

TRENDS ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Drawing on the country level data presented in **Section B** of this report it is possible to identify Commonwealth countries that have sustained high levels of achievement on individual MDG/EFA indicators and/or have made significant progress since the beginning of the new Millennium.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

EFA Goal 1 Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

It is widely acknowledged that ECCE programmes help to offset social and economic disadvantage and to establish the foundations for life. Health, nutrition, hygiene and early learning opportunities all play their part. Pre-primary education is just one of a range of ECCE interventions.

Table 2 using gross enrolment rates in pre-primary education shows that of 44 countries for which data are available, 17 Commonwealth countries (all in the Caribbean and the Pacific) have achieved over 75% coverage at the pre-primary level, although this figure is counterbalanced by an almost equal number with a GER below 50% (18 countries – predominantly in Sub-Saharan Africa). Although very great care should be taken with the trend data, it appears that over 20 countries have experienced an upward trend in enrolment ratios since 1999, including countries starting with a low enrolment rate. On the other hand there is some evidence of countries witnessing declining levels although in some instances this may reflect changes in the classification of pre-primary education (e.g. in the United Kingdom).

TABLE 2 **Pre-primary education: gross enrolment ratio in 44 Commonwealth countries**

| GER in Pre-primary Education (2007 or most recent year) | GER data unavailable for 1999 | Recent Trend (1999- 2007 or most recent year) | | Total |
|---|---|--|---|-----------|
| | | Negative | Positive | |
| Above 75% | Australia , Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | Dominica (-3), Grenada (-13), Guyana (-37), Malta (-6), Saint Kitts and Nevis (-12) | Barbados (17), Cyprus (19), Jamaica (14), Maldives (31), Mauritius (3), Nauru (32), New Zealand (7), Seychelles (0) , Trinidad and Tobago (27), Tuvalu (25) | 17 |
| | 2 | 5 | 10 | |
| Between 50% and 75% | Antigua and Barbuda, Kiribati | Pakistan (-11), Saint Lucia (-2), United Kingdom (-5) | Brunei Darussalam (0), Canada (4), Ghana (21), Malaysia (4) | 9 |
| | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| Below 50% | Botswana, Nigeria, Swaziland, U.R. of Tanzania, Vanuatu | Bangladesh (-7), Lesotho (-3), Samoa (-5), Tonga (-7), Uganda (-1) | Belize (8), Cameroon (10), India (22), Kenya (5), Namibia (1), Sierra Leone (1), South Africa (22), The Gambia (4) | 18 |
| | 5 | 5 | 8 | |
| Total | 9 | 13 | 22 | 44 |

NOTES: Countries in bold have a GER above 100%. The figures in brackets correspond to the percentage point change between 1999 and 2007 or most recent year.

SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, December 2008 release

Universal Primary Education/Completion

EFA Goal 2 Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

MDG Goal 2 Achieve UPE - **Target 3** Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

These goals and targets (EFA and MDG) have received the most constant attention internationally over the last decade. Their measurement is not easy. High and sustained net enrolment is commonly used as a major indicator but it can hide significant variations within and across individual countries while there is no clear resolution on how to measure completion in the absence of authoritative data which captures both completion of the primary cycle and mastery of the primary curriculum. So the use of Adjusted Net Enrolment Rates (NER) set along side the Gross Intake Rate (GIR) to the last grade in primary school should be treated with some caution.³

Over one third of the 40 Commonwealth countries for which data are available have recent primary net enrolment rates of over 95% and over 90% GIR rates. For these countries – albeit facing issues of how to improve the quality of education – UPE/UPC has been achieved. At the other end of the scale there are still Commonwealth countries (including states that are not represented in **Table 3** because of the lack of data: e.g. Nigeria) where both NER and GIR show that 25% of school age children are neither in primary nor secondary education and that less than 75% of the children who should be entering the final grade of primary school do so. In these countries the UPE/UPC goals remain highly relevant. There are also instances of countries with high or improving NERs that have lower percentage figures for children entering the last grade of primary (e.g. India and Jamaica).

TABLE 3 **Adjusted primary NER and GIR to the Final Grade of Primary in 43 Commonwealth countries**

| | | Gross Intake Ratio to Last Grade (%) | | | | | Total |
|---|-----------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------|
| | | Unavailable for 2007 or most recent year | Below 75% | Between 75% and 89,9% | Between 90% and 94,9% | Above 95% | |
| Adjusted Net Enrolment Ratio (%) (2007 or most recent year) | Above 95% | Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom | | Zambia | Barbados, Mauritius | Belize, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, Malaysia, Maldives, St Lucia, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tonga, U. R. of Tanzania | 16 |
| | | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 10 | |
| | Between 90% and 94,9% | St Vincent & the Grenadines | | India, Jamaica | South Africa | Malta, The Bahamas, St Kitts and Nevis, Samoa | 8 |
| | | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | |
| | Between 75% and 89,9% | Vanuatu | Bangladesh, The Gambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland | Grenada, Namibia, Trinidad & Tobago | Botswana, Kenya | Dominica | 12 |
| | | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| | Below 75% | Nauru, Nigeria, Solomon Islands | Pakistan, Ghana | Lesotho | | Antigua & Barbuda | 7 |
| | | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Total | | 8 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 16 | 43 |

SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, December 2008 release

3 See the Glossary at the beginning of Section B for an explanation of these indicators

Literacy

EFA Goal 4 Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Worldwide it is estimated that 780 million adults lack basic literacy skills although many observers believe this figure to be a significant underestimate given major and largely unresolved issues about how to measure literacy. And while this total figure has come down somewhat in the past decade, in large measure due to significant increases in levels of literacy in China, this EFA challenge remains daunting. And it is a challenge from which high income countries cannot be excluded.

Table 4 sets the percentage of adults projected to be without basic literacy skills in 2015 against the estimated rate which is required to meet the EFA goal of a 50% improvement in levels of literacy (using a year 2000 baseline or the closest year to 2000 for which data are available). The table is split into two. Countries in the bottom half have a poor chance on current rates of progress of getting close to the EFA goal. But countries in the top half of the table have a much better chance of achieving or getting close to the 2015 indicator. Only 29 Commonwealth countries have data to enable these calculations to be made. This low coverage is explained partly by the lack of international comparable literacy data for high income countries.

TABLE 4 **Percentage of adults (15-64 years) without basic literacy skills, projected rate by 2015 and EFA target rates**

| | Country | Projected rate by 2015 | EFA Target Rate* |
|---|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Countries where the projected percentage of 15-64 year olds who will lack basic literacy skills in 2015 is no more than 2.5% above the percentage of the adult population lacking basic skills in 2015 that would represent a 50% improvement in relation to the 2000 (Dakar) baseline level. | Tonga | 0.6 | 0.5 |
| | Trinidad and Tobago | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| | Samoa | 1.0 | 0.8 |
| | Cyprus | 1.2 | 0.6 |
| | Maldives | 2.5 | 1.8 |
| | Brunei Darussalam | 3.3 | 3.9 |
| | Singapore | 3.7 | 3.7 |
| | Malta | 5.3 | 6.1 |
| | Malaysia | 5.7 | 5.7 |
| | Sri Lanka | 6.8 | 4.7 |
| | South Africa | 8.9 | 7.7 |
| | Mauritius | 9.7 | 7.8 |
| | Namibia | 9.8 | 7.8 |
| | Jamaica | 10.7 | 9.6 |
| | Swaziland | 11.4 | 10.2 |
| Countries where the projected percentage of 15-64 year olds who will lack basic literacy skills in 2015 is more than 2.5% above the percentage of the adult population lacking basic skills in 2015 that would represent a 50% improvement in relation to the 2000 (Dakar) baseline level. | Botswana | 12.6 | 10.7 |
| | Vanuatu | 16.2 | 14.1 |
| | Uganda | 19.5 | 16.9 |
| | Nigeria | 20.9 | 17.3 |
| | Malawi | 21.3 | 16.8 |
| | U. R. of Tanzania | 25.6 | 15.9 |
| | Zambia | 27.6 | 15.8 |
| | India | 28.2 | 20.1 |
| | Ghana | 29.1 | 21.1 |
| | Bangladesh | 38.8 | 26.8 |
| | Papua New Guinea | 38.9 | 21.3 |
| | Pakistan | 41.6 | 26.9 |
| | Mozambique | 50.7 | 30.6 |
| | Sierra Leone | 52.5 | 34.3 |

NOTE: This tolerance of 2.5% between the projected and EFA target rate is to allow for measurement and estimations error in international statistics series. It does not imply a judgement about the acceptability of any particular level of literacy.

* See Glossary (**Section B**) for more detailed definitions of the terms used in this table.

SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, December 2008 release

Gender Parity

EFA Goal 5 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.

MDG Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women - **Target 1** Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Achieving gender parity in enrolments in primary and secondary schooling is one contribution to the much broader and more complex goal of gender equality.

Table 5 shows some distinctive groupings. Eight countries have achieved gender parity at both primary and secondary levels. There is a significant block of countries (17) where gender parity at primary is followed by boys being at a disadvantage at the secondary level. There are seven countries where there is disparity to the disadvantage of girls at both levels. Again, caution is needed. These rates can change quite significantly over time either because of unreliable data or where there are imbalances in the population of boys and girls, for example, in India.

TABLE 5 **Gender Parity Indices (F/M) for access in primary and secondary education: 2007 or most recent year.**

| | | Gender Parity in Access to Secondary Education in 2007 or most recent year | | | | Total |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|-----------|
| | | Achieved 1.03>GPI>0.97 | Disparity is to the disadvantage of boys GPI>1.03 | Disparity is to the disadvantage of girls GPI<0.97 | No Data | |
| Gender Parity in Access to Primary Education in 2007 or most recent year | Achieved 1.03>GPI>0.97 | Bangladesh, Barbados, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Grenada, Malta, United Kingdom | Bahamas, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Jamaica, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, St Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago | Australia, Ghana, Guyana,, Kenya, St Kitts and Nevis, Uganda, Zambia | Sri Lanka, Tuvalu, U. R. of Tanzania, Vanuatu | 36 |
| | | 8 | 17 | 7 | 4 | |
| | Disparity is to the disadvantage of boys GPI>1.03 | | | The Gambia, Malawi | | |
| | 0 | | 2 | 0 | | |
| | Disparity is to the disadvantage of girls GPI<0.97 | India, Swaziland | St Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tonga | Antigua and Barbuda, Cameroon, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands | Papua New Guinea | 13 |
| | | 2 | 3 | 7 | 1 | |
| Total | | 10 | 20 | 16 | 5 | 51 |

SOURCE: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, December 2008 release