

## Tipping the balance: Girls out of school halved since 1999

The 2012 Education for All *Global Monitoring Report*, launched today, shows that the number of girls out of primary school has halved since 1999, while the number of teenage girls out of school has fallen by over a third. Tipping balances has left more countries with fewer boys than girls in secondary school than the reverse. Overall, of all six Education for All goals agreed on by 164 countries in 2000, the fifth goal, which includes getting equal numbers of boys to girls in school, has made most progress.

The EFA *Global Monitoring Report* shows huge strides taken by countries that had terrible gender records over a decade ago. Afghanistan has overcome the biggest obstacles to girls' education any country has witnessed. While less than 4% of girls were enrolled in 1999 under Taliban rule, latest data shows almost eight out of ten now get the chance of an education.

The most striking progress is often the direct result of political will and strong policy plans. Bangladesh, for example, a low income country has had so much success in helping girls get into school that boys are now in the minority. In total, over half the 97 countries with gender divides in secondary education have fewer boys than girls in school.

The number of countries with severe gender disparities with fewer than 9 girls to boys to 10 boys in school has also halved between 1999 and 2010. Even in primary schools, there are now only two regions – Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa – which have yet to reach parity, and both have made significant progress since 1999

Once in school, girls perform better than boys in reading in all but one country that participated in international learning assessments since 2005, with boys' performance even declining over time in France, Romania and Sweden.

Despite progress, however, much remains to be done. Some countries' school records still show huge gender gaps. Afghanistan's neighbour, Pakistan, still has over three million girls out of school. The scale of the obstacles girls face in the country was underlined in the shooting of 14 year old Malala Yousafzai on October 9. Pauline Rose, Director of the Global Monitoring Report said: *"The news of the attack on Malala Yousafzai's in Pakistan is a tragedy. She was standing up for the right of education for girls in the country, rights which are not yet being respected. In some regions in the country, close to one in six girls still aren't going to school. Afghanistan has shown us the speed with which it's possible to make a difference, Pakistan must do the same."*

The advances many countries have made in closing gender gaps have often taken decades to achieve. The 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report calculates that this slow progress has left 200 million young people aged 15-24 years never having completed primary school and therefore lacking skills needed for work. Young women are affected worst of all; 116 million have been denied the opportunity of completing primary school. The report calls on governments not only to continue prioritising gender equality in schools, but to ensure that these young people who missed out the first time around get a second chance at an education. To ensure the fifth education goal is truly achieved, governments also need to tackle the discrimination that young women, particularly those with more limited education, face in the workplace.

Pauline Rose continued: *'I met young women in rural areas in Egypt and in Ethiopia just this last year who never had the chance of even learning how to read and write in primary school. There is now little chance of them finding work – they have little hope of escaping from poverty. While new generations of girls being born today have a far greater chance at an education than those who came before them, we must not forget the teenagers and those in their twenties who deserve a second chance. We must give them the opportunities they need – give them training in business and marketing, for example, and the chance to learn literacy and numeracy. These women deserve the dignity of an education, and of getting decent work.'*

Investing in young peoples' skills is a smart move for countries seeking to boost their economic growth. The Report estimates that every \$1 spent on a person's education, yields US\$10-US\$15 in economic growth over that person's working lifetime. Not investing in young people's skills leaves them either adding to unemployment statistics in rich countries, or trapped in jobs earning poverty line wages in low-income countries.

The Report makes a number of recommendations to address these problems and support skills development for young people:

- Skills strategies must target the disadvantaged: particularly young women living in poor urban and rural parts of countries.
- Alternative pathways to learn basic and foundation skills must be provided for an estimated 200 million young people
- All young people need quality training in relevant foundation skills at secondary school.
- Upper secondary curricula should provide a balance between vocational and technical skills, including IT, and transferable skills such as confidence and communication which are indispensable for the work place.
- \$8 billion is needed to ensure all young people attend lower secondary education. Governments as well as donors and the private sector must help fill the funding gap.

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For interviews, photos, case studies, videos, quotes taken from focus groups in Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, the UK and Vietnam or to find out more about the report, please contact:

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To download the report and other relevant materials: <http://www.efareport.unesco.org>

Twitter: #YouthSkillsWork. A tweetchat will be taking place on October 16 to discuss the findings of the report.

Information on Education First

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

The EFA Global Monitoring Report is developed annually by an independent team and published by UNESCO.