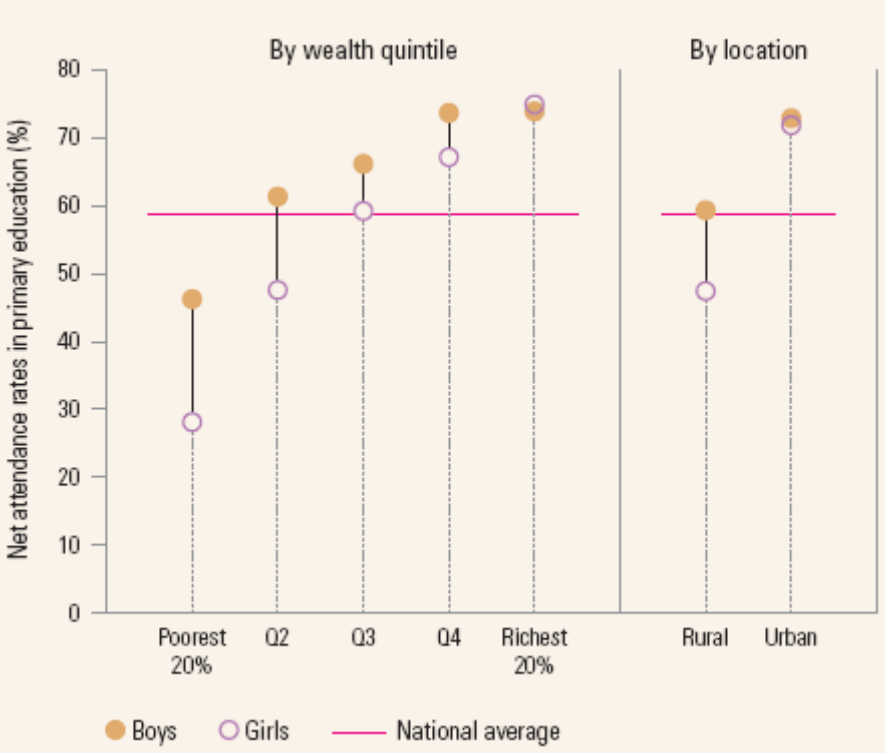
Further progress will require policy measures that weaken the interaction between gender inequality

and poverty. School attendance is lowest, and the gender gap widest, among the poor and in rural areas (Figure 3). Of the more than 900,000 primary school age children out of school in 2005, 70% were girls and 88% lived in rural areas. Household survey data show that only 28% of girls and 46% of boys in the poorest quintile attended school. Such evidence points to parental attitudes and household labour practices that attach less weight to girls' education than that of boys.

Child labour patterns are also structured by gender disparities. Poverty drives both boys and girls into employment, either because of household cash needs or because parents cannot afford education fees. Children of both sexes also spend time on household chores. Around one-fifth of boys and one-quarter of girls are involved in child labour. However, while 70% of male child labourers attend school, only 52% of females do. The disparity reflects longer work hours among girls, a division of labour that leaves girls with greater responsibility for household labour and a greater weight attached to boys' education.

The complex array of factors keeping children out of school in Yemen points to a need for a twin-track response. Education policies can broaden school infrastructure to reach more children and address gender inequality through financial incentives, recruitment of female teachers and other interventions. At the same time, wider strategies are needed to tackle rural poverty, curtail child labour and challenge attitudes that devalue the education of girls.

Figure 3: In Yemen, girls' enrolment is lowest in the poorest and rural areas
Primary net attendance rates in Yemen, by gender, wealth and location, 2005



Source: UNESCO-DME (2009).

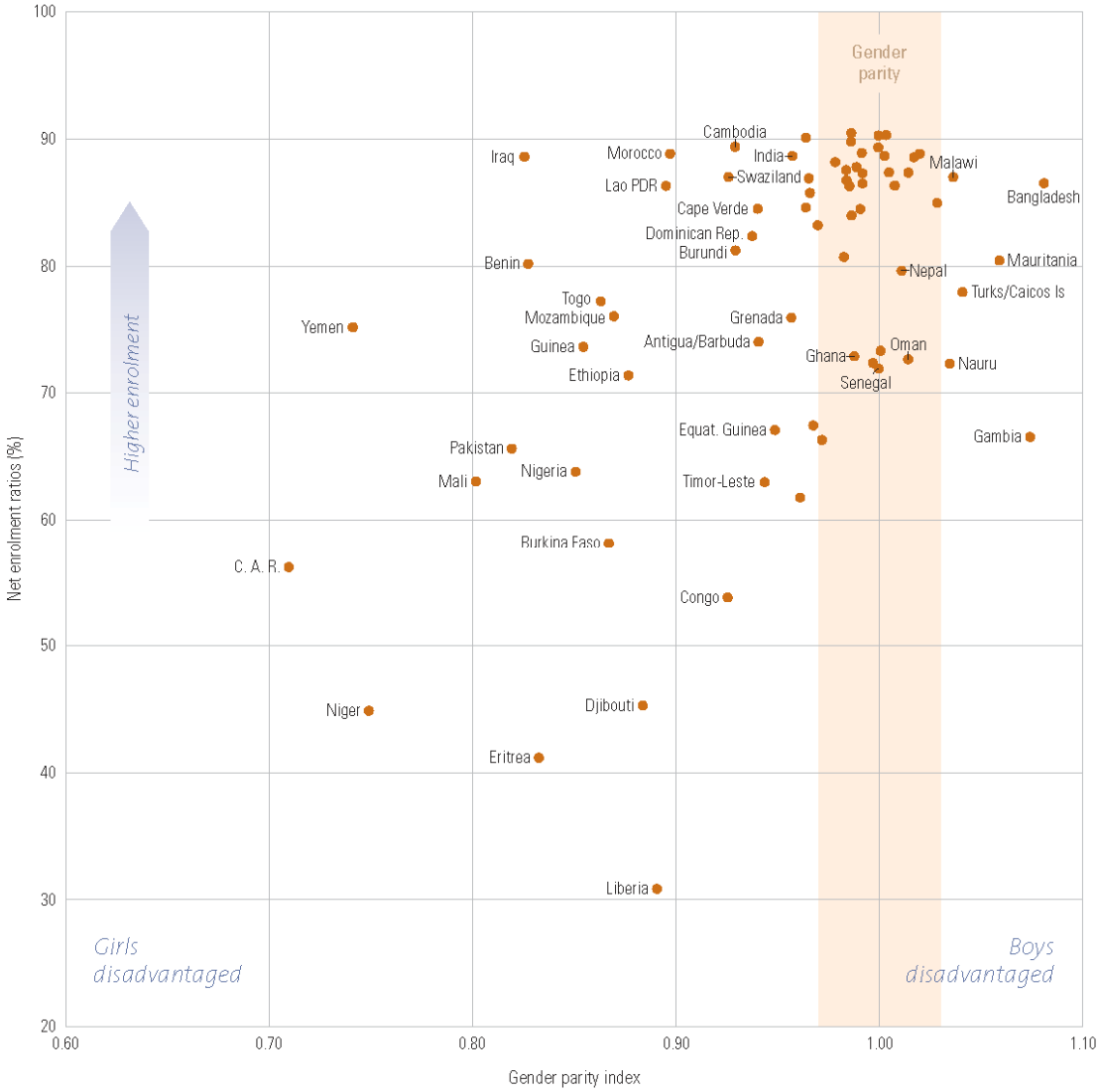
Sources: Al-Mekhlafy (2008); Guarcello et al. (2006); Integrated Regional Information Networks (2006, 2007); Kefaya (2007); Ochse (2008).

Gender parity is usually inversely related to enrolment: the lower the enrolment, the greater the gender disparity (Figure 4). An exception is Senegal; while the country still has low net enrolment (72% in 2007), in the space of one primary school generation, the country has moved from a gender parity index of 86 girls per 100 boys in 1999 to an equal number of girls and boys in 2007. However, not all progress towards gender parity has positive origins.

In Equatorial Guinea, Liberia and Togo, greater parity has been driven not by expansion of the education system but by the fact that boys' enrolment has declined (Figure 5).

Figure 4: The relationship between enrolment and gender parity varies across countries

Net enrolment ratios and gender parity in primary education, 2007

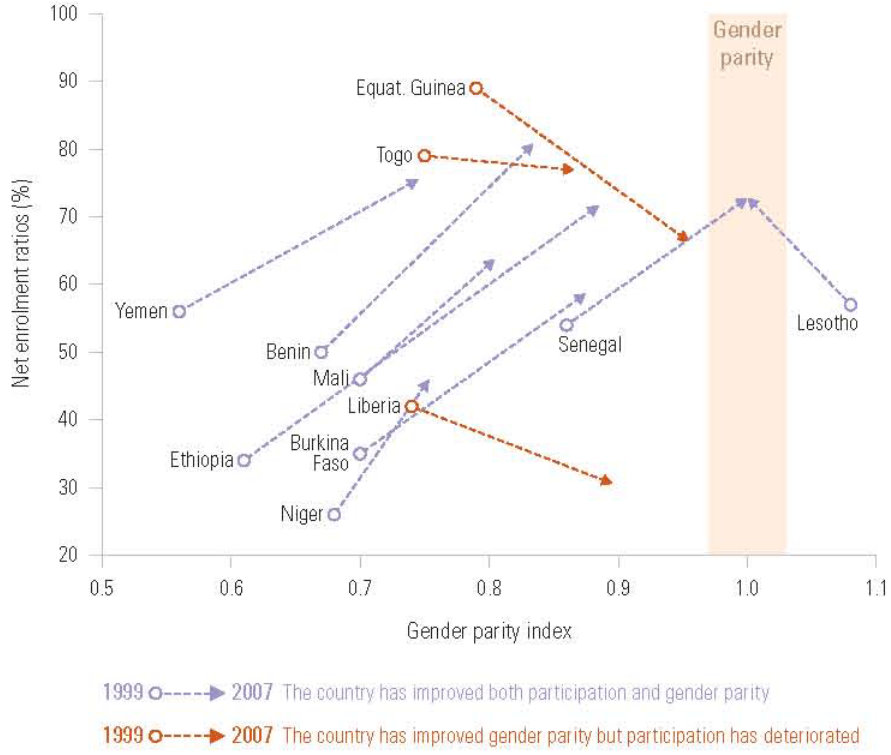


Note: Gender parity in primary education is measured by the gender parity index of gross enrolment ratios. See GMR annex for details.
Source: GMR annex, Statistical Table 5

With some of the world's largest gender gaps, several countries in West Africa have adopted policies aimed at strengthening parity as part of the wider strategy for achieving universal primary education. Some of these policies focus on removing one of the greatest obstacles to gender equity: attitudes on girls' and women's place in society. Working through village heads and religious leaders, governments have mounted campaigns to communicate to parents the importance of educating daughters. Other strategies include paying financial incentives, providing water and sanitation in schools (including separate latrines for boys and girls), recruiting female teachers and providing incentives for their deployment to rural areas, and giving teachers gender sensitization training (UNESCO-IIEP, 2009). In remote rural areas, distance to school is often a major security concern for parents of young girls. Governments have responded by attempting to bring classrooms closer to communities, often by building satellite schools.

Aid donors can play an important role in supporting efforts to overcome gender disparity. In Chad, a USAID-funded programme is addressing financial and cultural barriers to girls' schooling by providing scholarships and backing community sensitization campaigns. Recognizing that attitudes cannot be changed through top-down directives, the programme supports local agents for change, working through mothers' associations, religious figures, local government and village leaders, and school officials to promote girls' education. The role of imams in asserting the consistency of gender equality in education with the precepts of Islam has been particularly important (Zekas et al., 2009). Initiatives such as these have helped make people more aware that girls have a right to be educated. They also contributed to Chad's progress between 1999 and 2007 in narrowing the gender gap from 58 girls per 100 boys to 70, with greater gender parity helping drive an overall increase in enrolment.

Figure 5: The gender gap is narrowing, but sometimes because enrolment is declining
Changes in net enrolment ratios and gender parity index of gross enrolment ratios in primary education, 1999-2007, selected countries



Note: Gender parity in primary education is measured by the gender parity index of gross enrolment ratios. See GMR annex for details.
Source: GMR annex, Statistical Table 5.

For many countries, sustained progress towards gender parity will require advances on two fronts. Getting girls into school demands concerted action to change attitudes and household labour practices. Keeping them in school once they reach puberty poses another layer of challenges, especially in countries where early marriage is common and where girls' disadvantage interacts with other aspects of marginalization, such as poverty or ethnicity. Countries including Bangladesh and Cambodia have demonstrated that financial incentives can both increase the likelihood of girls entering lower secondary school and raise demand for primary schooling (Filmer and Schady, 2006; Fiszbein et al., 2009). However, public policy interventions are required in many other areas in education and beyond.

In West Africa, some of the world's poorest countries with low enrolment ratios have shown that political leadership and practical measures can override gender discrimination in the household and beyond. By the same token, failure to narrow gender gaps points to failure in these areas. With a higher income and comparable net enrolment ratio, Pakistan lags far behind Senegal on gender parity. Pakistan's primary net enrolment ratio in 2006 was 73% for boys but only 57% for girls. If Pakistan were to match Senegal's performance, it would have 1.1 million more girls in school. Pakistan's persistent gender disparities, which may be exacerbated by political movements hostile to girls' education, are holding back overall progress in enrolment (Box 2). The threat to gender equity is even more marked in neighbouring Afghanistan, where schools and teachers have been targeted with a view to driving girls out of school. Gender disparity is not unidirectional. In a small number of developing countries, girls' enrolment outstrips that of boys. This may happen where demand for boys' labour is higher. To take one example, poor rural families in Lesotho, particularly those in highland areas, often rely on boys to herd cattle, with the result that dropout rates are high after grade 3 (World Bank, 2005e). The positive news is that the pace of increase in enrolment has been faster for boys in recent years and gender parity has now been achieved.

Box 2: Pakistan – gender disparities hold back progress

Pakistan is off track for achieving universal primary education by 2015. The country accounts for a significant share of the global out-of-school problem. Failure to tackle gender disadvantages that intersect with poverty and regional differences is at the heart of the problem.

Deep disparities based on location and wealth are a feature of education in Pakistan. In the richest households, over 85% of children go to primary school, with little difference between boys and girls. Attendance rates for children from poor households are far lower, especially for females: only around one-third of poor girls are in school. Similarly, attendance is higher and the gender gap smaller in urban areas than in rural ones, and in the relatively wealthy Punjab province than in Balochistan and Sindh (Figure 6).

The North West Frontier Province stands out as having above average attendance for boys but well below average attendance for girls. There is growing concern that this gender gap could be widening further. In the Taliban-occupied parts of the province, 91 girls' schools have been destroyed and 25 damaged, with some boys' schools also suffering. The factors behind Pakistan's deep gender disparities have been extensively researched. Distance to school matters far more for girls than boys, reflecting security concerns and household labour demands.

Girls' enrolment drops off sharply with each 500-metre increase in distance from the closest school admitting girls and this 'distance penalty' accounts for 60% of the gender gap in enrolments. Cost factors can also disadvantage girls because households tend to spend more on boys. The presence of a government school in the community has a significant positive effect on girls' enrolment. As there has been a marked trend towards sex-segregated primary education, the absence in some areas of all-girl government schools has emerged as a major constraint on girls' schooling. Insufficient recruitment of female teachers is another constraint. Rural parents strongly prefer to have girls educated by women, but the legacy of low investment in girls' education means few local women have appropriate qualifications. It is also difficult to attract qualified female teachers to rural areas from other parts of the country.

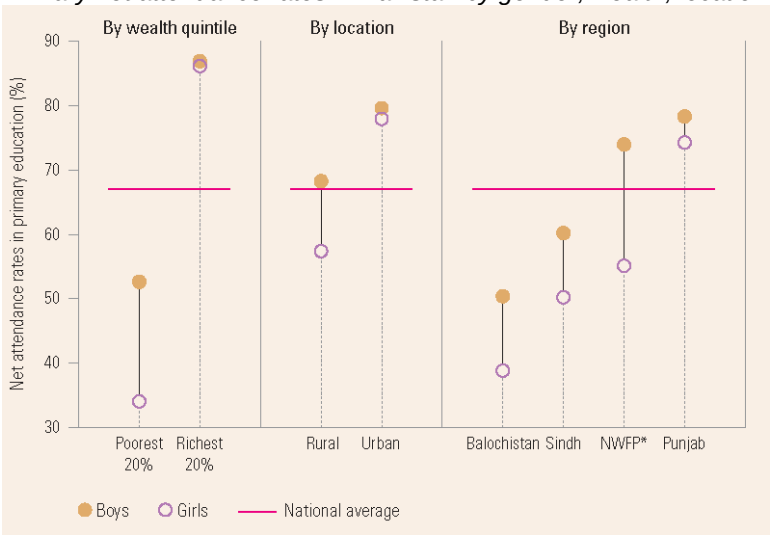
Education policy documents increasingly recognize that more weight has to be attached to gender equity, but it is far from clear that the current policy framework provides concrete measures for translating statements into action. Policies indicate community needs as criteria for the location of new government primary schools, for example; however, research suggests that community economic status

and the extent of gender disparity have had little influence over the placement of new government schools.

Overall levels of public financing remain low, education is weakly integrated into national poverty reduction strategies and there have been limited attempts to introduce the type of incentives for girls' education that have been successful in Bangladesh, which has moved far ahead of Pakistan in terms of enrolment and gender parity.

Figure 6: Pakistan's primary school attendance is marked by gender, regional and wealth inequalities

Primary net attendance rates in Pakistan by gender, wealth, location and region, 2007



* NWFP: North West Frontier Province
Source: UNESCO-DME (2009)

Sources: Aly and National Education Policy Review Team (2007); Andrabi et al. (2008); Lloyd et al. (2007); O'Malley (2009); Pakistan Ministry of Education (2003).

Youth and adult skills: expanding opportunities in the new global economy

> *Public policy interventions need to strengthen chances for girls to make the transition from primary to secondary school, and to broaden their opportunities in technical and vocational education.*

Gender disparities in secondary school have an important bearing on opportunities for technical and vocational education. The two regions with the largest gender disparities are South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. While the former has achieved a marked improvement in gender parity since 1999, the latter has moved in the opposite direction: the secondary-level gender parity index in sub-Saharan Africa has slipped from 0.82 to 0.79. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where more girls than boys attend secondary school, there has been no progress in narrowing the gender gap.

Gender disparities are often more pronounced in technical and vocational education than in general education. In South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, girls accounted for 44% of students in secondary school in 2007, but just 27% and 39%, respectively, in technical and vocational education. In nine of the eleven Arab states for which data are available, girls accounted for less than 40% of enrolment. The same is true for twelve of the twenty-five countries in sub-Saharan Africa with reported data. These disparities tell only a small part of a far wider story of gender inequality. In many cases, young girls in technical and vocational

streams are being trained for traditional female occupations, often in areas characterized by low pay. Moreover, returns to vocational education are often lowered by gender discrimination in employment and wages.

Box 3: Training, skills and youth exclusion in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran's experience demonstrates the challenges facing policy-makers across the Middle East. Over the past twenty years, the country has made rapid strides in education. Participation at secondary level has increased, average years in education have nearly doubled and gender inequalities have narrowed, especially in urban areas. Vocational education, however, reinforces a mismatch between skills and jobs that perpetuates high youth unemployment.

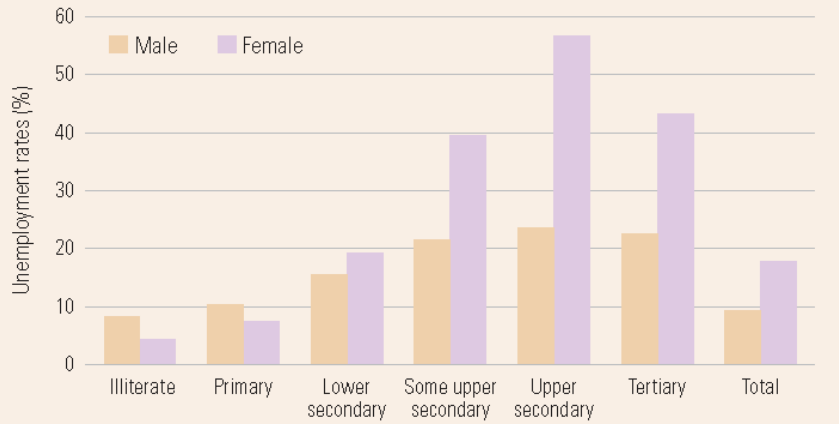
The education system in the country is heavily oriented towards the university entrance exam, the concour, which parents and students see as a route to secure employment, usually in the public sector. Compulsory education ends at around age 15, when students are evaluated and directed on to three separate tracks: the academic curriculum (Nazari), technical and vocational education (Fanni-Herfei) and basic skills through on-the-job training (Kardanesh). The aim of the latter two is explicitly to focus on job skills, but the system fails on several fronts.

Tracking brings high levels of attrition. Of the female students who began their secondary education in 2003/2004, nearly one-third dropped out after tracking. Most students pursue the Nazari track with a view to passing the concour, spurning the vocational tracks because of their low perceived status and quality. But of the nearly 1.5 million who proceed each year to the concour, 1.2 million fail and leave school lacking qualifications and job skills. Iranian policy-makers increasingly recognize the problems with the current system. Of particular concern are the misalignment of education and labour markets, and the poor quality of vocational education, which operates through a network of highly centralized public training centres. Many of these lack equipment and well-trained instructors, and they produce qualifications that employers see as having limited relevance.

The mismatch between education and employment is becoming increasingly stark. Steady economic growth has reduced overall unemployment, but youth unemployment remains over 20%. Those who completed upper secondary education have the highest level of unemployment (Figure 7). Measured in terms of employment, the benefits of education are dwindling, along with the skills base of the Iranian economy. Education is only part of the story. Labour market rigidity and discrimination also play a role. Gender barriers to employment appear to be rising, with unemployment rates among women aged 20 to 24 now twice the level for men of that age group.

Figure 7: Unemployment increases with level of education, but Iranian women are especially penalized

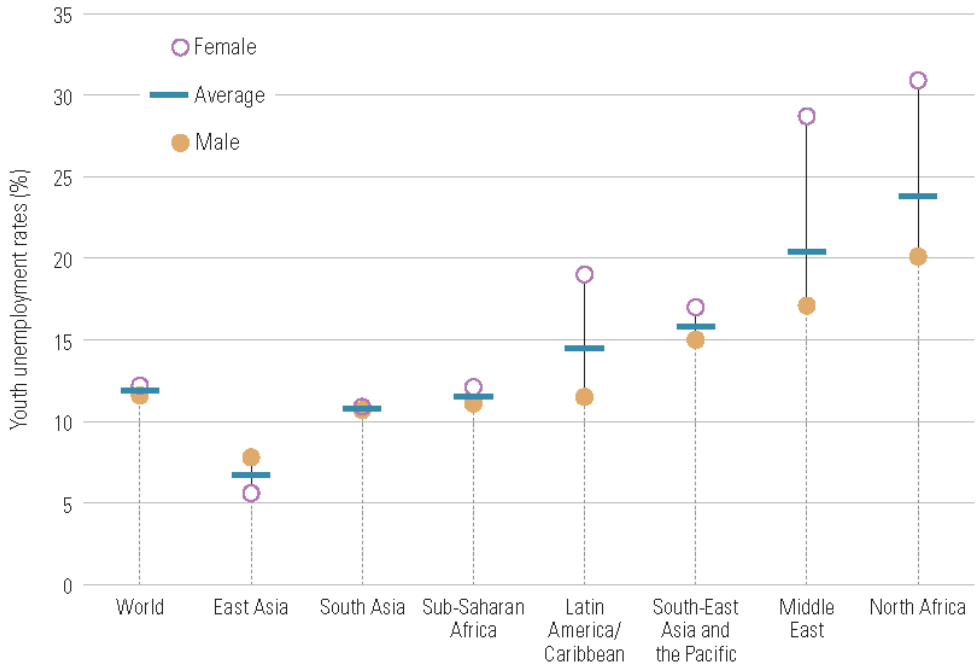
Unemployment rates by educational attainment and gender, 2005



Sources: Salehi-Isfahani and Egel (2007); Povey (2005)

Youth unemployment patterns vary across the developing regions (Figure 8). The ILO reports that the Middle East and North Africa have the highest unemployment rates, with about one-fifth of 15- to 24-year-olds unemployed. Gender discrimination, both in terms of job segmentation and wages, is deeply entrenched in Arab States' labour markets (Salehi-Isfahani and Dhillon, 2008). In Egypt, fewer than one-quarter of women aged 15 to 29 are economically active – one-third the male rate. The transition from school to work is also more difficult for girls, with fewer than 25% of young women finding work within five years (Assad and Barsoum, 2007). Employer discrimination, early marriage and claims on the labour of women at home all reinforce gender disadvantage in labour markets.

Figure 8: Gender inequalities reinforce high levels of youth unemployment
Youth unemployment rates by region and gender, 2007*



* Regions presented are those used by the ILO, which differ to some extent from the EFA regions.
Sources: ILO (2008b); OECD (2009f).

Youth and adult literacy

> *Women still account for nearly two-thirds of the world's 759 million adult illiterate population.*

There are signs of progress of the gender gap in adult literacy narrowing. Comparing the time periods 1985-1994 and 2000-2007, the number of adult female literates increased by 14%, compared to 7% for adult males. Women may be catching up, but in many countries they are starting from a long way back. Gender disparities remain very deep – and the share of women in the total number of illiterates has increased slightly. The process of convergence is thus starting from very unequal points (Figure 9). In the three regions with the lowest levels of literacy and largest gender disparities – the Arab states, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa – female adult literacy rates for 2000–2007 were still below the average for male literacy in 1985–1994. On the current trajectory, it will take women in South and West Asia about fifty-six years to catch up.

Rising literacy has been accompanied by declining gender disparities. Many countries that started with very large gaps between male and female literacy, and from low overall levels, have been on a pathway towards parity.

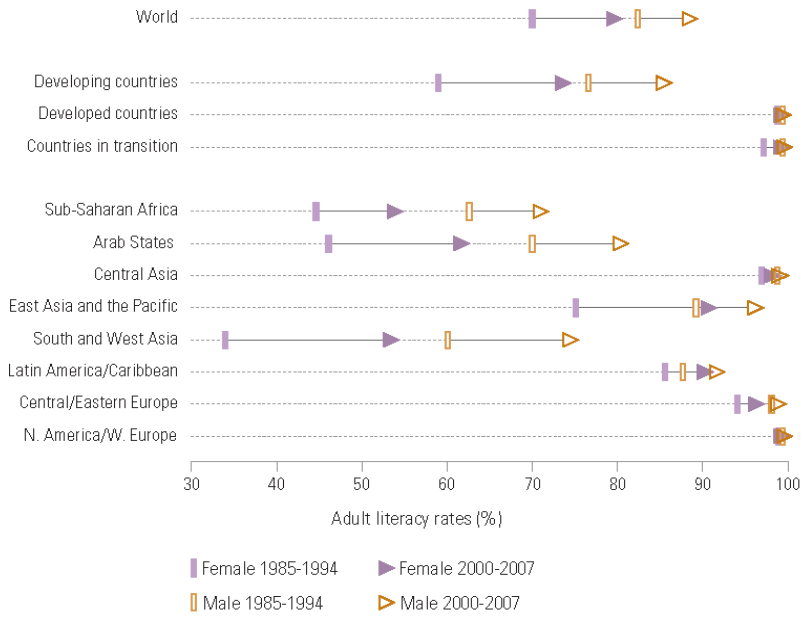
Gender parity improved in all but eight of the seventy-nine countries with data. In Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Malawi, Nepal and Yemen, female adult literacy rates doubled or tripled, and have increased twice as fast as male rates. Because adult literacy gaps track developments in basic education, this catching up process mirrors a narrowing of the gender gap in basic education. Between the two benchmark periods, the number of adult female literates increased by 14%, compared with 7% for adult males (see GMR annex, Statistical Table 2).

Gender convergence in adult literacy is proceeding at different rates in different countries. Compare the contrasting experiences of Bangladesh and India. Women aged 25 to 34 in Bangladesh have illiteracy rates 32% higher than men in the same age group. The gap reflects gender disparities that prevailed in the education system when that generation went to school. For 15- to 24-year-olds in Bangladesh today the gender gap has been eliminated. While India has been narrowing the gap, 15- to 24-year-old females are still about twice as likely to be illiterate as males in that group. Among the Arab states, Morocco has been making rapid progress towards improved literacy with every school generation but has been less successful in closing the gender gap, as comparison with China underlines (Figure 10).

Improvement in access to education across generations is one of the motors driving increased literacy levels. In almost all countries, literacy rates among younger adults (15 to 24) are higher than the average for all adults (15 and over). In the Arab States, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, youth literacy rates in 2000–2007 were 16% to 24% higher than the average for all adults (see GMR annex, Statistical Table 2). Age-group disparities are particularly marked in some countries, including Botswana, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria and Sri Lanka, where the proportion of illiterates among all adults is double or more the proportion for younger adults.

Figure 9: Being so far behind, women have further to travel to reach male literacy rates

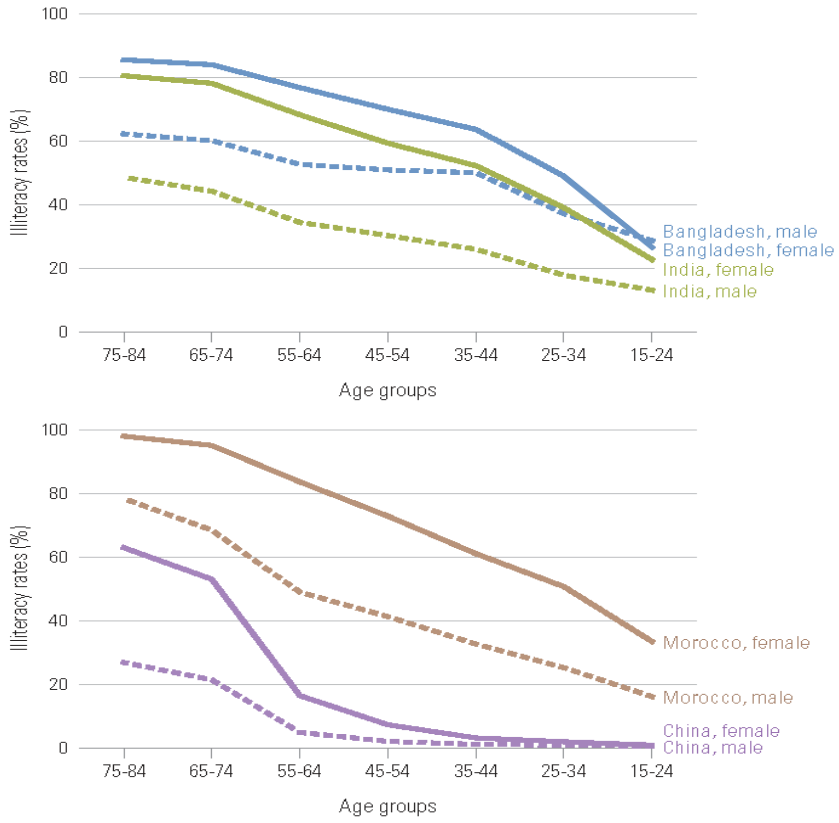
Adult (15 and over) literacy rates, by region and gender, 1985-1994 and 2000-2007



Note: Data are for the most recent year available during each period specified.
Source: GMR annex, Statistical Table 2

Figure 10: Contrasting experiences in reducing illiteracy and the associated gender gap in four countries

Age illiteracy profile in selected countries, by age group and gender, 2007



Source: UIS database.

The quality of education

> *While girls are less likely to get into school, once in school they can perform at least as well as their male classmates.*

In many countries, girls are less likely than boys to get into school. Once in school, though, they tend to perform as well as, or better than, their male classmates. While there are important gender-based differences in learning achievement by subject, learning achievement in general is not characterized by deep inequalities.

- *OECD countries.* In PISA 2006, average reading scores for 15-year-old girls were 8% higher than those of boys throughout the OECD. In mathematics, boys held an advantage over girls. The widest gap was found in Austria, where males' test scores were on average 5% higher. Gender differences in science tended to be statistically insignificant.
- *Arab States.* TIMSS 2007 covered thirteen of the twenty Arab States. In most of them, grade 8 girls outperformed boys in mathematics. In Qatar, girls' test scores were 13% higher than boys'. A similar number of countries recorded a female advantage in science, with larger gender gaps in many cases. In Qatar, girls scored on average 25% higher than boys.
- *Central and Eastern Europe.* PISA 2006 covered fifteen of the twenty-one countries in this region. All registered a large female advantage in reading performance. In most, gender gaps in mathematics were statistically insignificant; in the remaining countries boys tended to do slightly better than girls.
- *Latin America and the Caribbean.* Information from sixteen countries in the 2006 SERCE assessment in mathematics shows that boys in the sixth grade performed better than girls. When reading was assessed, girls outperformed boys, but in both subjects the average differences were small.
- *Sub-Saharan Africa.* Among Francophone countries participating in the PASEC assessment, there were no large gender differences in second and fifth grade performance in French or mathematics. For the thirteen countries participating in the 2000–2002 SACMEQ assessments, gender differences in sixth grade English were on the whole either statistically insignificant or small. In mathematics, about half the participating countries showed no statistically significant gender difference. In the rest, males' average scores tended to be higher but the differences were not large.

These findings confirm that gender gaps in overall achievement are modest. Where differences do exist, the data show that, except in the Arab States, girls do better in languages and boys in mathematics and science. Eliminating remaining gaps will be necessary if the goal of education for all is to be achieved. However, it has to be recognized that current data provide an incomplete picture, especially for countries that do not participate in international and regional assessments (Bonnet (2009); Ma (2007); Mullis et al. (2008); OECD (2007*b*)).

Teachers play a crucial role in the quality of education, and female teachers can be particularly important in supporting girls' education. Trained teachers are more likely to choose to work in urban areas, especially in systems where their remuneration is linked to parental contributions. Opportunities for professional development are also more likely to be concentrated in urban areas, enabling urban teachers to gain qualifications more readily than

their rural counterparts (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007). Cities may be seen as preferable to rural areas for other reasons, ranging from the quality of housing, amenities and schools to the proximity of friends and family. Concerns over living in remote and unfamiliar rural communities can also play a role. Such factors play a part in the preference of female teachers for urban areas in many countries. In Uganda and Zambia, the share of female teachers in urban primary schools is about 60%, compared with 15% to 35% in rural areas (Mulkeen, 2009).

Reaching the marginalized

Governments across the world constantly reaffirm their commitment to equal opportunity in education and international human rights conventions establish an obligation for them to act on that commitment. Yet most governments are systematically failing to address the extreme and persistent education disadvantages that leave large sections of their population marginalized. These disadvantages are rooted in deeply ingrained social, economic and political processes and unequal power relationships – and they are sustained by political indifference. They are also often reinforced by practices within the classroom. In many countries, the education of girls is widely perceived as being of less value than that of boys, with traditional practices such as early marriage adding another layer of disadvantage. Poverty, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics interact to create overlapping and self-reinforcing layers of disadvantage that limit opportunity and hamper social mobility. The failure to place inclusive education at the centre of the Education for All agenda is holding back progress towards the goals adopted at Dakar.

Measuring marginalization in education

Measuring marginalization in education is inherently difficult. There are no established cross-country benchmarks comparable to those used for assessing extreme income poverty – and national data are often not detailed enough to enable marginalized groups to be identified.

The 2010 Global Monitoring Report includes a new tool, available online, that provides a window on the scale of marginalization within countries and on the social composition of the marginalized. Called the Deprivation and Marginalization in Education (DME) data set, it also identifies groups facing particularly extreme restrictions on educational opportunity. The data set focuses on three core areas:

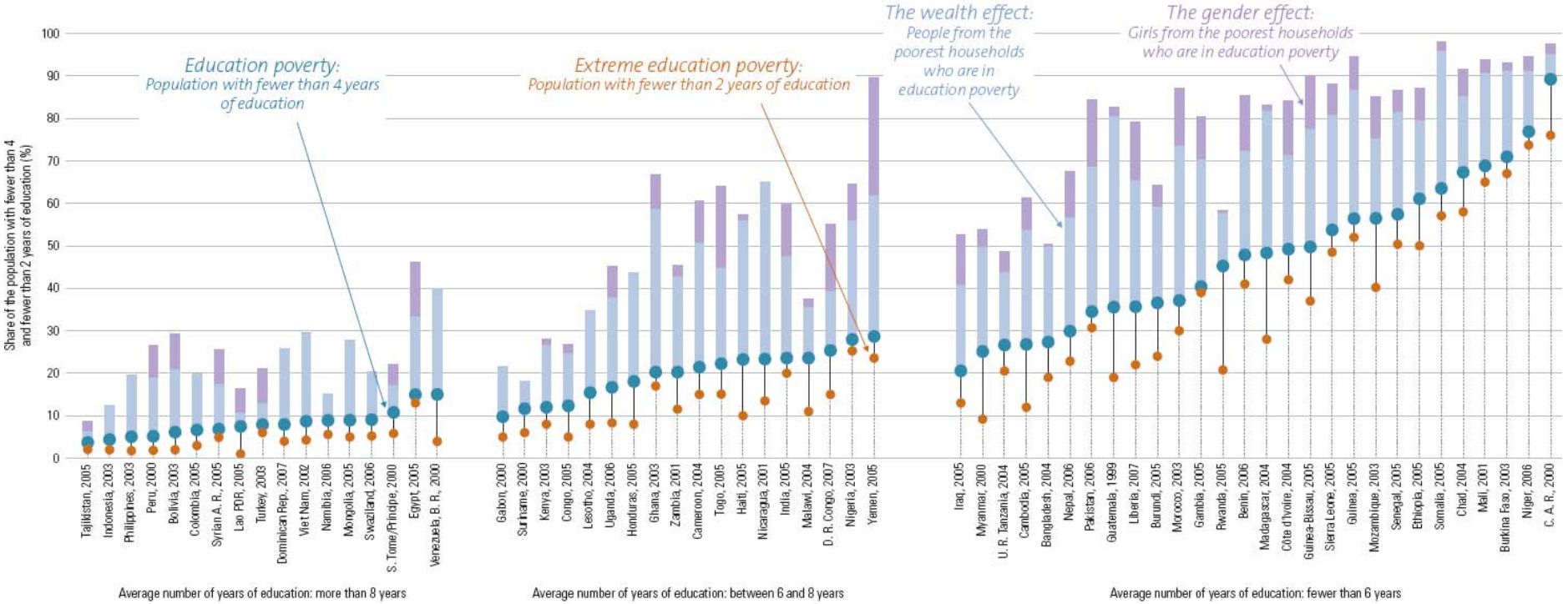
- *Education poverty:* young adults aged 17 to 22 who have fewer than four years of education and are unlikely to have mastered basic literacy or numeracy skills.
- *Extreme education poverty:* young adults with fewer than two years of education, who are likely to face extreme disadvantages in many areas of their lives.
- The bottom 20%: those with the fewest years of education in a given society.

Being poor and female carries a double disadvantage in many countries. Gender effects magnify poverty effects – and vice versa. Figure 11 highlights the distance that separates girls in the poorest households, not just from the national average but also from boys in poor households. Gender disparities play an important role in explaining the relatively high level of education poverty in Egypt. Young women in the country are twice as likely as young men to have fewer than four years of education – and four times as likely if they are poor women. The incidence of deprivation among poor women in Egypt is higher than in some other

countries, such as Honduras, Uganda and Zambia, at far lower levels of average income. Young women from the poorest households in Morocco are more likely to have fewer than four years in education than their counterparts in Senegal. In Yemen, 90% of poor young women aged 17 to 22 years have fewer than four years in education compared with 30% for poor males.

Figure 11: Measuring education poverty across countries

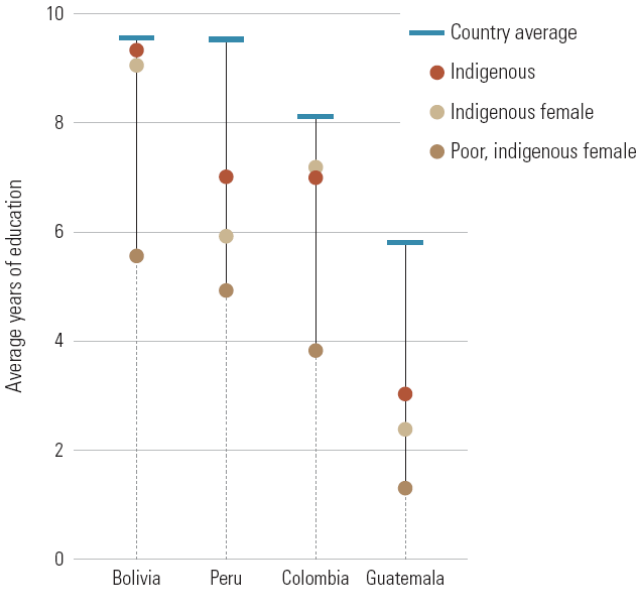
% of national population, the poorest households, and girls in poorest households aged 17 to 22 with fewer than four years and fewer than two years of education, selected countries, most recent year



Source: UNESCO-DME (2009).

Poverty and gender discrimination exacerbate education deprivation among indigenous minorities. From Guatemala and Peru to Colombia and Bolivia, indigenous young adults are far more likely than the non-indigenous to experience extreme education deprivation, especially if they are poor and female. An indigenous person aged 17 to 22 in Peru has two years less education than the national average; poor indigenous girls are two years further still down the scale (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Wealth and gender widen indigenous education disparities in Latin America
Average number of years of education for indigenous people aged 17 to 22, selected countries, latest available year



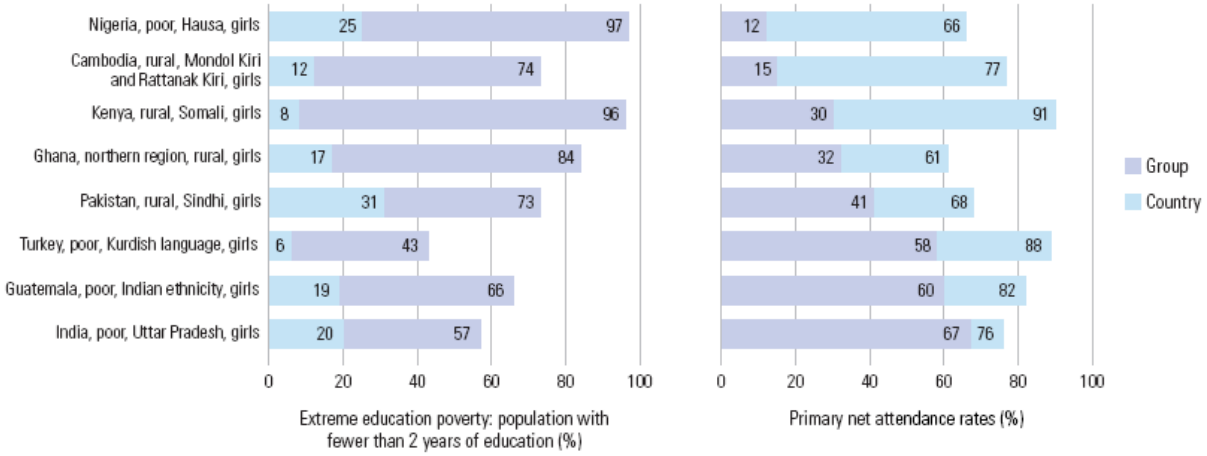
Notes: The indigenous average is the weighted average for the indigenous groups for which data were available. These were: Bolivia (Aymara, Guarani and Quechua ethnicity); Guatemala (Chorti, Kanjobal, Kaqchiquel, K'iche', Mam, Poqomchi', Q'eqchi' and Tzu'Utihil language); Peru (Aymara and Quechua ethnicity). For Colombia, the 'indigenous ethnicity' census category was used.
Sources: UNESCO-DME (2009); census, calculations by Harttgen and Klasen (2009).

The disadvantages that drive people into the bottom 20% in education do not operate in isolation. They intersect and magnify the wider social inequalities that restrict opportunities in education. This is illustrated in Figure 13, which uses DME statistics to look at the impact of two or three overlapping dimensions of deprivation. The impact of clustered disadvantage is evident from the combined effects of poverty, gender and other markers for disadvantage. These effects can be captured by reference to the 'extreme education poverty' benchmark of fewer than two years in education and the more recent disadvantages reflected in the school attendance rates for primary school age children:

- Being a rural girl in the Cambodian hill provinces of Mondol Kiri and Rattanak Kiri increases the risk of not being in school by a factor of five. Three-quarters of the group have fewer than two years in school, compared with a national average of 12%.
- In Guatemala, girls from poor households of Indian ethnicity have primary net attendance rates of 60% compared with a national average of 82% and they are over three times more likely to have fewer than two years in school.

- In Turkey, one of the most marginalized groups is Kurdish-speaking girls from the poorest households. Around 43% at ages 17 to 22 have fewer than two years of education, while the national average is 6%.
- In Nigeria, poor Hausa girls face some of the world's most severe education deprivation. Some 97% of 17- to 22-year-olds have fewer than two years of education and just 12% of primary school age Hausa girls attend primary school.

Figure 13: Overlapping disadvantages erode education opportunities
Primary net attendance rates and % of the population aged 17 to 22 with fewer than two years of education, selected countries, latest available year.



Source: Data from UNESCO-DME (2009)

Getting left behind

Marginalization in education is the product of a mixture of inherited disadvantage, deeply ingrained social processes, unfair economic arrangements and bad policies – all of which have potentially adverse gender consequences. These processes are examined with respect to the interaction between gender and four groups most severely affected by marginalization.

- **Poverty and child labour**

Gender intersects with low income to create forces of marginalization that are less tangible and less easily measurable than poverty but no less damaging. The low value placed on girls' education can make them the last into school and the first out when poverty strikes. Cultural attitudes and beliefs, stigmatization and discrimination also fuel marginalization, locking children into cycles of low expectation and underachievement.

Social attitudes strongly condition the effects of poverty. The degree to which parents value children's education influences prospects of participation in school. For Hausa girls in northern Nigeria, the low value many adults ascribe to their education is a powerful source of exclusion (Box 4).

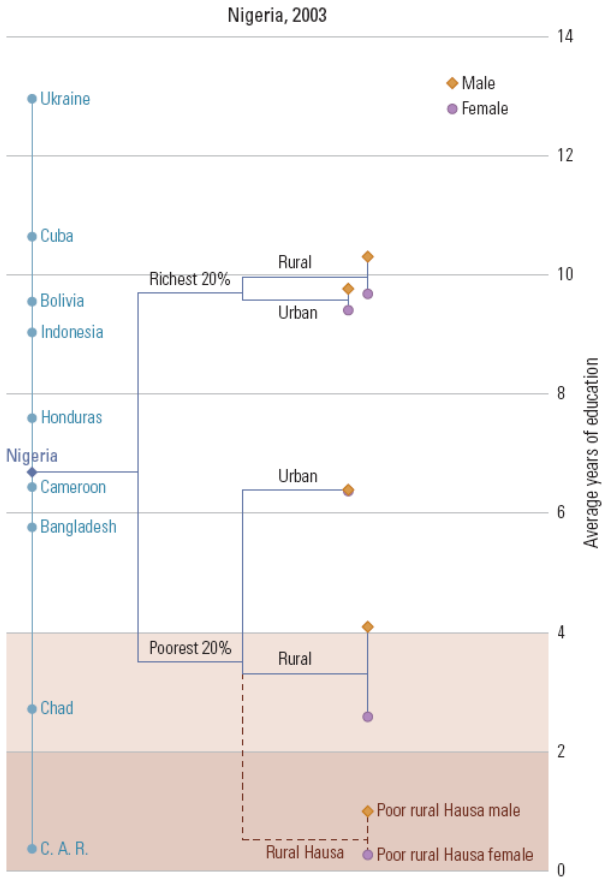
Box 4: Hausa girls in northern Nigeria — losing out in education

Any international ranking of opportunity in education would place Hausa girls in northern Nigeria near the bottom of the scale. In 2003, half of primary school age girls in Kano state were out of school and in Jigawa state the figure was 89%. Being poor and living in a rural area compounds the disadvantage — in this category, over 90% of Hausa women aged 17 to 22 have fewer than two years of education (Figure 14). Northern states such as Jigawa, Kaduna and Kano are among the poorest in Nigeria. There is evidence that household deprivation hurts girls' education in particular, as poverty intersects with social and cultural practices, beliefs and attitudes.

Some parents attach limited value to girls' education. As one research report put it, 'from birth' a girl 'may be considered as a costly guest in her own home. Her schooling is likely to be considered a waste of time and money, and she is diligently trained to be home as a bearer of many children and a free source of labour' (Rufa'i, 2006, p. 86).

Hausa girls who go to school tend to start late. Around one-quarter of girls aged 6 to 14 in school in Kaduna and Kano were over the usual age for their grade. To compound the problem, marriage at 14 or even younger is common and typically signals the end of education.

Figure 14: The education inequality tree
Average number of years of education of the population aged 17 to 22 by wealth, gender, location, and other selected drivers of marginalization, latest available year



Source: UNESCO-DME (2009).

Hausa girls who go to school tend to start late. Around one-quarter of girls aged 6 to 14 in school in Kaduna and Kano were over the usual age for their grade. To compound the problem, marriage at 14 or even younger is common and typically signals the end of education.

Northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslim. Many parents send their daughters to Islamic schools out of distrust for formal public education, concern over the quality of government schools or the distance to them, or fear of sexual harassment in school or on the way there. Yet the quality of Islamic schooling is highly variable — and the education many young girls receive there is both limited and short-lived. The experience of Hausa girls illustrates some of the wider challenges involved in reaching those on the margins of education. There are public policy measures that can make a difference, such as building classrooms closer to communities, eliminating informal school fees, integrating Islamic schools that meet quality standards into the government system and improving quality through better teacher training.

But in northern Nigeria the most tenacious barriers to girls' education are often embedded in parental and community attitudes and gender practices. Removing those obstacles requires more equitable education policies, including wide-ranging incentives for girls' education, backed by social and political dialogue to change attitudes.

Underlying gender disparities often lead to girls bearing the brunt of economic shocks. In rural Pakistan, for example, unanticipated economic losses reduced the likelihood of girls being in school, but not boys (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007). Similarly, in rural Uganda, crop losses led to sharp declines in girls' enrolment and performance in examinations, while the impact on boys was much smaller (Björkman, 2005).

Child labour often magnifies poverty-related gender disadvantage. A common thread across many countries with large gender disparities in education is the disproportionately large share of the household labour burden that young girls carry. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for both urban and rural populations, the average time spent in school falls with poverty and young girls in poor households spend less time in classrooms than young boys. Poor rural girls spend just over two hours a day studying and five hours working, on average. Young boys spend slightly more time than girls in remunerated employment, while young girls spend more than twice as much time as boys on household activities (King and van de Walle, 2007). The upshot is that young girls from the poorest households are less likely than boys to combine school and work, and more likely to be out of school (Hallman et al., 2007).

- **Group-based disadvantage**

In many countries, children born to parents who are members of an ethnic or linguistic minority, a particular racial group or a low caste enter school with poor prospects of success and emerge with less education and lower achievement than do children without these disadvantages. Such group-based marginalization interacts with gender through processes associated with formal and informal discrimination, stigmatization and social exclusion linked to social, economic and political power relationships.

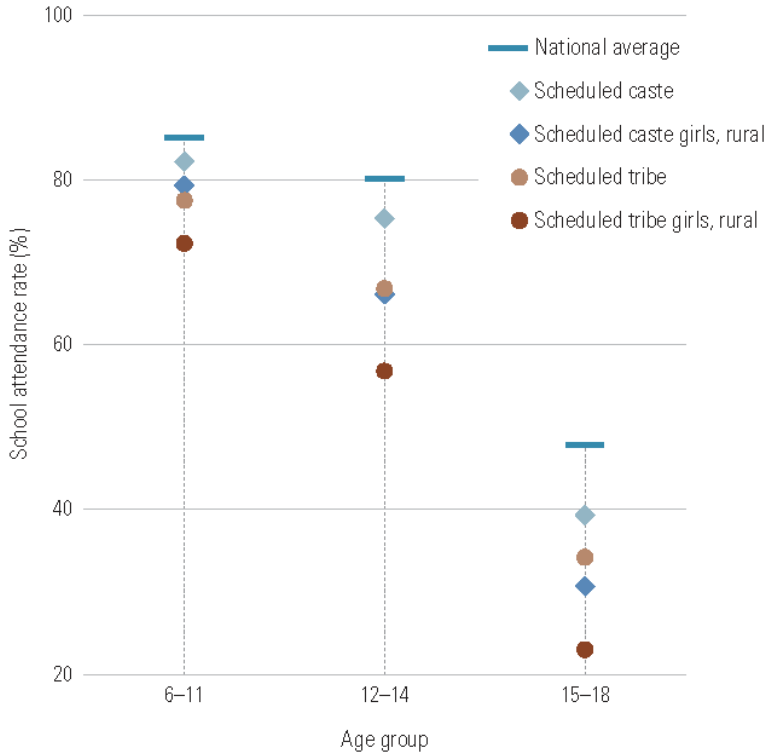
The situation of indigenous groups in Latin America powerfully illustrates the multiple dimensions of deprivation. Indigenous people, especially women and children, have less access to basic health services. They are also more likely to suffer from nutritional problems. In Ecuador and Guatemala, about 60% of indigenous children under 5 are malnourished – roughly twice the national averages (Larrea and Montenegro Torres, 2006; Shapiro, 2006). In Ecuador, non-indigenous women are three times as likely to receive antenatal care and have a skilled attendant present at birth (Larrea and Montenegro Torres, 2006).

Poverty magnifies the barriers facing indigenous children, especially girls. In Guatemala, indigenous girls from extremely poor households enrol in school 1.2 years later than indigenous girls from non-poor households, on average, and are far more likely to drop out. Among 7- to 12-year-olds, Mayan boys and girls are twice as likely as non-indigenous children to combine school and work. For non-enrolled indigenous females, lack of money and housework are cited by parents as the main reason for children being out of school (Hallman et al., 2007).

In India, belonging to a scheduled caste or tribe lowers prospects of school attendance. Being a girl and living in a rural area brings a further layer of disadvantage. In 2004/2005, just 57% of rural girls aged 12 to 14 from scheduled tribes and 66% from scheduled castes were in school, compared with a national average of 80% (Figure 15).

Figure 15. In India, scheduled castes and tribes remain disadvantaged at all levels in education

Attendance rates by age group in India, by community, rural/urban residence and gender, 2004/2005



Notes: The attendance rate for an age range is the proportion of children of that age range who report attending school at the time of the survey. The age ranges correspond approximately to primary education, upper primary (or 'middle') education and secondary education, respectively, in the Indian school system.
Source: Bhalotra (2009) based on National Sample Survey data (61st round).

- **Location and livelihoods**

Gender disadvantages linked to poverty, ethnicity and language are often reflected in human geography. Living in urban slums, remote rural areas or conflict zones are often areas that have the most limited access to basic services, including education.

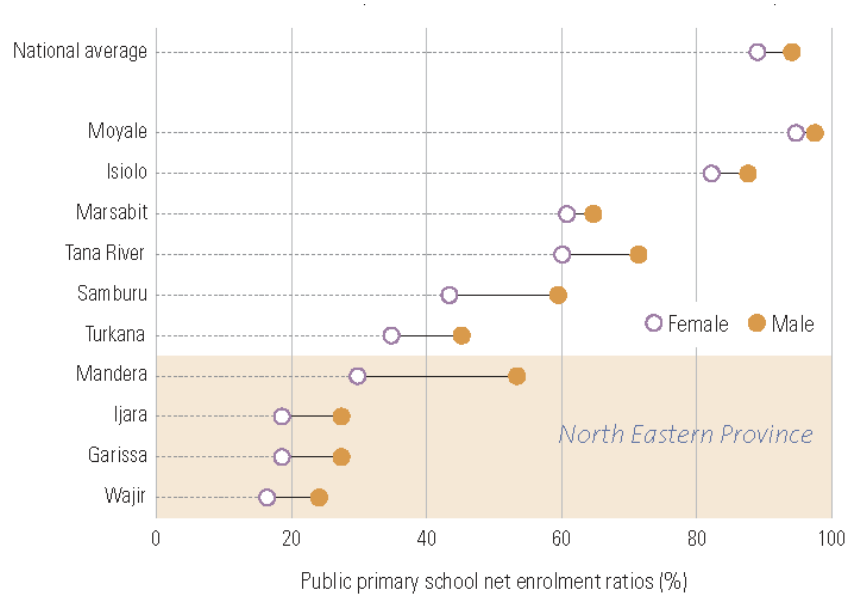
In urban slum areas, even where schools are not far away, security concerns present an additional hurdle to access with particular consequences for girls: 60% of girls interviewed in the Kenyan slum of Kibera – one of the largest slums in sub-Saharan Africa – expressed fear of being raped. A common response to fear of violence and harassment in slums is to stop going to school (Erulkar and Matheka, 2007; Mudege et al., 2008).

In rural areas, girls' attendance is particularly sensitive to journey times. Household surveys in many countries identify distance as a major factor in parents' decisions to keep daughters out of school (Kane, 2004, and World Bank, 2005d, cited in Theunynck, 2009; Glick, 2008; Huisman and Smits, 2009). Explanations vary, but concerns over security and domestic labour needs figure prominently.

Early marriage for girls is another barrier to education in some pastoralist communities. So is a deeply engrained belief that female education may be of less value. A proverb of the Gabra community in northern Kenya says: 'God first, then man, then camel, and lastly girl.' This explains a reluctance to sell camels to finance girls' education, unlike for boys (Ruto et al., 2009, p. 11). The social attitudes behind such sentiments are deeply damaging for girls' education.

The diversity of pastoralist experience cautions against generalization. Yet even in countries making strong progress in primary education, pastoralist children are often being left far behind. Kenya is now looking beyond primary schooling to universal secondary education, but that vision contrasts strongly with reality in the country's ten most arid districts. Inhabited predominantly by pastoralist communities, these districts have some of the country's lowest enrolment ratios and largest gender disparities, with net enrolments less than 30% for boys and 20% for girls in the three worst-performing districts located in the North Eastern Province (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Many of Kenya's arid districts are left behind
Net enrolment ratios in public primary schools for northern arid districts of Kenya, 2007



Source: Ruto et al. (2009), based on 2007 data from Ministry of Education Statistics Unit (2009).

Groups within the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan have targeted girls' schools, both to challenge government authority and to assert values hostile to equal opportunity in education.

In the Swat district of Pakistan, the Taliban destroyed 108 girls' schools and damaged 64 other schools between 2007 and May 2009. During 2008, local Taliban leaders ordered a ban on women teachers and girls' education. In response, 900 schools closed or stopped admitting girls and fear created by the decree led to the withdrawal of 120,000 girls from school (O'Malley, 2009).

- **HIV and AIDS**

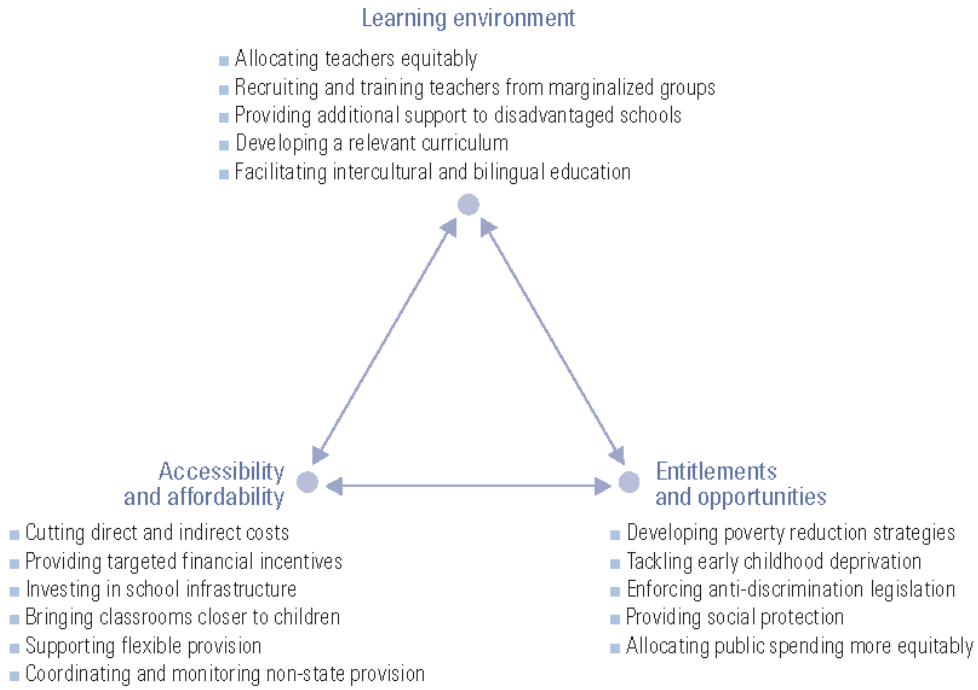
In many countries HIV and AIDS are reinforcing deep gender disparities in education. In high-prevalence southern African countries, such as Malawi, South Africa and Swaziland, HIV infection rates for girls and young women aged 15 to 24 are 1.8 times to 5.5 times the rates for men (Stirling et al., 2008). These disparities can harm girls' prospects of completing primary school and making the transition to secondary school.

Becoming an orphan due to AIDS can inflict severe damage on education prospects, although there are marked variations, some influenced strongly by the gender of the deceased parent. In some sub-Saharan African countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania, children whose mothers died were more likely to move to another household and less likely to stay in school (Beegle et al., 2009; Evans and Miguel, 2007; Himaz, 2009; World Bank, 2007c). While the death of a father in Ethiopia did not significantly affect school enrolment, the death of a mother reduced enrolment among both boys and girls by around 20% and disrupted attendance by enrolled children (Himaz, 2009).

Levelling the playing field

Marginalized people are often conspicuous by their absence from national debates on education reform. The implicit assumption of many policy-makers is that, as national education systems become more effective, the benefits will eventually trickle down to the most disadvantaged sections of society. That assumption is flawed. Governments can, and should, do more to put marginalization at the centre of education reform debates – and including gender as a core aspect of this is crucial. Three broad sets of policies can make a difference. They can be thought of as three points in an inclusive education triangle (Figure 17).

Figure 17: The Inclusive Education Triangle



Expanding access and improving affordability for excluded groups

Proximity of schools to communities is an obvious condition for participation in education, especially for young girls, as gender disparities in many countries widen with distance. The location of new schools and classrooms is critical for underserved groups. Too often, classroom construction programmes fail to prioritize areas and groups with greatest need. This is despite the proven benefits of greater equity. In Ethiopia, classroom construction has been a central part of the national strategy to accelerate progress towards universal primary education. Of the 6,000 schools built since 1997, over 85% are in rural areas, significantly reducing average distances to school. The out-of-school population has declined by 3 million and gender disparities have narrowed, underlining the effect of distance on demand for girls' education (UNESCO, 2008a).

Non-government organizations often provide education that is complementary to formal schooling, and can put children and youth on a route back into the formal system. The more successful programmes combine flexible timing of classes with strong support for learners as well as courses and curricula geared towards relevant skills. Such provision can be particularly beneficial for addressing the constraints that girls face, as a programme in northern Ghana illustrates (Box 5)

Box 5: Addressing educational deprivation in northern Ghana through complementary education provision

Northern Ghana faces some of the country's most acute educational deprivation. School attendance rates in the region are among the lowest in the country and many children reach adulthood with no more than a few years of education. Parents cite distance to school, cost, seasonal labour demand and, for girls, early marriage as major barriers.

An innovative programme run by non-government organizations is attempting to provide out-of-school children in northern Ghana with a second chance. School for Life offers an intensive nine-month literacy course for children aged 8 to 14, with the aim of preparing them to re-enter primary school. Teaching schedules are designed to accommodate seasonal demands on children's time. Students are given free books and uniforms are not required, reducing the cost of attendance.

The School for Life curriculum is designed to make education meaningful to rural families who feel that formal schools fail to respect the dignity and strengthen the self-esteem of their children. Students are taught in local languages by locally recruited facilitators, many of them volunteers, who receive in-service training.

School for Life has achieved impressive results. Between 1996 and 2007, it reached around 85,000 children in eight districts, with no discernible gender gap. An evaluation in 2007 found that over 90% of students completed the course, 81% met third-grade literacy and numeracy standards and 65% entered the formal education system. Government data indicate that School for Life graduates entering formal school perform above the average in mathematics and English.

Sources: Casely-Hayford et al. (2007); Hartwell (2006); Mfum-Mensah (2009).

Schools also need to be affordable, so families are not forced to make choices about whether to send their sons or daughters to school. Experience from a broad group of countries points to the positive effects of measures supplementing the abolition of fees, often including girls amongst the target groups. In Nepal, the 2004–2009 education strategy included scaling up a stipend programme targeted at low-caste Dalit children. In 2003, about 384,000 out of 527,000 eligible Dalit children received stipends (World Bank, 2006d). Scholarships and other incentives have also been made available for girls. Another targeted grant provides a cash transfer to children from households in which no member has completed a primary education. Despite some problems in targeting, the programme appears to have helped girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds into education (Acharya and Luitel, 2006; Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, 2003).

Stipends at the secondary school level can be effective in counteracting marginalization in primary education. In some countries, there is evidence that parents unable to meet secondary school costs will withdraw their children from primary school before completion. An innovative programme in Cambodia attempted to forestall that decision. In a pilot scholarship programme supported by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, girls who reached the final grade of primary school were eligible for grants of around $45. The cash was provided to families, conditional on their children attending secondary school. It was estimated that the programme increased enrolment among participants by around 30%. An evaluation found that enrolment effects rose with household poverty. For girls from the poorest 20% of households, enrolment increased by 50%, compared with 15% for girls in the wealthiest two quintiles (Filmer and Schady, 2008; Fiszbein et al., 2009).

The Bangladesh Female Secondary School Stipend Programme has also introduced wider conditions for transfers. It covers school fees and additional payments for girls who stay in school, remain unmarried to age 18 and pass exams. The stipends are credited not just with increasing secondary school enrolment by around twelve percentage points, but also with creating incentives for households to ensure that girls complete primary education (Khandker et al., 2003). Girls' primary school enrolment now exceeds that of boys.

The learning environment

Well-trained teachers can help mitigate the disadvantages of marginalized children. Such children stand to gain the most from high-quality teaching, but are the least likely to receive it. Recruitment and deployment practices are at the heart of the problem. Many teachers, young women in particular, are understandably reluctant to move to remote areas, especially when they are characterized by high levels of poverty and lack transport, health services and other facilities.

Entitlements and opportunities

Education systems can do a great deal to address the inequalities that restrict opportunity for children from disadvantaged groups. But prospects for greater equity in education ultimately depend on what happens to girls and boys beyond school, through social and economic structures that perpetuate marginalization.

The contemporary human rights regime operating under United Nations auspices comprises a broad array of instruments, many of which set standards for rights in education. These instruments collectively form a comprehensive framework for extending opportunities to children facing exclusion or discrimination in education on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, language or poverty.

Legal instruments can make a difference for the millions of young girls every year who face having their education disrupted or terminated by early marriage. By one 2005 estimate, almost half of South Asian females aged 15 to 24 were married before age 18. Poverty, tradition and unequal power relationships between men and women all play a part in early marriage (Levine et al., 2008). These issues have to be addressed on many fronts, but legal prohibition of early marriage, coupled with incentives to keep girls in school and campaigns to change attitudes, can establish norms and a basis for legal recourse. In Bangladesh, a national non-government organization called Nijera Kori ('We do it ourselves') has helped landless labourers, primarily women, strengthen their ability to claim rights and entitlements (Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2008).

Some highly marginalized groups have a weak voice even within broad-based civil society lobbies seeking improved access to education. The rural poor, ethnic minority women, children with disabilities, slum dwellers and children in conflict zones are groups whose causes have not been widely or effectively taken up.

Helping poor and vulnerable people manage risks without compromising long-term welfare is another approach that can help broaden opportunities in education. Social protection programmes, which take many forms, have been shown to have positive outcomes for education. Many programmes incorporate a strong gender dimension, including by making special provision for girls' nutrition. Giving transfers to women can result in a higher share of the money being directed towards children – especially girls – than may be the case when men receive the transfers (Kabeer, 2005).

Contrasting evidence from programmes in Burkina Faso underlines the importance of policy design in social protection programmes. In 2005/2006, the World Food Programme assumed responsibility for all school feeding in the country's Sahel region. In some schools it provided lunches to all pupils every school day; in others, girls with 90% attendance received monthly take-home rations of 10 kg of flour. The two models produced different results. While both improved enrolment, take-home rations extended positive nutritional benefits to younger siblings. An evaluation carried out after one year of the programme also found that both approaches increased new enrolment among girls by five to six percentage points, but school lunches did not appear to significantly affect boys' enrolment. Absenteeism declined on average, but increased among girls in households facing severe labour constraints. The reason: siblings took over the off-farm labour of girls eligible for school feeding, who in turn took on more domestic labour. This resulted in higher enrolment but periodic absenteeism as girls were occasionally pulled out of school for chores in the home (Kazianga et al., 2009).

Conclusion

‘Reaching the marginalized’ does not have to be an empty rhetorical pledge. There are strategies that work to break down gender and associated forms of disadvantage – but they have to cut across the borders of traditional policy making. They also need to be integrated into a coherent policy framework that simultaneously tackles the multiple underlying causes of marginalization.

References

Please refer to the full 2010 Global Monitoring Report for references.
See: www.efareport.unesco.org

See also the Deprivation and Marginalization in Education dataset:
www.unesco.org/en/efareport/dme