

IV.

SECONDARY EDUCATION:

*An Uncommon
Opportunity*

In 43 developing countries, nearly one-fourth of all the countries in the world, secondary gross enrollment rates are under 50 percent, and the majority out of school are girls.¹⁸

As education progresses, fewer children attend

Though secondary enrollment rates still lag behind primary enrollment rates, this is not an issue of demand, but of access. The global demand for secondary education has increased secondary enrollment substantially since 1990. In 1960, only one child in 20, aged 12-18, attended secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2000, the average net secondary enrollment in all developing countries was about 70 percent, ranging from five percent in Tanzania to 46 percent in India, and 76 percent in Lebanon.¹⁹ Despite increasing demand, however, access to secondary education continues to be low in much of the world. As students annually progress, access deteriorates. Upper secondary enrollment ratios are well below those for lower secondary education. Worldwide, UNESCO estimates that nearly one in four children at the lower secondary level (ages 10/11-14/15) do not go to school, and one in two children do not attend at the upper secondary level (ages 14/15-18/19).²⁰

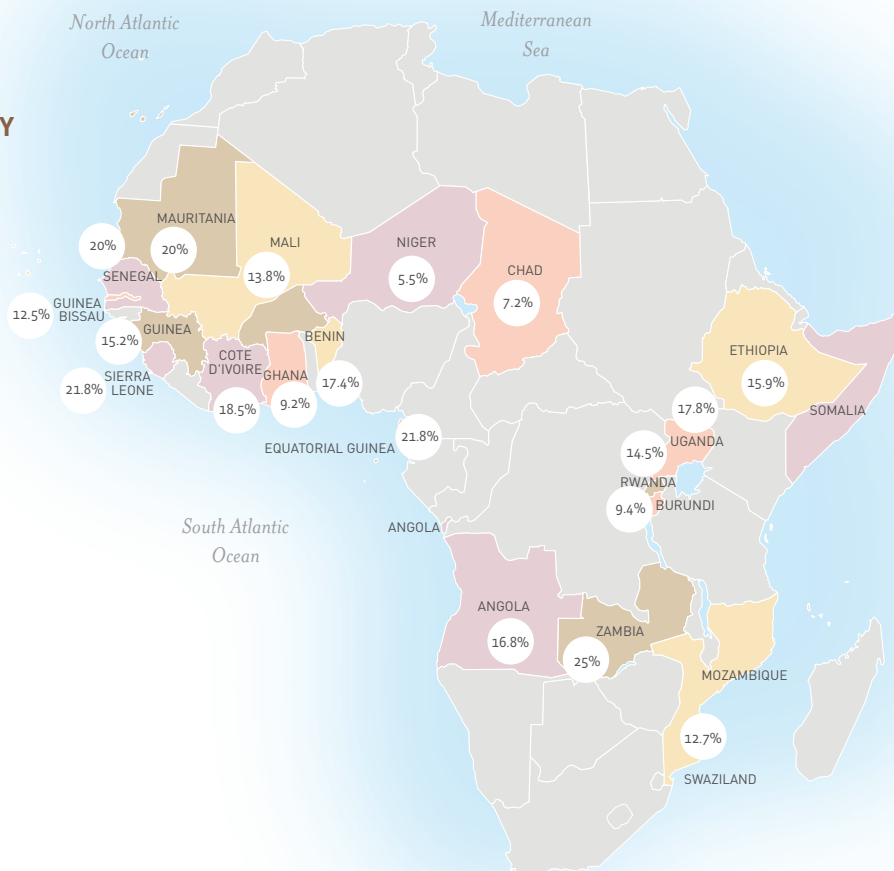
¹⁸ Mulama, Joyce. "Spare the Plough and School the Child." Interpress News Service Agency, 10 April 2006. Last accessed 22 May 2006. <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32835>.

¹⁹ UNESCO. EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003/04, Table 7 on secondary and postsecondary non-tertiary education.

²⁰ UNESCO. Global Education Digest 2005: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal, 2005.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHERE 25% OR FEWER GIRLS ARE ENROLLED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL, 2002/2003.

Data Sources: UNESCO Global Education Digest, 2005, and EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006.



On a regional level, enrollment ratios for lower secondary school versus upper secondary school reveal similar trends. For West Asia, the rate goes from 69 percent to 40 percent, while in East Asia it drops from 90 percent to 48 percent as children move from the lower to upper secondary levels. In Africa, lower secondary enrollment is at 45 percent, while upper secondary enrollment drops to 29 percent.

At the secondary level, gender progress but not parity

Gender parity remains an even more elusive goal at the secondary level (particularly upper secondary) in many developing countries, although there has been significant progress over the last 15 years. With the exception of Ethiopia, all developing countries where girls were at a strong secondary enrollment disadvantage in 1990 made progress over the following decade. Algeria, Bangladesh, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia achieved significant changes of more than 20 points in the gender parity index.

These advances speak to the increased demand for secondary school for girls, no doubt a result of increased access at the primary level, greater awareness of the need for girls' education, and heightened understanding of its benefits. Despite these advances, however, secondary school continues to be a rare privilege for many of the world's young women. In Malawi, 13.8 percent of eligible girls are enrolled in secondary school, compared to 25.1 percent of boys. In India, 46.7 percent of girls are enrolled compared to 58.5 percent of boys. While nearly half of the world's primary school-age population lives in countries with gender parity, only 13 percent of the world's secondary-age children live in countries with equal access to secondary school. In Uganda, for example, females make up 47 percent of total enrollment in primary school and 32 percent at the secondary level. Zawadi Ally, a female student in Tanzania, explains how girls feel if they are forced to abandon their education before it is complete, saying, "My friends may be angry, because their education will be useless."

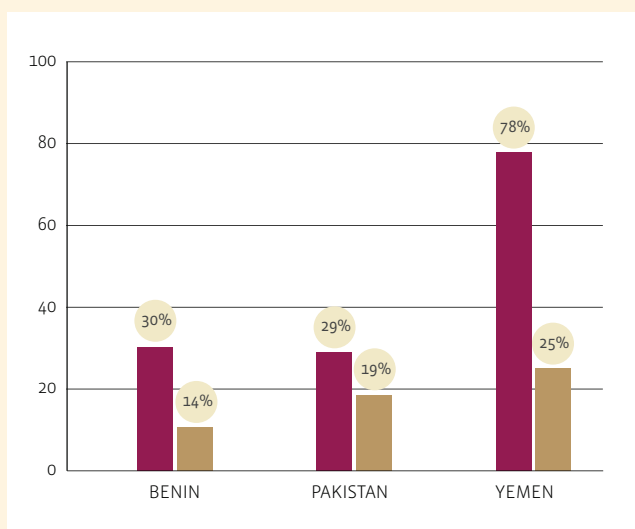
Further, the 2006 EFA Conference on Business and Education notes that:

"Secondary completion is still low in most countries, but much progress has been made. Around 30 years ago, in only 5 of the 69 countries shown did 20% of women receive a secondary high school diploma. By 2000/5, that number had risen to 29 out of 69. According to the trend projection, by 2015 secondary completion will almost double with more than 40% of the young women completing secondary in 28 of the 69 countries. Even though this is rapid progress, it is not fast enough for developing countries to break out of poverty within this generation."

GENDER GAPS IN THREE COUNTRIES 2000 Gross Secondary School Enrollment

Data Source:
UNICEF, 2005

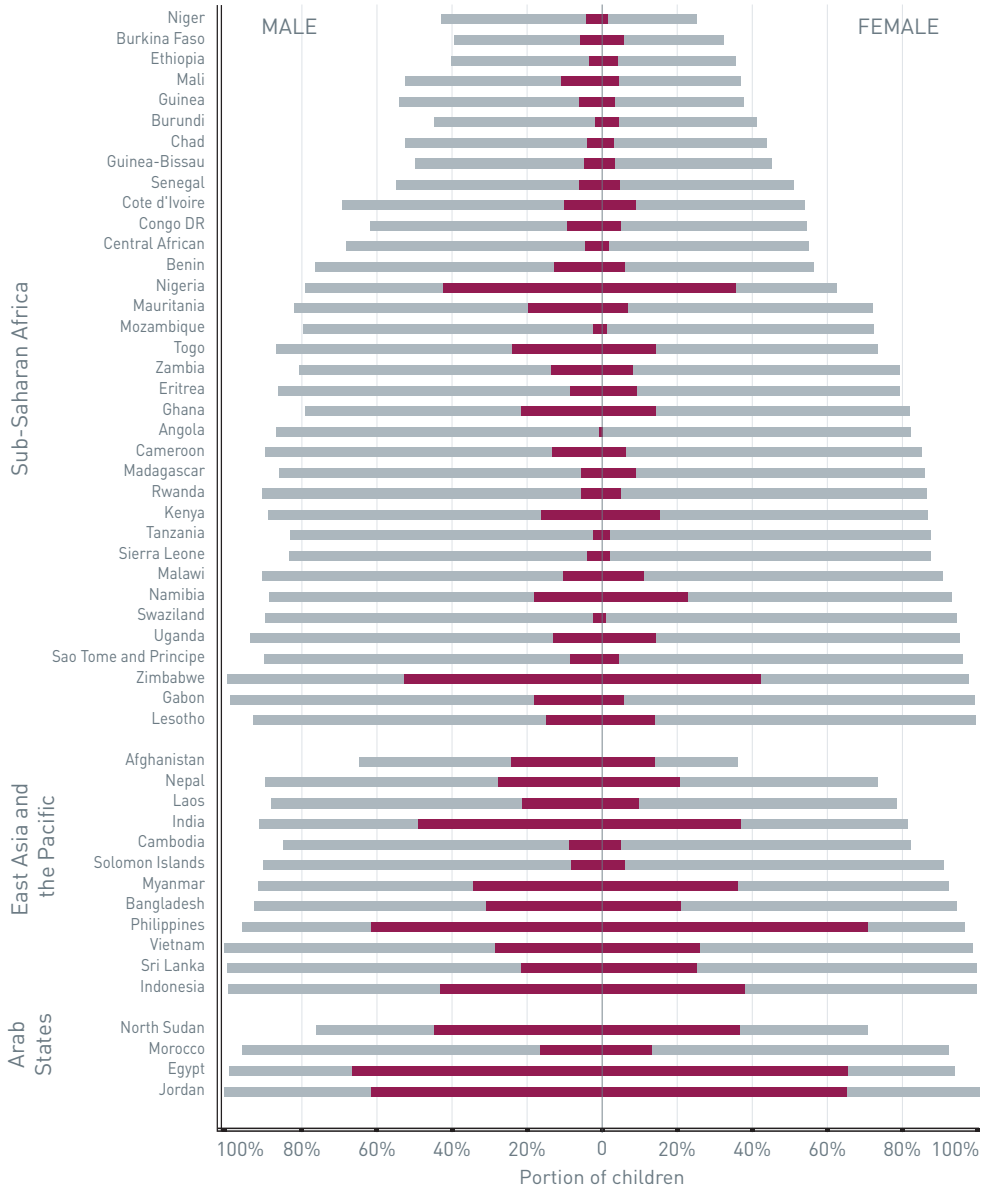
Male Female



EXPECTED SECONDARY COMPLETION (BY AGE 24)

Data Source: AED's EPDC calculations and household surveys.

Completion Attendance



The Academy for Educational Development (AED)'s Education Policy and Data Center estimates that a large percentage of the children in developing countries who enter secondary school do not make it to the last grade. The chart above shows an estimate of the percentage of boys and girls who will enter and complete secondary education, with the gray bar showing the portion of children in the country who will enter school and the red bar showing the percentage of children who will complete secondary school. The difference between the red bar and the grey bar is the dropout.²⁷

²⁷ Ibid.