



## **Management of Education for All (EFA) By 2015: The Situation So Far in Developing Countries.**

**Uche Grace Emetarom and Levi Nwokocha**

Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

Education is seen as a right and a tool for sustainable development, hence the adoption of the six Education for All (EFA) goals by world governments in the year 2000 as a roadmap for the global community to follow. These goals, which received broad national and international support, ensure that all children would have access to, and be able to complete a free, compulsory primary education of good quality by the year 2015. However, verbal commitments do not always translate into practice and compliance. This paper, therefore, looks at the situation so far with the management and attainment of the EFA goals by the year 2015 in developing countries. The aim is to bring into a special focus, the efforts of countries in meeting their commitment to the EFA goals made at the Dakar World Education Forum of April 2000. In doing this, information was sought mainly from the reports of EFA international monitoring committee. The paper commenced with a brief background followed by a discussion of the concept of EFA, the goals and their implications. Next, the importance of EFA is underscored. It goes on to discuss the situation in developing countries in the global EFA goals attainment. Furthermore, the paper has attempted to describe the challenges to the achievement of EFA. Thereafter, recommendations are made on concrete management strategies to be taken to close the EFA goals attainment deficit. The paper concludes by noting the need for developing countries to be aware of the enormity of the tasks facing them in achieving EFA goals.

**Key Words:** Management, EFA, Situation, Developing Countries

## Background

In the past ten years the world has made giant strides in educational development. However, many people seem to be far from benefitting from it. Since education is the right of all, Education for All (EFA) by 2015 has been identified as one of the means of reaching this goal. Verbal commitments are not enough to ensure that such goals are implemented. The authors see the need to examine how developing countries have managed EFA in the last 14 years.

The paper attempts to bring into a very special focus, the effort developing countries are making to meet their commitment to the Education for All (EFA) goals made at the Dakar World Education Forum of April 2000. Information on this was sought mainly from the reports of the EFA international monitoring committees from 2002 to 2012. The paper is certainly not a comprehensive compendium on EFA-related initiatives on the countries.

For this reason we have focused on the following basic areas: Concept and goals of EFA, Importance of EFA, The situation so far with EFA, Challenges to Achieving EFA and Recommendations on the possible way(s) forward in developing countries.

## Concept and Goals of EFA

Education for All is a global commitment to access of quality education by children, youth and adults. It was first launched in 1990 and later in 2000 by the following United Nations Agencies - UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank - with emphasis on the achievement of six goals by the year 2015.

### Goals of EFA

The recommendations of the Dakar EFA Forum of April 2000 are as follows:

1. **Expand early children care and education.** This entails expanding and improving early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. **Free and compulsory primary education for all.** This should ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. **Promote learning, skills for young people and adults.** This aims at ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. **Increase adult literacy by 50 percent.** This should aim specifically towards women and should allow for equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. **Achieve gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015.** This goal aims at eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

6. **Improve the quality of education at all levels.** This means improving all aspects of education and ensuring excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

### **Implications of EFA Goals**

The six goals of EFA indicate that by the year 2015 everyone, both adolescents and adults should benefit from pre-school, primary school through formal secondary technical and vocational education, non-formal adult learning or skill training. EFA is a driving force for the achievement of the MDGs as all MDGs are Education-Related. The implication of this is to pursue the twin sustainable human development goals of promoting quality-equitable access to Education in order to boost the MDGs while vigorously pursuing the MDGs to give the necessary thrust to fast track EFA.

### **Importance of EFA**

Evidence from global EFA Monitoring report (2013/14) supports assertions that education transforms lives in significant ways: Firstly, education reduces poverty and boosts jobs and economic growth. It has potential for offering the poor a route to a better life. Also, it accelerates escape from chronic poverty as it increases earnings up to 10 percent. Furthermore, it prevents the inter-generational transmission of poverty, improves employment prospects, increases the chances of better work conditions, and closes gender wage gaps. Education enhances prosperity since it fuels economic growth. However, it must be equitable to yield economic rewards. It improves people's chances of a healthier life. For instance, child mortality can be reduced by 50% in families with literate mothers. It is a key way of improving maternal and children's health as it plays a major role in containing diseases. It can be used to help in reducing the spread of HIV and other preventable diseases through access to health care facilities. Education in fact promotes healthy societies. Moreover, hunger cannot be eliminated without education.

In terms of governing, education builds the foundations of democracy and good governance, improves political participation, and strengthens democracy. It promotes political activism that influences policy changes. Education increases tolerance, helps prevent conflict and heals its consequences if it occurs. Due to its potential for imbuing the individual with knowledge and understanding of the environment, education can be a potent instrument for tackling climate change through the promotion of environmentally, friendly behavior. Education empowers men and women to make better life-choices and promotes gender equality. It yields higher returns – 11% to 30% more than investment in physical capital. (See table I below).

Education Level	Private rate of return	Social rate of return
Primary Schooling	26.4	20.6
Secondary Schooling	18.5	14.1
Higher Education	22.4	11.3

Table 1: Education in Low-income Countries Yield High Returns. (Source: *Mingat, A. and winter, C. (2002). Education for All by 2015. A Quarterly Magazine of the IMF, March Vol. 39, No. 1*

### The Situation so far with EFA Goals in Developing Countries

There was sustainable improvement in the gross enrolment ratio in developing countries between 1960 and 1980. Thereafter, enrolment stagnated in Africa and universalizing primary education stagnated and declined in many developing countries in the 1990's. In 2000 gross enrolment increased but fewer children completed their schooling with only 6% of the children in developing countries having completed primary education. To gain a better insight into the level of goal achievement, each of the six goals will be discussed.

#### Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education

This goal is about expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Access, measured in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), showed that some 23 developing countries had a GER of less than 30% by the year 2000; even then most of them had made gains compared to the situation in 1990. Early Childhood Care and Education ( ECCE)-- GER for selected African countries in 2000 are: Djibouti (0.1), Burundi (0.5), Niger (1.3), Mali (1.6), Ethiopia (1.8), Togo (2.7), Cote d'Ivoire (3.2), Senegal (3.3), Algeria (4.2), Congo DRC (4.2), Uganda (4.2), Eritrea (5.3), Benin (6.2), Libya (7.8), Egypt (12.8), Cameroun (14.3). In 2006, pre-primary gross enrolment ratio averaged 36 percent in developing countries up to 14 percent in sub-Sahara Africa as opposed to 79 percent in developed countries.

Available data (see Table 2 below) shows that some developing countries are making slow progress towards the generalized provision of ECCE, and that this conclusion is also applicable to many other developing countries. For instance, African countries featured prominently on the list of countries providing some form of organized ECCE experience by the year 2000, which is ten years after the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (28 African countries among the 46 for which data were available).

Country	Total (%)	36-47 months (%)	48-59 months (%)
Tunisia	46.7		
Equatorial Guinea	45.4	34.0	58.9
Lesotho	22.5	16.7	28.6
Sudan	20.2	16.2	24.8
Sao Tomé and Príncipe	18.2	14.4	22.7
The Gambia	16.3	11.2	22.3
Cameroun	15.4	9.7	21.3
Swaziland	14.7	8.5	16.3
Botswana	14.5	10.5	19.1
Comoros	14.3	9.9	19.3
Kenya	12.8	5.3	21.5
Sierra Leone	11.7	7.7	16.9
Togo	9.6	6.5	11.0
Senegal	8.1	7.5	8.8
Angola	6.6	5.0	8.6
Guinea Bissau	6.5	5.1	7.9
Egypt	6.4	2.6	10.7
Côte d' Ivoire	6.2	4.2	8.8
Madagascar	5.5	3.0	8.3
Burundi	4.6	3.6	5.9
Congo DRC	3.0	1.5	4.4
Central African Republic	2.7	1.8	3.8
Rwanda	2.6	1.4	3.9
Niger	2.5	1.6	3.5
Somalia	1.9	1.1	2.6
Chad	0.8	0.6	1.0

Table 2: Children Aged 36-59 Months Attending Some Form of Organized ECCE Program

One ready conclusion from Table 2 is that a greater proportion of children aged 48 to 59 months are engaged in organized ECCE activities than children aged 36 to 47 months. It appears that less formal ECCE learning is going on for which statistics are not available.

Africa and Central Asia rank abysmally low in terms of enrolment in organized ECCE programmes when compared with the rest of the world (See figure I below). The figure indicates that there could be some positive correlation between the state of socio-economic development and participation in GER programmes. Poverty is therefore, a likely explanation for poor participation by developing countries in ECCE.

There are major global disparities in enrolment between the world's richest and poorest countries. With increasing conflict in developing countries, fewer children enroll in schools. This goal is yet to be achieved as early child care and Education is not yet well expanded.

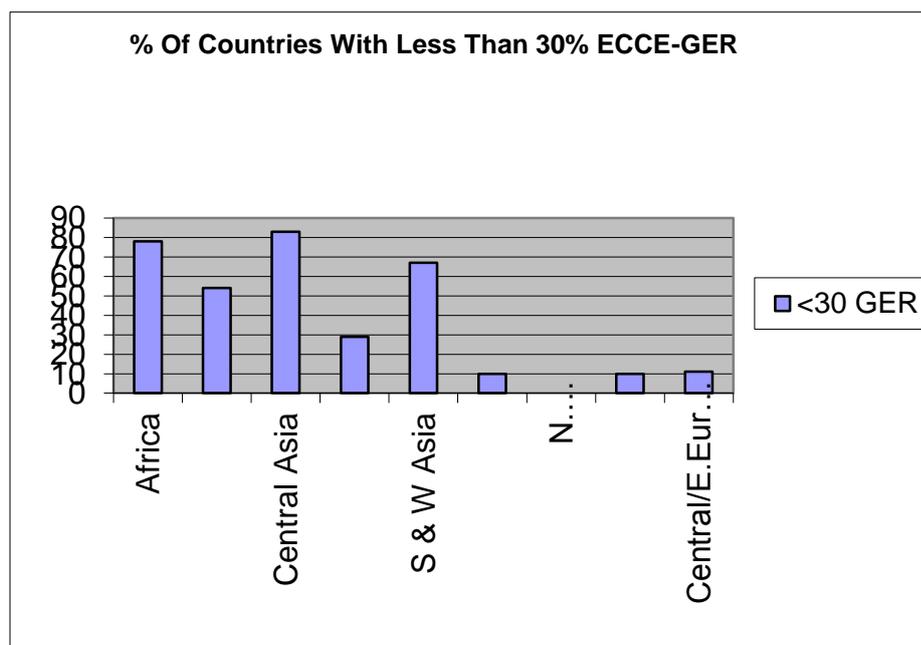


Fig. 1: Level of Enrolment in Organized ECCE Program:% of Countries with less than 30% ECCE-GER

## Goal 2: Universal Primary Education

This goal states that by 2015 all children, especially girls and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to free primary education of acceptable quality.

For developing countries, the issues here are related to the broad coverage area of EFA Goal II. It is tempting to refer to it as “universal primary education” but it means a lot more than that. The emphasis here is on the expression “all children”, and the term is there to draw special attention to (i) girls, (ii) children in difficult circumstances, and (iii) children from ethnic minority groups. The challenge here is that countries have to get every child into school, but most especially, every group should be adequately catered for. Thus, special needs education of different types would have to be developed to respond to different forms of ‘difficult circumstances’. Enrolment patterns in primary education, in terms of NER and GER, are presented in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

NER <50%	50%> <70%	NER 70%> <90%	90%> <100%	NER	Data not Available
Angola, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Burundi, Guinea, Niger, Tanzania, Djibouti, Sudan	Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zambia.	Benin, Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Morocco	Mauritius, Rwanda, Togo, Swaziland, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia		Cape Verde, Central Africa, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroun, Congo DRC Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Nigeria, Sao Tome, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda, Libya, Mauritania.

Table 3: Classification of Countries According to NER level (1999)

GER <70%	70% >GER<100%	GER>100%	Data not Available
Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea, Niger, Sierra Leone, Sudan Tanzania,	Benin, Bissau, Cameroun, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Mozambique, Morocco Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe,	Algeria, Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda,	Cape Verde, Central Africa, Congo DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Sao Tome, Seychelles, Somalia,

Table 4: Classification of Countries According to GER Levels (1999)

The tables show the clustering of the Net Enrolment Ratios (NERs) and Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) around the 70%> range. Compared with major regions of the world, developing countries have very low enrolment rates in primary education. (Figure 2 below)

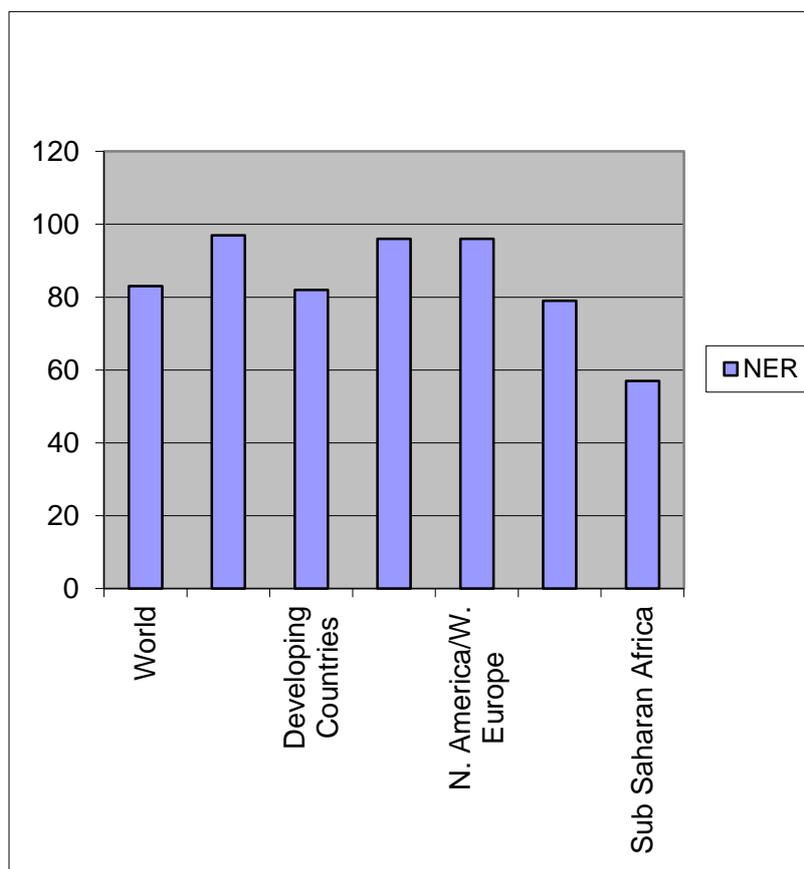


Fig. 2: Primary Net Enrolment Rates (1999)

The low GER and NER are an indication that primary education is still unavailable to large numbers of children in developing countries. Figure 2 shows that 34% of primary school-age children do not attend school.

However, average net enrolment ratio has increased since year 2000 from 54 to 70 percent in sub-Sahara Africa. About 7.5 million, 55 percent girls are currently not attending school, half of which live in developing countries. In most developing countries, the repetition rate for boys tends to be higher than for girls. Also in some of those countries repetition is more common with boys while in others, the reverse is the case. Although lack of data makes it difficult to make generalize statements

about this for the developing countries, the fact remains that developing countries are lagging behind other regions of the world (except South Asia) in pursuing the goal of universal primary education. In addition, low enrolments (GER as low as 30% in some countries), GER that are even lower, high repetition and survival rates simply mean that they are still far from achieving Universal Primary Education goals. With this current trend, millions of children will still not be in school by the end of 2015 – the target date.

The point must, however, be made that there are variations amongst the countries, just as there are variations within countries. Generally speaking, countries such as Mauritius, South Africa, the countries of North Africa, and Namibia should have few lessons to share with the rest of the countries. On the whole, the goal is not yet achieved as education is not yet free and compulsory in most developing countries to get all children in school. There is need to delve more deeply into the facts behind the figures. What factors can explain the high dropout rates? Why do they reach a peak at specific levels of primary education? Why have conditions not really improved since the year 2000? Why statistics are still a problem? Probing further into these and other issues unearthed by the figures would be one way of giving concrete assistance to developing countries in their march towards EFA.

### **Goal 3: Learning and Life Skills for Youth and Adults**

This aims at ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.

The need for learning and life skills for youth and adult in developing countries can be seen from the nature of the region itself – generalized poverty, a youthful population, the failure of universal primary education, and the changing nature of the world of work. Most developing countries have not gone beyond the stage of merely issuing statements of intention in regard to promoting life skills education. In most cases, the perception of ‘life skills’ is still that of technical skills (in the form of hands-on experience), for ‘productive’ activities. They are yet to make a beginning in their march to attaining this goal. A lot of little things are happening. The need is felt, as youth restfulness is witnessed everywhere. However, concerted efforts are still a long way off. Generally, Governments in developing countries are not yet giving priority to youth and adult learning needs in their education policies. No strong political commitment and less public funding as well as absence of data seem to pose challenges. This Goal is, therefore, not achieved as many young people and adults who pass through educational institutions at all levels lack skills.

### **Goal 4: Adult Literacy**

This means achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

The 2002 monitoring report affirms that illiteracy is concentrated in countries whose school systems are known to be weak. The report also predicts that a large number of developing countries (in keeping with global expectations) would have made some gains in literacy education by 2015 (Table 5).

Literacy Rate in 2000	Literacy rate in 2015			
	<50%	50-70%	70-90%	>90%
<50%	Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger	Benin, Burundi, Centrafrique, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal		
50-70%	Comoros, Egypt, Eritrea, Liberia	Comoros, Egypt, Eritrea, Liberia	Algeria, Congo, Djibouti, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Togo, Uganda	
70-90%			Botswana, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Ghana, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritius, Swaziland, Tunisia, Tanzania, Zambia	Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe
>90%				

Table 5: Progress Toward Literacy By Developing Countries (2000-2015)

As table 5 shows, developing countries are still likely to be lagging behind the world average for literacy attainment by the year 2015. This is in spite of the progress expected to be made during the one and a half decade of promoting EFA. One possible explanation here is the fact that three of the countries of Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia, and Nigeria) harbor large numbers of illiterates, in view of their large population sizes. Africa will still harbor 8% of the world's illiterates, as two of the three countries are likely to experience an increase in the number of illiterates as indicated in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Three High Population Countries: Evolution on Literacy Rates**

COUNTRY	2000 (862 million world illiterates)	% Of world illiterates	2005 (799 million world illiterates)	% Of world illiterates
Egypt	17.24 million	2	23.97	3
Ethiopia	17.24 million	2	23.97	3
Nigeria	25.86 million	3	15.98	2
TOTAL	68.96 million	8	63.92	8

## Women Literacy

Table 7 shows that women literacy rate reached over 70% by the year 2002 while nine countries still had rates between 30 and 49%, and nine others below 30%.

RANGE	COUNTRIES
>70%	Botswana, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe
50-70%	Algeria, Cameroun, Cape Verde, DRC Congo, Egypt, Gambia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Rwanda, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda
30-49%	Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote D'Ivoire, Eritrea, Liberia, Malawi, Togo,
<30%	Angola, Burkina Faso, Bissau, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal

Table7: Categorization of Developing Countries According to Female Adult Literacy Rates (2002)

## Youth Literacy

There is a distinction between youth and adult literacy, the former meaning persons aged 15-24 and the latter persons aged 25 and above. Generally speaking, and as is the case in other regions of the world, the rate of youth literacy in developing countries tend to be higher than adult literacy rates. Part of the explanation could be the spread of formal education in the past two decades. There are only three countries in which youth literacy is below 50%. A majority of the countries is in fact in the 70 to > 90% rate. See Table 8 below.

There are significant gender differences in youth literacy rates, according to the monitoring reports. Four countries (Kenya - 95.1% young women literates, Lesotho—98.1%, Namibia – 96.6%, and South Africa – 91.2%) had by 2000 higher literacy rates for young women than was the case for young men. Other countries within the 90% literacy range for young women are Libya (93%), Congo (96%), and Equatorial Guinea (95.4%).

On the other side of the scale are countries with relatively low rates of literacy for young women - Niger (13.8%), Burkina Faso (23.3%), Mali (25.1%), Benin (36%), Senegal 41%), Guinea Bissau (43.7%), and Ethiopia (48.7%). It is worrisome that there is still gender gap in literacy attainment among youth.

RANGE	COUNTRIES
<50%	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger
< 50- >70%	Benin, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Comoros, Ethiopia, Gambia, Liberia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal
<70- >90%	Botswana, Cote D'Ivoire, DRC Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Sudan, Togo, Tanzania, Zambia
>90%	Algeria, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zimbabwe

Table 8: Categorization of African States According to Youth Literacy Rates

Literacy is still a serious problem in developing countries as little progress has been made in recent years to increase adult literacy. Over 700 million adults will be lacking literacy skills in 2015. Nearly all developing countries are off track in meeting adult literacy target of 50 percent by 2015. Many of them have literacy rates less than 55 percent (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009). It is worrisome, as suggested by the monitoring reports, that a number of developing countries might increase the number of illiterates in their population, instead of reducing it by 50%, as envisaged by EFA. The task before the developing countries thus becomes intractable.

Hence this Goal is yet to be achieved and it raises a number of questions on the efficacy of the innumerable literacy projects mounted over the decades: To what extent have these projects addressed the real issues? What factors can explain their apparent lack of sustainability?

### **Goal 5: Gender Equality**

This goal aims at eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality

Gender parity and gender equality in education mean different things. The first is purely numerical concept. Reaching gender parity in education implies that the same proportion of girls and boys –relative to their respective age groups – would enter the educational system and participate in its different cycles.

Gender equality, on the other hand, means that boys and girls would experience the same advantages or disadvantages in educational access, treatment, and outcomes. In so far as it goes beyond questions of numerical balance, equality is more difficult to define and measure than parity. (EFA Monitoring Report 2003/2004).

There is an overall gender parity index of 0.88 (based on Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)) and of 0.92 (based on Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)) for developing countries in the year 2000. These are still far from the ideal figure of 1.00, already attained by the industrialized nations. They however represent an improvement on the 1990 figures, which were 0.83 and 0.86 respectively. Gender disparities in primary enrolment are overwhelmingly to the disadvantage of girls. Sub-Saharan Africa has low GERs and strong inequalities in enrolments. In one-third of the countries, female ratios are circa three quarters of the male ratio or less (e.g., Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Benin, Central Africa Republic, and Liberia) (Monitoring report, 2003-04).

### **Out-Of-School Children and The Gender Question**

Developing countries account for two-thirds of out of school children, suggesting that some 29 million children will most likely not attend school in 2015 in developing countries. In terms of percentages, the proportion of out-of-school girls fell marginally from 64% in 1990 to 57% in 2000. The factor at play here appears to be rapid population growth, which furthermore, could impede progress towards the realization of EFA goals.

### **Gender and Illiteracy**

61% of illiterates in developing countries were women in 1990. This estimated figure remained the same in 2000, and it is projected to remain the same in the year 2015. This is almost in keeping with global trends. The gender dimension of participation in secondary and tertiary education indicates as follows:

Access to secondary education in developing countries (gross enrolment rate of 22.9) is far below the world average. Moreover, it is the lowest worldwide: a reflection of the low level of access to primary education. With regards to tertiary education the situation is worse. With a gross enrolment rate of 2.5%, it is ten times below the world average. Gender parity indices (0.82 for secondary education and 0.47 for tertiary) are the lowest in the world. There remains wide disparities among the African countries in terms of female participation in secondary education

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries did not achieve gender parity by 2005, as compared to 37 percent of non-African countries worldwide that had achieved gender parity at the secondary level. Gender equality by 2015 is also farfetched for most if not all developing countries. Hence, gender equity and gender equality will remain the key to attaining EFA in developing countries. This goal is, therefore, yet to be achieved.

### **Goal 6: Ensuring Quality**

This implies improving all aspects of quality education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Quality is really the factor that makes education useful, since the ultimate goal of an educational enterprise (both at the personal and social levels) is qualitative improvement. This is probably the rationale for the emphasis on “quality” in each of the six EFA goals. This also holds for its goal number six, which brings quality very much to the fore.

### **Expected Years of Schooling**

With an average of 7.1 years (compared with a world average of 10.3) Sub Saharan Africa and the rest of the developing countries remain a region in which the average child does not have enough of schooling to acquire and consolidate the basic skills that could enhance life quality.

### **Teacher-Pupil Ratio**

Report (Obanya, 2005) indicates that 20 of some 57 developing countries have class sizes of 45 and above. Considering that this situation is also compounded by poor facilities (and the poverty of other contextual factors) the quality of teaching and learning definitely suffers. Generally, inequality exists between regions, communities, schools and classrooms in developing countries. There are large national and regional disparities in pupil/teacher ratios, with marked teacher shortages. Many essential resources taken for granted in developed countries remain scarce in developing countries – basic infrastructure such as electricity, seats, textbooks and so on.

## **Funding of Education**

On funding, the GDP spent on education is low. For instance, it stands at 3.6% for Sub Saharan Africa, East Africa/Pacific (3.9). This indicates that developing countries might be overstretching their resources already on education. The issue, however, is that of efficient spending, for it is on that that quality really depends. Funding remains critical resource for improving quality of education in developing countries as this is limited. Learning achievement has not met the desired level as there is substantially high proportion of low learning achievements. This goal is not yet achieved as the quality of education in most developing countries leaves so much to be desired.

## **Challenges to Achieving EFA in Developing Countries**

There are some challenges to the achievement of EFA in developing countries. The challenges can be grouped under the following sub-headings:

### **Socio-Economic factors**

Many parents are poor and find it difficult to send their children to school due to the financial demands in terms of school fees, levies, cost of books, uniforms and transport among other costs. Hence children from such parents are given out to be used as house helps in return for money. In addition, many parents are concerned about the opportunity costs of sending their children to school. Furthermore, settlements in sparsely populated areas do not have enough children population to attract the establishment of schools. In other cases, available schools are too far for children in settlements in remote areas. The non achievement of EFA is even more compounded with very limited employment opportunities for school leavers.

### **Cultural factors**

The perception of Western education as incompatible with traditional beliefs and cultural practices as well as skeptical attitudes towards the benefits of education poses serious challenges to EFA in the developing countries.

### **Political and Institutional factors**

The political crises and civil war in many developing countries have resulted in huge refugee problem for many families with their children's educational opportunities being affected. It is worthy of note that the educational systems of some of the countries are ill-adapted to local learning needs. The introduction of school meals policy to attract children to school have become politicized and marred by corrupt practices, which have led to the partial or non-implementation of the policy. We note that people are not held accountable and brought to justice for such lapses and so, the challenge adversely affects attendance to school by many children.

### **Funding factors**

Governments at all levels in many developing countries do not give the education sector the desired priority in their budgetary allocation. For instance, public spending on education ranges from less than 2 percent of the GNP such as in Chad, Guinea and Guatemala to 10 percent in Botswana, Namibia and Nigeria. However, inadequate budgetary allocation does not seem to be the only problem in view of the fact that allocations are not judiciously spent. In addition to this, the private sector

has not provided adequate partnership with governments in the provision of the needed funds for education.

### **Factors linked to School**

There are limited number of school buildings, many of which are dilapidated and unsafe, resulting in over-crowded classrooms and inadequate school facilities. The school environments are poor with many lacking portable water and toilets for both boys and girls. Absence of school canteens or feeding facilities provides a challenge. Furthermore, children's school fees are not affordable by many poor parents. In some developing countries, attendance to school is seasonal as the school calendar is incompatible with farming and fishing cycles during which the children assist their parents. The existing schools have under qualified and underpaid teachers who lack motivation to deliver quality teaching that will attract and keep children in schools. Also, the illiteracy rates for adult women in many developing countries are as high as 80 per cent. Undoubtedly, this has a negative impact on the achievement of Education For All goals.

### **Recommendations**

With the foregoing discussion, recommendations are hereby made for improved management of EFA in developing countries.

In order to increase the enrolment rates and improve retention and completion rates to at least 80 per cent, it is important to establish additional schools. These schools should be located within reasonable distance to the children's homes.

There is a need for governments at all levels to reduce the direct costs of education to parents. They can do this by increasing their budgetary allocation for education. More importantly they should monitor the implementation of allocated funds with the aim to ensure proper usage in order to achieve desired results. Efficient use of available resources is critical. Donors should be encouraged to provide support for sector wide programme implementation rather than finance specific projects that may not be far reaching in achieving the Education for All goals.

The need for trained teachers who should receive regular training cannot be overemphasized. In addition provisions for adequate learning materials and physical facilities and Information Communication Technology (ICT) needed to complement teaching and learning should receive greater attention.

There is need for strong, transparent leadership in developing countries. This should contribute in reducing corruption which militates against the provisions for the achievement of increased enrolment in schools.

Educational resources should be allocated equitably and efficiently across localities and individual schools.

Each developing country needs to pursue a strategy best suited to its situation, if it is to achieve Education for All goals within a reasonable and sustainable financing framework. The provision of quality primary education to all the citizens of developing countries is a critical cornerstone in achieving economic growth.

## Conclusion

Over the past decade and half, access to education has been expanding in developing countries. Innovative literacy programs are transforming the lives of thousands of their people. Mobile tent schools for nomadic herder communities in Nigeria and Mongolia are provided. Despite these positive gains, there is an estimated 56 million children still unenrolled in 2015, half of which are girls. However, it is not a 'no progress' situation in relationship to the pursuit of EFA. A number of developing countries appear to be on track. It would be of great value to many of these countries, if the factors responsible for the relative success were to be studied in greater depth, with emphasis on measures that yield the outcome for improved management.

Educational deprivation in developing countries is a reality. EFA is itself a response to that reality. Whether or not the global EFA momentum has set developing countries on the path of 'educational recovery' is however difficult to ascertain. More importantly, developing countries need to be aware of the enormity of the tasks involved in the management of EFA for the achievement of its goals.

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