

Chapter III

Social protection, education and gender equality

Summary

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reconfirmed countries' long-term commitments towards poverty reduction and human development. The MDGs provided the framework to scale up social spending and the implementation of their own national policies to strengthen long-term development efforts.
- Comprehensive programmes of social protection have contributed to reducing extreme poverty and making progress in other MDG areas, and have helped to mitigate the impact of crises on progress towards achievement of the MDGs. However, these programmes should build stronger interlinkages with strategies to promote incorporation of beneficiaries into the labour market and the economy at large.
- Social insurance and other contributory forms of social protection are expected to lead the way towards universal social protection systems after 2015. Because this transition will unfold as part of a long-term process, social assistance programmes will have to continue playing a critical role in the short to medium term. This will require major improvements in their implementation to address current shortcomings.
- A number of interventions have been successful in raising primary enrolment levels in developing countries and bringing universal primary enrolment closer to reality. Countries will need to continue efforts towards universal enrolment with a greater focus on improving completion rates and on the quality of education.
- Countries should continue investing in appropriate infrastructure and teacher capital to ensure the best outcomes for students. This will require efficient use of limited resources and availability of proper monitoring systems to improve outcomes. Most important, improved education must be matched with appropriate labour market policies to ensure greater capacity to absorb new graduates.
- There have been improvements in gender equality in many countries, including as a result of legal changes, but further efforts will be necessary to come close to meeting the goals. Proper enforcement of existing laws and implementation of policies to reduce discrimination and boost equality of opportunities are necessary.
- Ensuring equal access to education, politics and the labour force requires a combination of policies targeted towards girls and women at all stages of life to ensure equal representation and better chances for equal outcomes.

Introduction

This chapter and chapter IV provide an overview of policies that have contributed to reducing poverty and overcoming the human development challenges encompassed by the MDGs with a focus on social policies. As noted in chapter I, this *Survey* recognizes that economic and social policies are indivisible aspects of broader development policy. The *Survey* also recognizes the difficulty in determining exactly whether the MDGs were the main motivators of the policies reviewed. Many of the social policies under review predate the MDGs; therefore, their continued use was actually a confirmation of countries' long-term policy commitments to poverty reduction and human development, which was demonstrated in many developing countries' efforts to scale up social spending.

Public social spending has risen since the MDGs were adopted, but it is uncertain how much of this was driven by the MDGs

Since the MDGs were adopted, developing countries have, by and large, allocated more public spending to social protection and social sectors—although it is uncertain whether this trend was driven by the MDGs. Many of these countries did not cut public social expenditures in the midst of the global financial crisis and thereby shielded vulnerable populations from the effects of the crisis, as noted in chapter II. Increased public spending has made it possible to step up efforts to make progress towards the achievement of the MDGs. The experience of the 2000-2015 period is rich with regard to social policy efforts—their successes and failures as well as their potential to continue producing improved development outcomes. Reviewing this experience proves valuable for drawing lessons that can be valid for completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Because social policy is such a broad concept and in many cases overlaps with economic policy and other policies, the social policies reviewed in this chapter and chapter IV are limited to and grouped into three major categories: social protection, sectoral policies and social promotion.¹ *Social protection* has two important components: (i) social insurance programmes, which are usually contributory and provide pensions in old age as well as protection against multiple risks, and (ii) non-contributory schemes such as income transfers, subsidies, workfare and others. *Sectoral policies* are those interventions that contribute directly to building human capital, typically by investing in education, health, housing, and infrastructure. *Social promotion* includes policies in the areas of microfinance, technical assistance to small firms, promotion of production, and so forth, which expand the opportunities of people to generate their own income.

The emphasis in this chapter and chapter IV is on the first two categories of social policies. Non-contributory social protection programmes are the component with the strongest focus on poverty reduction in developing countries (Cecchini and Martinez, 2012; Barrientos, 2010). Some of these programmes also contribute to employment creation and reducing hunger. In the same vein, most MDGs were also expressed as sectoral goals, thus their realization has involved sectoral policies in education, health and sanitation. Social promotion initiatives are discussed as long as they complement social assistance and sectoral policies.

This chapter in particular presents examples of some of the social policy efforts that have proven effective in making headway towards reducing poverty and hunger (MDG 1); achieving universal primary education (MDG 2); and promoting gender equality and empowering women (MDG 3). Policies with regard to health are reviewed in chapter IV, and those related to water and sanitation in chapter V. Policy implications for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emanating from the review of policies for each MDG area covered in this chapter are presented in the policy recommendations section at the end.

¹ This classification is according to the definition of social policy used in Cecchini and Martinez (2012, p.116).

Social protection for lifting people out of poverty

Globally, the MDG target of reducing extreme poverty by half has already been met. Economic growth and concomitant job creation have enabled many people in the world to escape income poverty. Social policies that target the most vulnerable populations and build and promote human capital have also played a critical role. However, more efforts are still needed to further eradicate poverty, especially in populous countries with large numbers of people living in extreme poverty as well as in vulnerable and conflict-affected countries. The proportion of undernourished people in developing regions has also decreased. Some countries have made little headway since the early 1990s, such as in Oceania, whereas others, such as in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, have made considerable progress, but are still well above the targets with the numbers of undernourished increasing owing to population growth (United Nations, 2015a).

Social protection will be a critical aspect of the social policy efforts for further reduction of poverty and hunger going forward. Social protection floors (SPFs) and social safety nets (SSNs) are key instruments of social protection. SPFs are designed to provide universal protection to all in need of such protection, based on the human rights framework for social security—an initiative launched by the International Labour Organization (2012a) in response to the global financial crisis.² SSNs could be viewed as a subset of SPFs and as part of transitory or short-term response measures to protect the poorest against “shocks”. Essentially, SSNs are non-contributory benefits and are sometimes interchangeably referred to as social assistance policies (Smith and Subbarao, 2003) throughout this Survey. During the global financial crisis and the aftermath, for example, many developing countries’ Governments stepped up social protection spending to shield part of the vulnerable population from the effects of the crisis (see chap. II).

This section focuses on non-contributory social protection policies, as they encompass public actions designed to transfer resources to groups deemed eligible due to deprivation (as defined by low income) or other dimensions of poverty. These policies are typically tax-financed benefits, in cash or in kind, sometimes universal but generally targeted towards specific population groups. In developed countries, these policies focus on income maintenance and protecting living standards of everyone. In developing countries, which this chapter focuses on, these policies are centred more on reducing poverty and providing support to people living in extreme poverty and other underserved populations.

Starting in the 1990s but accelerating in the new millennium, public social protection spending has increased in low- and middle-income countries, outpacing other social expenditures such as those allocated to education (figure III.1). This increase was rather limited in those developing regions of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, where low-

Social policies that target the most vulnerable populations have played a critical role in reducing poverty...

...and will continue to be a critical aspect of social policy going forward

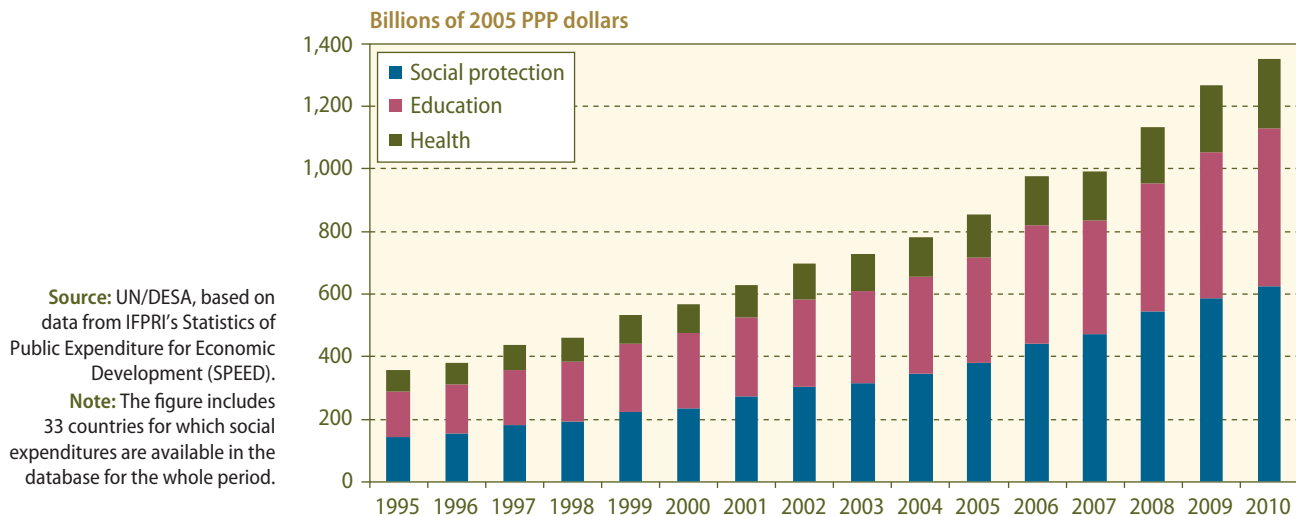
Public social protection spending has accelerated in the new millennium, particularly in low- and middle-income countries

² On 5 April 2009, the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the United Nations Chief Executive Board (CEB) reached an agreement on nine joint initiatives to address the global financial and economic crisis. The Social Protection Floor (SPF) Initiative was the sixth initiative of this agreement (<http://www.socialprotectionfloor-gateway.org/59.htm>). On 19 October 2010, the General Assembly (through resolution 65/1) recognized the role of SPFs in the efforts to make progress towards achieving the MDGs. In 2011, the Report of the Social Protection Floor Advisory Group, chaired by Michelle Bachelet and convened by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with the collaboration of the World Health Organization (WHO), further endorsed the initiative in 2011 (see International Labour Organization, 2011). The ILO laid out their SPF strategy in a report in 2012 (International Labour Organization, 2012a). In March 2014, the Chair of the United Nations Development Group and the Director General of the ILO called on United Nations country teams to take steps to advance the expansion of SPFs. The Sustainable Development Goals foresee the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including SPFs.

income countries tend to be concentrated. In those regions, the financing of most of the social spending relied substantially on external assistance. The proliferation of social assistance instruments such as cash transfers explains, to a large extent, the increase in social protection expenditures—while contributory schemes are taking more time to be developed. In fact, in some regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, where the most significant cash transfer programmes originated, the increase in public social spending was mostly driven by higher spending in social protection. The necessity to step up countercyclical policies during the crisis was also behind the growing pattern of social protection spending, especially after 2008. Governments in low- and middle-income countries' are also expending relatively more in social assistance schemes because they are more aware of the important synergies with education and health.

There is an array of social assistance instruments that contribute to reducing poverty and hunger, and in some instances they also promote employment (table III.1). Some of these policy instruments can also strengthen the inclusiveness and equitability of economic growth because they are essentially redistributive in nature. Because in many cases these instruments also generate positive synergies for goals related to education and health, they can often be regarded as sectoral policies.

Figure III.1
Public social expenditure in low- and middle-income countries, 1995–2010



Cash transfers

Different social investment programmes in the 1990s in Latin America led to what is known today as cash transfer (CT) programmes whose proliferation became more apparent in the 2000s.³ Cash transfers (CTs) have proven to significantly reduce extreme poverty and make

Cash transfer programmes have been proven to significantly reduce extreme poverty and contribute to progress in other areas of development

³ For example, on 17 July 1990, the family allowance programme (PRAF) began as a social compensation programme aimed at attenuating the effects of the adjustment programmes among Honduras's poorest population. In 1997, PROGRESA was initiated in Mexico to become what is perhaps the first cash transfer programme. It aimed to target poverty in rural areas by providing cash payments to families in exchange for regular school attendance, health clinic visits and nutritional support. In 2001, PROGRESA was expanded into semi-urban areas, and in 2002 throughout the urban centres when its name changed to Oportunidades.

Table III.1
Social assistance instruments

Area/sector	Instrument	Activity	Criteria	Objective
Economic security and social development	Cash transfers	Distribution of income to targeted households and persons	Household income level; extreme poverty line; household composition; for conditional cash transfers, school attendance, demand for health services	Reduce extreme income poverty in households (MDG 1) with spillovers to other MDGs
Food security	In-kind transfer (food-based)	Distribution of free food, food for work, food stamps, school feeding	Targeted to the poor and vulnerable (sometimes universal)	Reduce hunger and vulnerability among poorest households without economic capacity and with children
	Subsidy	Sale of subsidized food to targeted households	Targeted to the poor and vulnerable (sometimes universal)	Reduce household poverty
Employment creation	Workfare	Public works, vocational training	Unemployed heads of household; rural workers; low-skilled workers	Smooth seasonal income fluctuations in rural areas; reduce poverty caused by unemployment and underemployment in urban areas
Education	Grants	Scholarships, block grants, fee waivers	Targeted to poor households (sometimes include middle-income)	Reduce household poverty and facilitate investment in schooling, thereby helping to break the poverty chain across generations
Health	Subsidy	For medical service visits, fee waivers for those visits, medicines acquired, acquisition of family planning products, imported equipment, delivery of child nutrition products, micronutrient supplementation, midwife attention	Targeted to poor households (sometimes including middle-income)	Reduce household poverty and facilitate investment in health care, thereby helping to break the poverty chain across generations
Energy and transportation	Subsidy	For electricity consumption, fuel consumption	Targeted to poor households (sometimes universal)	Reduce household poverty and enhance access to electricity
Housing	Subsidy	To mortgages; one-time subsidy	Targeted to poor households (sometimes including middle-income)	Enhance access to sound housing
Agriculture	In-kind transfer (inputs-based)	Free distribution of seeds and/or fertilizers	Targeted to poor peasants	Foster income-generation and productive capacities
	Subsidy	Subsidy for inputs distribution; fertilizer subsidy	Targeted to poor peasants	Foster productive capacities and development

Source: UN/DESA, based on Cecchini and Martinez (2012); Sumarto, Suryahadi and Widjanti (2010); and Smith and Subbarao (2003).

sizable progress on several developmental sectors (Barrientos, 2010). Many programmes start with an unconditional cash transfer (UCT) scheme. Increasingly, countries—particularly middle-income countries—are attaching some kind of conditionality, thus turning their UCT programmes into conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes. These programmes only transfer cash to target populations who typically meet certain criteria with regard to enrolment in schooling or utilization of health services. Adding conditionality has proven to be crucial to increasing cost-effectiveness and maximizing synergies (Baird and others, 2013).

Unconditional cash transfer programmes may be appropriate where institutional capacity is more limited

A wealth of evidence shows that UCT programmes reduce income poverty—for example through universal minimum pension schemes—and have synergies with a number of MDGs (see a review of studies in Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b). Although the use of CCTs is increasing, UCTs are still vital in a few countries and for particular populations. UCTs are being used more and more to target older persons and their importance is rising in sub-Saharan Africa where 37 countries had them in 2013, up from 21 just three years earlier (*The Economist*, 2015a). Weak government systems and institutional capacity favour the use of UCTs in many African nations because they do not require significant administrative costs and the rigorous monitoring and evaluation criteria that tend to characterize CCTs. Beyond the cost of monitoring conditions, UCTs may also have other inherent benefits over CCTs; for example, they are non-coercive and can promote choice and empowerment (Department for International Development, 2011).

CCTs and UCTs share a characteristic: both boost recipients' income contributing to reducing income poverty and inequality. Additionally, CCTs also seek to enhance human capital by providing cash to families in exchange for their commitment to invest in education and health services, among others.

Conditional cash transfer programmes have been effective in reducing poverty, hunger and gender discrimination...

Inspired by the call of the MDGs for reducing extreme poverty and hunger, ambitious CCT programmes to provide not only cash but also food aid to people living in poverty have been pioneered in several Latin American countries. Brazil's Bolsa Família, for example, the largest CCT programme in the world, has four subprogrammes (educational stipends to boost school attendance, maternal nutrition, food supplements and a domestic gas subsidy) that benefit about three quarters of people living below the poverty line (Camargo and others, 2013; Hall, 2006). The programme has secured food for mothers and children, improved the quantity and diversity of food consumed, and boosted the growth and nutritional status of children. Bolsa Escola, its largest component, has had a positive impact on school attendance, with 50 per cent of benefits reaching the two lowest income deciles (Graziano Da Silva, Del Grossi and de França, eds., 2011). More broadly, a wealth of evidence for other Latin American countries shows clear impacts of CCTs in terms of reducing poverty and inequality, increasing school enrolment and attendance as well as preventive health-care visits, and boosting children's nutrition and health in general (Levy and Schady, 2013; World Bank, 2013b; Ranganathan and Lagarde, 2012; Hall, 2006). The role of CCTs in promoting gender equality and empowering women has also been apparent, with some of the outcomes including higher labour market participation rates and greater feelings of empowerment (Soares and Silva, 2010). Interestingly, environmental conditional cash transfer (ECCT) programmes are providing direct transfers to communities and families with land titles in the Amazon basin in exchange for the protection of large areas of tropical forests and ecosystems (da Conceição, 2014).

...and increasing environmental protection, inclusion and school enrolment

CCT programmes have also been adopted in other regions. For example, the Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Programme is a cornerstone of the Government's social

protection strategy. It has boosted enrolment in primary education as well as the long-term nutritional status of young children (World Bank, 2013c). In Pakistan, the Punjab Female School Stipend Programme has increased enrolment of eligible girls in middle school, while participating girls have also delayed marriage and have had fewer births by the time they are 19 years old (Alam, Baez and Del Carpio, 2011). In Malawi, a CCT scheme based on school attendance has also contributed to changing sexual behaviour with important outcomes, including a reduction in the prevalence of HIV, early marriage and teenage pregnancy among schoolgirls aged 13-22 years (Baird and others, 2009). Sub-Saharan African countries have been piloting community-based targeting programmes that use community members to identify worthy recipients. These programmes have been found to be effective in solving inclusion and exclusion criteria problems, while addressing poverty at a rate equal to, or better than, traditional CCT schemes (Davis and others, 2012).

Additional schemes of social assistance

Where CTs programmes are not widely used, smaller social assistance programmes have been worth pursuing. For example, social protection spending may be low in sub-Saharan Africa, but a new wave of social assistance programmes indicates that there has been a move towards more regular programmes that provide income transfers as well as access to and utilization of social services in low-income countries of this region (Nino-Zarazua and others, 2010). In-depth assessments of these programmes are yet to come.

Subsidies have also been given to small farmers to buy fertilizer and seed at a rate far below the market price. In Africa, this strategy has guaranteed a return on investment of farmers living in poverty in the form of larger output yields per unit of grain used and a reduction of economic insecurity and vulnerability (Adesina, 2010). Some social programmes provided subsidized “essential” goods to targeted households, aiming at providing food security. In India, for example, the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is the largest food security programme in the country, accounting for about 1 percent of GDP in 2006 (Ihsan Ajwad, 2007).

In-kind transfers were one of the main forms of social assistance in Latin America until the 1970s and many countries still use them. Food programmes in particular have targeted households living in poverty and school children by providing soup kitchens, basic staples or nutritional supplements to mothers and babies, and food-for-work programmes for which participants self-select to work for low compensation (Ferreira and Robalino, 2010). These programmes range from in-kind food rations that household members can collect in certain shops (Tortivale in Mexico), public clinics (Programa Nacional de Alimentación Complementaria in Chile), schools (School Cafeterias in Costa Rica; Peru’s Desayunos Escolares), to food stamps (Food Stamp Programme in Jamaica; Bono Escolar and Bono Materno Infantil in Honduras). School feeding programmes often operate through public schools in neighbourhoods with a high incidence of poverty in order to have important synergies in areas such as attendance rates, nutrition, and improved cognitive performance, among others. Nonetheless, transfers in kind, such as food, have high operational and administrative costs related to procurement, transportation and the logistics of distribution.

Workfare programmes provide a cushion against unemployment risk by offering monetary compensation for “emergency” or “short-term” work in certain sectors such as agriculture, public infrastructure construction and others. Wages are set at a level that, while helping participants and their households to avoid hunger, are low enough to prevent the

Subsidies, in-kind transfers and workfare programmes have also been effective in improving the lives of poor and vulnerable populations

programme from attracting other low-productivity workers from their main occupations. Even so, some of these programmes are very ambitious with regard to their coverage. For example, Argentina's workfare programme *Jefes y Jefas de Hogar* had 1.2 million recipients by 2006 (equivalent to 6.4 per cent of the economically active population). The Rural Employment Guarantee Programme of India (NREGA) created about 2.5 billion workdays for 50 million households between 2010 and 2014. Not only has this programme reduced extreme poverty, it has also scored human development benefits in the localities where it has been implemented and has had economic growth effects as well (see Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b, box 3; Zepeda and others, 2013).

Implementation issues, shortcomings and solutions

Some social protection programmes have issues with implementation, targeting and funding sources...

While they have proven effective for reducing poverty and vulnerability, the social protection instruments described above are faced with important challenges. For example, some have questioned their long-term financial sustainability and the need to build complementary programmes to enhance sustainable poverty reduction by improving investment in basic long-term social infrastructure. It has also been argued that CTs may create disincentives to work, perpetuate dependency, and suffer from improper client selection, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, and lack of transparency. There are also issues of overlap and inadequate design of various programmes. For example, the expansion of poverty reduction programmes in sub-Saharan Africa has often been almost entirely funded with international aid. Some programmes also risk promoting fragmentation of social assistance.

There is also a broader issue relative to the merits between targeted and universal poverty reduction programmes. Apart from the problems of improper inclusion and exclusion, targeted programmes may harm social cohesion and stigmatize the recipients (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2010). However, in spite of the shortcomings, these types of programmes will continue to be necessary as long as there are vulnerable populations that cannot benefit from broader economic, social and environmental policies.

...although solutions such as changes in programme timing, targeting families and unique registry systems can help to mitigate some problems

Simple and innovative solutions are available to address some of the problematic issues of social assistance policies. Most of these are aimed at increasing effectiveness and require adequate monitoring and evaluation. For example, in Bogotá, Colombia, a CCT programme boosted attendance during the school year but re-enrolment rates were low. In this case, a shift in the timing of the hand-out—that is, withholding part of the regular payment until just before the start of the school year—boosted enrolment sharply again (*The Economist*, 2014b). In some cases, an approach that would focus on targeting the family as opposed to individuals could also help eliminate unjustified overlaps of programmes—thus improving targeting and effectiveness (World Bank, 2013d). This is particularly true if these transfers do not worsen the intra-household income distribution, given that the patterns of resource allocation within households may marginalize allocations towards some household members such as women, the elderly, children, persons with disabilities, and so on.

There are experiences of countries that have created a unique registry system for all policies in order to improve efficiency. For example, the *Bolsa Família* programme in Brazil and programmes in at least 22 other developing countries have started to list the registration of recipients online to help reduce fraud, while 230 programmes in over 80 countries verify identities with biometric information, some keeping track of the recipients of social spending (*The Economist*, 2015a).

Social assistance programmes are also more effective when they are supplemented with supply-side interventions. A number of studies suggest that learning outcomes for children brought into school by CCTs are mixed. It is equally significant that while CCT programmes improve enrolment rates, they can also be factors leading to larger student-teacher ratios, thus handicapping the quality of education (Hasan, 2010). In this case, increasing the number of teachers becomes a necessary intervention to translate larger enrolment rates into good education outcomes. There have also been CCT programmes paying women to deliver in health facilities, but this has not necessarily translated into a reduction of maternal mortality, partly because of the low quality of health care at institutions (see chap. IV).

Offering opportunities for a broader, more active and coordinated approach than simply providing CCTs or other social benefits is also critical to the impact of social assistance. For example, Chile Solidario is a pioneering programme using social workers to seek out people chronically living in poverty and encourage them to enrol in training schemes, take up social benefits and raise their aspirations (*The Economist*, 2015b). Training programmes to boost skills are promising and can be critical for gradually moving towards more developed schemes of social promotion but, as with all other social assistance schemes, they will also require careful design and implementation.

Supplementing programmes with supply-side interventions is necessary for increasing effectiveness

Interventions to ensure the attainment of primary education

In their efforts to meet the targets for universal primary education (UPE), developing countries have, by and large, focused to a much greater degree on enrolment as opposed to completion. These countries' enrolment rates increased from 83 per cent in 2000 to 91 per cent by 2015 (United Nations, 2015a, p.25). This masks disparities, though, as some developing countries had already achieved the goal of UPE in the years prior to the Millennium Declaration (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a).⁴ Some of these countries raised the targets for MDG 2 to include more years of education or other educational goals (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015a). At the same time, other countries significantly lagged behind in meeting the goal well into the 2000s.⁵ Given the starting position of many developing countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, it is logical that there has been greater focus on raising enrolment rates, while less attention has been paid to increasing completion rates. Hence, while enrolment rates have improved in many regions, completion rates have mostly stagnated. On the other hand, many developing countries are on track to achieve gender parity in primary education. Still, overall, the world will not reach the goal of universal primary education in the time planned, as progress

Many countries have raised enrolment rates, but completion rates have stagnated

⁴ This varies by country and by year; for example, Argentina had 100 per cent enrolment in 1997, Cabo Verde had 98.2 per cent enrolment in 1991 (99.1 per cent in 1994), Cuba had 98.7 per cent in 1996, Lebanon had 99.8 per cent in 1999 (although they have since fallen back), Malawi had 99.1 per cent in 1999, among others.

⁵ For example, by 2012, primary enrolment rates were only 34.2 per cent in Eritrea, 70.4 per cent in Mauritania, 63.6 per cent in Niger, and 72.5 per cent in Pakistan. On the other hand, some countries that were lagging earlier were able to make rapid progress. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo only had net enrolment of 56.1 per cent in 2006, but this increased to 91.6 per cent by 2012. Burundi had net enrolment of 57.3 per cent in 2005, which increased to 94.1 per cent by 2010 (United Nations MDG database).

began to stagnate after 2007 (United Nations, 2015a). Sub-Saharan African countries in particular will have to continue work to expand basic education, whereas other regions that have made better progress can begin to focus on expanding education at all levels. Overall, with regard to the goals for education, “[t]here is evidence that the world will have advanced by 2015 beyond where it would have been if the trends of the 1990s had persisted,” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015, p. 43). That is, the trend shown by education-related indicators was generally more satisfactory after the adoption of the MDGs, compared with the previous decade, which points to a potential contribution from the MDG agenda in achieving the education targets.

Legislative changes have often been an important first step in increasing enrolment

Some of the interventions that were most effective in the past still appear to provide significant social outcomes per education dollar as further explained below. The approaches to raising enrolment may start by undertaking legislative reforms—in most cases to guarantee free and compulsory education. Fifteen countries in sub-Saharan Africa have adopted legislation abolishing school fees, either through constitutional guarantees or other forms of legislation, since 2000 (*ibid.*). Furthermore, there are a wide variety of factors involved in boosting primary school enrolment and completion rates, the most important of which are discussed in this section. In general, the most effective interventions appear to be a combination of appropriate number and form of facilities, particularly infrastructure; well trained staff, who are incentivized and monitored to minimize absenteeism; the relevant amount of instruction for both students and teachers; elimination of school fees; provision of teaching materials; proper attention to each student’s needs and abilities; well-fed and generally healthy students; well-educated families; involved communities; and proper attention to gender balance (Evans and Ghosh, 2008).

Sometimes these interventions feature as part of social protection policies, although they are more often education sector policies; or sometimes the two types of policies are integrated. Moreover, interventions geared towards prioritizing girls as well as health and nutrition-related programmes are also important for education outcomes and will be discussed in the next sections and chapter IV. A relevant example is in Ghana where a programme targeted disadvantaged schools with interventions such as providing potable water and free meals combined with the provision of deworming and eye-screening (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012, box. 5.1). Overall, deworming has been found to be one of the most cost-effective interventions for raising school attendance (Dundar and others, 2014; Kabaka and Kisia, 2011; Evans and Ghosh, 2008). Yet, it is not enough to have these types of programmes in place if they are not executed properly; they must have the appropriate outreach and awareness strategies as well as funding and political support. This relates to the governance issues discussed in chapter VI.

Outcomes of spending on education

Many countries have undertaken comprehensive programmes to improve education outcomes, which have sometimes been supported by enacting legislative reforms in the first place. These programmes required increased public spending (see chap. II). In spite of the limited resources in developing countries, primary education appears to have provided the maximum social outcomes per education dollar (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012). The increased spending on education programmes not only has enhanced enrolment but it has also resulted in millions of new teachers trained and tens of millions of children receiving free textbooks (Dundar and others, 2014).

A decade since the MDGs were formulated, public spending per student in primary education appeared to be highly correlated with higher primary completion rates across countries (figure III.2). While there is some variation in outcomes by spending level owing to differences in historical, social and governance structures, and effectiveness in general, the overall trajectory points to a relatively strong connection between completion rates and education expenditures. Interestingly, public spending per student in primary education seems to be effective, including across upper-middle-income countries—a pattern not observed for public health spending (see chap. IV). At the same time, while increased per-student spending in primary education up until about US\$ 1,000 raises completion rates, additional per-student spending beyond that level does not seem to increase completion much further and could rather be allocated to higher education levels or other social sectors (figure III.2). A number of lower-middle-income countries where public spending per student in primary education has not increased much have also reaped important improvements in primary completion. These countries initially faced more challenging human development gaps than countries with higher incomes and therefore have seen improvements in education outcomes without having to spend as much, comparatively. Lower-income countries have also benefited relatively more from official development assistance, an important share of which was not necessarily tied to budget support early into the new millennium, and hence has not been accounted for as part of public spending.

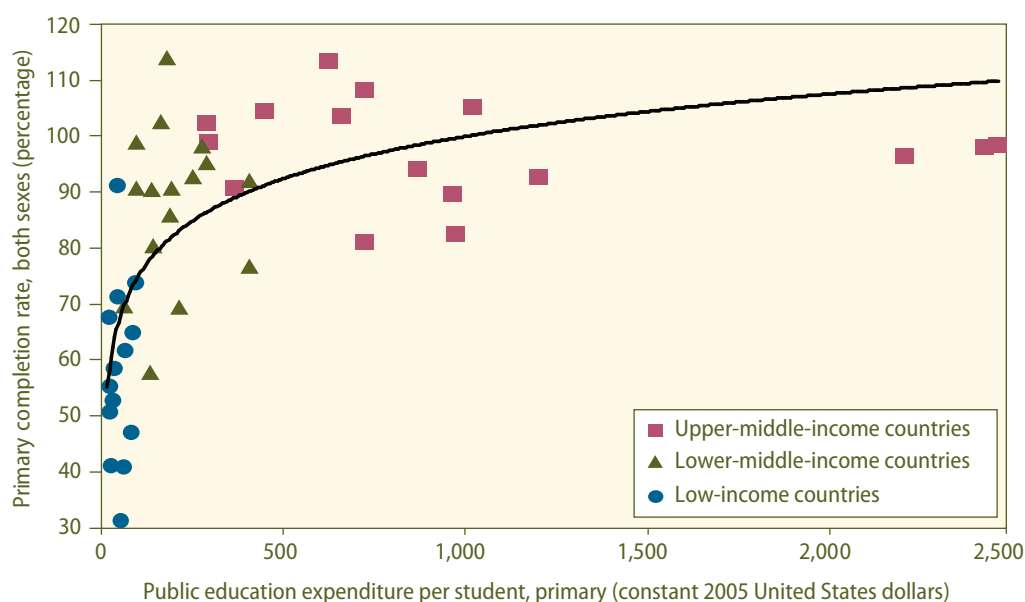
Increased public spending per student is correlated with higher primary completion rates

School infrastructure

One of the most common and most effective interventions to raise enrolment undertaken in many countries has been the construction of more school facilities closer to the school-age population. Botswana, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, have all

School construction has been a common and effective intervention to raise enrolment...

Figure III.2
Public education spending and primary completion in low- and middle-income countries, 2010



Sources: UN/DESA, based on World Bank, World Development Indicators for public education expenditure and United Nations MDG Database for the primary completion rate.

constructed thousands of new classrooms, particularly with the intention of reducing the distance that students have to travel to school (United Nations Development Programme, 2010b, 2010c). Improving the accessibility or adequacy of school infrastructure for students in general and girls in particular, is another critical measure to boost enrolment. Gendered sanitation facilities are an important example, particularly with regards to girls' enrolment and completion. Other interventions that have contributed to boosting enrolment by girls are introduced in the gender equality section of this chapter. Another example comes from Bangladesh where the special needs of children with disabilities are being addressed through the construction of ramps in schools (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b).

...while community or village-based schools have helped to reach underserved populations

Community or village-based schools also have considerable benefits for enrolment, progression, construction cost and the ability to reach underserved populations.⁶ Albania, Bangladesh, Benin, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, Zambia and Zimbabwe,⁷ among others, all have variations on community schools, including community budgeting, school rehabilitation and management. In some cases, such as in Bangladesh and Nepal, committees directly responsible to parents, students and local citizens manage the schools (Dundar and others, 2014, box 9.2). Not only have community schools helped to boost enrolment, they have also contributed to reaching underserved populations in a number of countries such as Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Pakistan and Zambia, among others (DeStefano and others, 2007). In Cambodia, the Highland Community Programme has been effective in improving access and completion rates for indigenous children who are primarily ethnic minorities. This programme has established community governance with locally elected school boards comprised of village elders and has trained local teachers selected by the community. The educational process has also worked to introduce bilingual programmes to ease the transition between local languages and Khmer (United Nations Development Group, 2010). Village-based community schools in Afghanistan increased average enrolment by 42 percentage points (with a relatively higher percentage for girls) and raised test scores for all children in the village (Burde and Linden, 2012).

The construction of many schools must have had a positive impact on MDG 2, especially in LDCs, and should continue to feature prominently among development efforts to cover important remaining deficits. At some point, there are likely to be diminishing marginal returns from some of the most effective interventions, such as new school construction, that will necessitate shifts in policy strategy. That point is still far off in many poor countries that face high population growth rates or where sizable parts of the population live in remote areas and may remain unreached for some time.

⁶ There are a variety of definitions for what qualifies as a community school, but generally they involve members of local communities participating in various functions for the school ranging from construction, management, governance, curricula, recruiting teachers and procuring supplies. These schools also tend to be separate from schools run by the Government and have different sources of funding (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, 2002).

⁷ For Albania, see United Nations Development Programme (2010a); for Bangladesh and Nepal, see Dundar and others (2014, box 9.2); for Benin, Mauritania and Zimbabwe, see Majgaard and Mingat (2012); and for Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mali and Zambia, see DeStefano and others (2007).

Adequacy of staffing, training and retention programmes

The first step in addressing the human resource aspect of education begins with ensuring an adequate number of appropriately educated graduates, which sets the baseline from which to draw teachers (Mulkeen, 2010). This will require further investment in all levels of education in order to raise the number of graduates qualified to be trained as teachers. Investing in education to increase the number of teachers may take time (as further explained below). Therefore, the next—if not simultaneous—important intervention for providing adequate primary education is to use more immediate solutions that will increase the number and qualifications of staff to both give instruction and operate the institutions. Examples of programmes to tackle this issue include the establishment of training institutes in provinces (Central African Republic); progressive financial incentives to attract qualified teachers to otherwise underserved locations (The Gambia); direct hiring by local schools to select teachers from the local communities (Lesotho); and self-selection by candidates willing to serve in rural areas (Malawi) (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012, box 3.1). Ethiopia is working to improve the qualifications of the existing teachers through improvements in on-the-job training as well as summer programmes for teacher training (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a). Appropriate salaries and proper incentives can be important for ensuring effective teacher performance and reducing absenteeism (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b). In India, individual performance incentives resulted in significant improvements in student outcomes (Dundar and others, 2014, box O.8).

Some other examples of successful teacher hiring programmes to increase primary school coverage include seeking contract teachers to address the gap between the ratio of civil servant teachers and students as a result of rising enrolment rates (Niger), recruiting volunteer teachers (Ghana and Senegal), and involving parents' associations in the hiring of teachers (Madagascar). In many instances of these or similar programmes, the Government has subsequently taken steps to attempt to integrate these teachers into the civil service (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012, box 4.1; United Nations Development Programme, 2010c). Other successful ways of improving teacher coverage, particularly of underserved groups, include recruiting women and representatives of marginalized groups (of people with disabilities and ethnic minorities in Nepal); establishing programmes whereby teachers are selected to travel with migratory pastoralists (Ethiopia); training teachers on adapting to diverse student needs (Lao People's Democratic Republic), and using mobile classrooms to reach street and working children (Egypt) (United Nations Development Programme, 2010b; United Nations Development Group, 2010).

Nonetheless, even when teachers are assigned to schools, there are often serious problems with teacher absenteeism, especially in LDCs. Useful interventions to deal with this issue include community involvement in teacher monitoring and performance-based incentives that hold teachers or school principals accountable for students' learning outcomes. For example, the Gambia introduced "cluster monitoring" supervision units to regularly check teacher attendance records, resulting in a substantial rise in teacher attendance (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012, box 5.4). Similarly, school-based management (SBM)—a system of decentralization of control to local schools—has been shown to increase the accountability of teachers to schools (Barrera-Osorio and others, 2009). Evaluations of programmes that have SBM components in El Salvador and Honduras show relevant changes in teacher behaviour and consequently improvement of student outcomes (Rogers and Vegas, 2009). The use of social audits focused on educational attainment and

Increasing the number of qualified teachers will require further investment in education in the long run...

...and a variety of other measures, such as recruiting more women and representatives of marginalized groups, in the short run

literacy rates in India through the collaboration of government and citizens' organizations have been an important tool in monitoring the effectiveness of education; they also cost less than more extensive surveys (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a).

Elimination of school fees and other costs

Elimination of school fees has been effective in raising enrolment and should continue

Free primary education has a measurable impact on years of schooling (Bhalotra, Harttgen and Klasen, 2014). The reduction in fees for school and materials, particularly textbooks, and reducing opportunity costs has important implications for enrolment and attendance (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b). A number of developing countries had all eliminated school fees at the primary level by 2010 (United Nations Development Programme, 2008; 2010a; 2010c). Burundi and Mozambique, for example, saw considerable progress after dropping school fees in 2004, with enrolment rising from 54 to 95 per cent between 2004 and 2010, and from 70 to 88 per cent between 2004 and 2008, respectively (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). The elimination of school fees in Mozambique also included capitation grants to local schools to purchase learning materials as well as free textbooks for all primary school students, which helped to offset some of the revenue local schools may have lost (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). Given that eliminating school fees can put pressure on government budgets, a number of countries such as Benin, Ghana and Lesotho have implemented the fee reduction in stages in order to mitigate fiscal pressures (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015). In addition, Burkina Faso, Ghana and India have all taken steps to increase the provision of free textbooks (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012, box 5.1; United Nations Development Programme, 2010b). Improving the availability and quality of educational materials features among the effective interventions that have helped Chile become a leader in educational achievement in Latin America (Overseas Development Institute, 2014). As part of its decentralization programmes, Kenya devolved school management, including the supply of free teaching materials, to local schools (United Nations Development Programme, 2010c).

School feeding programmes

School feeding programmes have also been effective in boosting enrolment and raising participation rates

There is strong evidence for the effects of school feeding programmes on raising enrolment, although the effect on academic achievement is still inconclusive. A total of 19.8 million school feeding beneficiaries in 63 countries were reached by the World Food Programme in 2013—of which almost half were girls. As a result, a greater number of parents sent their children to school (United Nations, General Assembly, 2014a). The Food for Education (FFE) programme in Bangladesh has boosted school participation rates (Meng and Ryan, 2007) and other feeding programmes have increased enrolment, especially of girls in Burkina Faso and increased attendance rates in Uganda (World Bank, 2012a). Overall, school feeding programmes have obvious synergies with the hunger reduction targets of MDG 1 as they raise children's and their siblings' consumption (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b). Some school feeding programmes also have synergies with MDG 3 as they have also boosted girls' enrolment and completion rates (Gelli, Meir and Espejo, 2007).

Issues relatively neglected in the policy agenda

In their efforts to achieve universal primary education, many developing countries have focused to a much greater degree on enrolment as opposed to completion. Greater focus on completion is necessary and calls for extra efforts to gather data on out-of-school students. Without better knowledge of the conditions preventing children from attending or staying at school, it will be difficult to introduce proper measures to address those constraints. The fact that many students are not staying in school is still a serious issue in some countries, particularly those affected by conflict, and it has been resistant to efforts to reduce it for some time (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). Because the reasons explaining school dropout can vary from country to country, addressing them will necessitate various levels of adaptation of programmes to reach those students (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012). An example of a more generally beneficial intervention is increasing the share of female teachers, which was shown to increase retention of students in a cross-country analysis of 54 developing countries across regions by Mapto-Kengne and Mingat (2002). Outreach, extracurricular activities and financial incentives were successful in increasing retention rates of Roma children in Bulgaria (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015). In addition, monitoring of currently enrolled students through tests of literacy and subject knowledge must be expanded to ensure that they are learning and retaining the material studied.

In addition, the issue of child and adult literacy has often been overlooked. While the vast majority of programmes focus on childhood education, many students complete primary education without reaching important literacy and numeracy benchmarks (Unterhalter, 2014). Low literacy rates raise the issue of the quality of schooling—which will be a significant hurdle for further efforts to improve education going forward (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). This underlines the need to further improve student/teacher ratios, teacher training levels, pedagogy methods and teaching materials—issues noted above.

Furthermore, it is also important to pay more attention to early childhood development as this has important synergies with educational attainment and, in particular, with early childhood nutrition. Pre-primary education is a valuable way for improving general education levels and literacy as well as boosting the effectiveness of subsequent primary education. There has been a considerable rise in enrolment in pre-primary education—up by 64 per cent between 2000 and 2012—albeit from an initially low level (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015). Nonetheless, many developing-country Governments already have stretched education budgets that limit their efforts to provide pre-primary education. Enrolment rates differ considerably across regions, with many countries in sub-Saharan Africa enrolling less than 20 per cent of children, despite considerable progress (ibid.). While a number of countries have instituted mandatory pre-primary education for which fees have been mostly eliminated, many pre-primary programmes in these countries still charge enrolment fees (ibid.). This may alleviate government budget pressures, but, at the same time, it puts pressure on households' finances. A possible solution to education budget constraints can be found in community-based pre-primary education, which some countries (Cabo Verde and Guinea) have provided at a much lower cost than traditional publicly funded programmes (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012).

Issues of adult literacy are particularly problematic for women, especially in rural areas and in sub-Saharan Africa, given the broader implications for health, development and women's empowerment. A number of countries across the world have undertaken

Increased attention to completion as well as dropouts will be important for making further progress

Pre-primary education will be an important part of early childhood development efforts

Literacy issues for both children and adults have been somewhat overlooked, particularly for women in certain areas

campaigns to boost literacy with varying degrees of success. The Ibero-American Plan for Literacy and Basic Education of Youth and Adults (PAI) covering 17 countries in Latin America and Spain has helped 5 million people gain basic literacy between 2006 and 2012. At the same time, this has had limited impacts on the literacy rates of these countries given the number of illiterate adults. In addition, the Cuban Yo Sí Puedo (YSP) literacy campaign has reached 7 million people in 30 countries in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, although there are debates about its efficacy (Hanemann, 2015). While overall statistics from all regions point to rising levels of adult literacy since the adoption of the MDGs, much of that appears to be as a result of increased education of previous generations. In other words, the rising levels of adult literacy do not tend to result from the success of adult literacy programmes; rather, they result from increases in education that current adults received as children. A rare exception to this has been Nepal's National Literacy Campaign Programme, which actually managed to raise literacy of adults over time (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015).

Overall the focus on expansion of education has overshadowed issues of distribution, particularly for girls, rural students, children with disabilities and indigenous populations. Part of the problem is that such issues of distribution have been hidden by the level of aggregation of available statistics. The unfinished business of the MDGs will require continued reinforcement of the existing data infrastructure to bridge such important data gaps (as discussed in chap. I). Nonetheless, there have been programmes to reach underserved populations. For example, Panama has established adult literacy programmes in indigenous areas, Costa Rica has established schools tailored to indigenous people, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's Misión Guaicaipuro programme has taken steps to ensure rights to education for indigenous people (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014a).

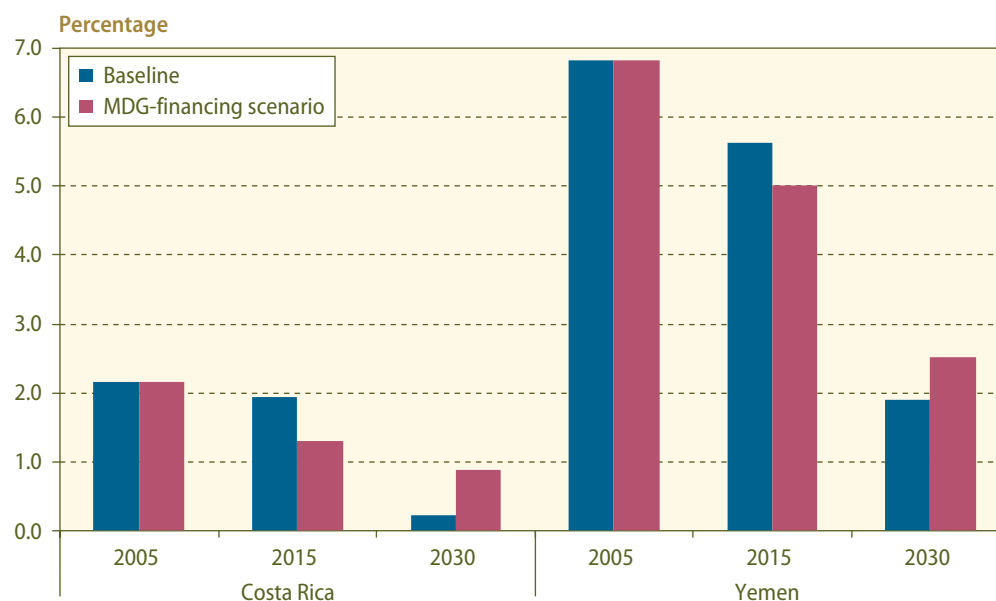
Education and the labour market

Increased enrolment has to be matched with efforts to boost the labour market to accommodate new graduates

Policies described above have helped developing countries to build a stock of better-educated workers. However, an important trend underlined in chapter II is that some economies have not been equipped to absorb an increasing stock of better-educated workers. In fact, there has been insufficient creation of skilled jobs in many developing countries, resulting in youth unemployment, underemployment and skill mismatches in the labour market. These issues are particularly problematic for the achievement of development goals, as they can result in rising inequality of income and opportunities, more poverty, and ultimately lead to the perception that the return to education is low. Chapter II suggests economic policies that can contribute to eliminating such mismatches. At the same time, there should also be initiatives to inform future job seekers about the needs of labour markets and programmes that address issues of relevance of education and training taught by the education system for the labour market.

In research on the connections between investment in education and outcomes in the labour market, Sánchez and Cicowiez (2014) simulated a scenario for four developing countries whereby public spending increases from 2005 to meet, by 2015, a number of MDG targets, including UPE. By comparing this scenario to a baseline projecting past trends, the authors find that the employment of better-educated workers that would be newly available as a result of past investments in education would generate productivity and GDP growth gains after 2015. However, it is also found that some economies would not be

Figure III.3
Unemployment rate of the most-skilled workers under a baseline and MDG-financing scenario^a



Source: Sánchez and Cicowiez (2014, fig. 4).

^a In the MDG-financing scenario, public spending increases to meet a set of MDG targets. Most-skilled workers are those who possess a diploma or degree in tertiary education.

equipped to absorb the increased stock of better-educated workers; in fact, unemployment of such workers increases at some point compared with the baseline (figure III.3).

Addressing these issues requires understanding the features of the education systems and the structure of the labour markets and how they interact. In developing countries, there are considerable differences in the degree to which graduates of higher education work in the formal sector vis-à-vis the informal sector. For example, 88 per cent of 25- to 34-year-olds with higher education in Malawi work in the formal sector, versus only 20 per cent in Guinea (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012). These differences may come as a result of the differing abilities of the labour markets to absorb the skilled graduates, which will therefore require further efforts to integrate those graduates appropriately.

Some countries are already addressing these issues. An example of a programme to offset the mismatches between education and the labour market is Ghana's National Youth Employment Programme (United Nations Development Programme, 2010c). Proper dissemination of information regarding the labour market can also be beneficial. Alignment of higher education programmes with employers' needs can produce more employable graduates and ensure that students have relevant expectations about the labour market. Public funds can be an important method for connecting post-primary education with areas that lack skilled workers (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012). In Kyrgyzstan, the Second Education Project is working to improve the relevance of the education system to the state of the economy (United Nations Development Programme, 2010b).

Bridging gender gaps to empower women

Many regions have improved gender balance in key areas, and overall gender parity in primary education will have been achieved by 2015 (United Nations, 2015a, p. 29). Even so,

there are still large gaps between male and female enrolment at higher levels of education, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and substantial differences in the share of women employed outside the agricultural sector across different regions. Women are also much more likely to have part-time employment compared to men and are seriously unrepresented in the political realm. Initiatives at the national level described here, covering legislative changes, education, the labour market, the political realm, and other issues, still hold the most potential for helping countries address gender gaps beyond 2015.

Legal changes and women's rights for gender equality

Legal changes to improve gender equality have been widespread...

Frequently, efforts to improve gender equality since the MDGs were formulated and adopted have come in combination with legal changes, either meant to roll back previous restrictions or to enshrine legal protection for certain rights for women. A number of countries have put legal structures in place, aimed at moving towards gender equality. Overall, a majority of countries now have provisions to protect women's rights, including 143 countries with constitutional guarantees of women's rights and 125 with laws to prohibit sexual harassment as of 2014 (UN Women, 2015). Although the outcomes of such laws and strategies have led to some progress, many disparities remain (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a). A recent study covering 173 countries found that 155 still had at least one law in place that impeded economic opportunities for women although, at the same time, there have been 94 reforms in 65 countries over the past two years that have improved women's economic opportunities (World Bank, 2015d). It is critical to ensure that new laws emerging from these efforts be reinforced with political support and complementary measures.

The outcomes go beyond gender equality. In Morocco, the Family Code introduced in 2004 has raised the legal age of marriage to 18, which can have important impacts on outcomes for health goals by way of reducing early childbearing (ibid.; Bharadwaj, 2015). The new code also addressed issues of property sharing and inheritance and legalized the initiation of divorce proceedings by women. Another example comes from changes in family laws enacted in Ethiopia in 2000. After raising the minimum age of marriage and allowing women to work outside the home without the possibility of denial by their spouses, economic participation by young single women age 15-24 increased considerably between 2000 and 2005. In general, Ethiopia saw significant changes in women's employment, such as working in occupations that employed more educated workers, in paid and full-time jobs, and generally in occupations that were outside of the home (Hallward-Driemeier and Gajigo, 2013). Across the world, 132 countries had equalized the age of marriage by 2014, but there are far fewer that have taken similar steps to enact equalizing family laws or repeal discriminatory provisions (UN Women, 2015).

...but further efforts are needed, including political support for the changes

Women's rights are critical to ensuring gender equality and they generally find necessary support in the rule of law. In fact, efforts to boost gender equality need to be taken on and maintained for their own sake on the basis of human rights as they may require special interventions. In more general terms, it will be necessary to combine efforts to improve women's empowerment and other processes as no single effort will produce the necessary conditions for full equality. For example, efforts to improve women's economic position require both economic development and endeavours to strengthen women's empowerment, as neither leads to the other in isolation (Duflo, 2012). As further noted below, policies designed to merely increase women's participation in the labour market may not have expected outcomes if the right to quality employment is not taken into account.

In a number of African countries, customary laws—which often accord fewer rights to women in areas of adoption, marriage, divorce and inheritance—operate alongside statutory legal structures favouring equal rights. In this sense, grassroots women’s groups in a number of African countries have undertaken important steps in improving women’s land and inheritance rights. The efforts include the engagement of communities to change perceptions and ensure that women’s claims are adequately addressed (Lawry and others, 2014).

There are also useful examples of existing projects that could help to meet expanded targets for gender equality going forward such as successful interventions related to ending violence against women, including sex trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. Programmes in Bangladesh, Colombia and Uganda have helped to improve awareness of gender-based violence and coping mechanisms, sensitizing elected representatives to these issues (MDG Achievement Fund, 2013; Abramsky and others, 2014). In Malawi, a programme has worked to address gender-based violence against women with HIV/AIDS as well as communication strategies and HIV risk awareness (United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, 2014). Interestingly, soap operas (Latin America) as well as documentaries, radio programmes and online platforms (Cambodia) have been used to expose and prompt dialogue on the dangers of sex trafficking, exploitation and other human rights violations against women (ibid.).

More broadly, women’s health during pregnancy and childbirth is another important basic human right. Ensuring that health-care personnel treat women with respect throughout pregnancy and childbirth is becoming a more important issue as it has been noted as a barrier to accessing quality health interventions (see chap. IV).

Gender equality in education

In general, there has been relatively good progress on raising enrolment rates for girls in many developing regions, thanks to a variety of interventions including schools targeted to girls; proper infrastructure, such as gendered sanitation facilities and schools in closer proximity to the villages where girls live; CT programmes and scholarships targeted towards girls; and dormitory facilities for girls, particularly at the secondary stage and above. In Malawi, a CCT—regarded earlier as a social protection intervention—targeted towards girls has boosted enrolment, raised re-enrolment of dropouts and subsequently reduced the dropout rate of enrolled students (Majgaard and Mingat, 2012, box 3.2).

Unterhalter and others (2014) also reinforce the idea that school proximity is especially important to girls, with important examples of community schools that require less travel time. For example, community schools in Afghanistan that required less travel time reduced security risks and raised parents’ likelihood of allowing girls to attend school (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2009). The construction of girls’ dormitories in secondary schools has also helped raise enrolment and retention rates in Ghana (United Nations Development Programme, 2010b). “Girl-friendly schools” that provide school meals to children living in poverty and vulnerable communities have helped Egypt become one of the few countries where girls are more likely to complete primary education than boys (United Nations Development Programme, 2010c). These girl-friendly schools also had facilities that were close to villages, primarily female teaching staff, class hours that allowed girls to participate in household activities, and free tuition.

Another key aspect of girls’ education is the appropriate teacher training that has a basis in gender equality, which has been shown to help reduce dropout rates and educational

School proximity is an important factor in raising girls’ enrolment in schools...

outcomes. Overall, female teachers are shown to have significant impacts on girls' learning, which will be important to take into account when planning future teacher recruitment efforts. The development of girls' clubs has also had relevant impacts on a variety of issues including education, reproductive health, gender-based violence and gender equality in general (Unterhalter and others, 2014).

...along with the appropriate teacher training and community involvement

Community involvement has also been important in increasing girls' school enrolment. In Benin, "Mother's Clubs" have helped raise educational awareness and boosted girls' educational registrations (United Nations Development Programme, 2010b). Nepal has implemented the Welcome to School initiative to enrol thousands of new students, over half of which were girls. These efforts involved coordination between the Government, communities and various forms of media to increase awareness and outreach (United Nations Development Programme, 2008).

Women's participation in the labour market

Actions by government ministries geared towards empowering women, government employment programmes that hire a significant proportion of women, women's employment organizations, efforts to balance women's work and other obligations, and general investments in education have contributed to important gains for women in the labour market. Yet, in spite of the progress, more women are still in positions of vulnerable employment than men, and a considerable portion of their work in childcare, agriculture, trade, home production and other occupations such as waste pickup is not considered to be part of the formal sector (International Labour Organization, 2012b).

While more women remain in positions of vulnerable employment, programmes targeted towards women have helped raise participation in labour markets

Nonetheless, there are experiences pointing to more adequate and fair participation of women in the labour market. Programmes in India such as Self Employed-Women's Association (Blaxall, 2004) and NREGA (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b) had considerable impacts on women's employment. Other examples of successful employment programmes targeted towards women include the Rural Maintenance Programme in Bangladesh covering an average of 60,000 destitute women per year (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a). Moreover, the Government of Bangladesh has promoted women's economic equality by withdrawing a ban on women's employment abroad and building capacity in the Ministry of Manpower Development and Export to provide security to women workers in the mid-2000s (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b). South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme has targeted a certain quantity of jobs towards women and has also mandated equal pay for equal work (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a; Devereaux and Solomon, 2006). In Egypt, there has been a significant increase—almost 70 per cent—in the number of women members in six farm associations targeted by the Pro-poor Horticulture Value Chain in Upper Egypt (SALASEL) Joint Programme (United Nations, General Assembly, 2014a).

Regarding the recruitment process, the nature of the work and time constraints are important considerations in trying to increase participation

An issue to be considered with regard to employment programmes is the nature of the recruitment process. For example, Rwanda had far better success attracting women through programmes that had information and recruitment programmes specifically geared towards women (Devereaux and Solomon, 2006). The nature of the work to be undertaken and whether there is a perception of gendered work roles both matter as well. For example, the Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados Programme in Argentina—an expansion of the social safety net in response to the economic crisis of 2001—was originally targeted towards male household heads, but had a 69 per cent participation rate for female household heads.

This was due to the fact that many of the jobs were more attractive to women (e.g., many involved working in community kitchens) (ibid.).

There are also issues regarding women's time constraints, such as expectations about childcare and housework, which are often not taken into consideration when initiating these programmes geared towards women. A potential solution was implemented in Ethiopia as part of the Employment Generation Scheme whereby women were allowed to work shorter hours in order to allow them to complete other tasks—albeit this could potentially enshrine gender differences in wages (ibid.). Community childcare centres in Colombia were shown to have significant impacts on women's labour force participation rates, particularly for low-income women (International Labour Organization, 2012b).

There are a number of benefits and synergies resulting from increases in women's employment, particularly in connection with education (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015b). In Mexico, general investment in education, without a specific gendered focus, had positive effects on reducing gender inequality in education, which subsequently increased female labour force participation rates (Creighton and Park, 2010).

For synergies between MDGs 2, 3 and 7, the introduction and expansion of access to cleaner and more reliable fuels has created income-generating opportunities for women across many African countries. In addition, it has saved women considerable time that they spend fetching and procuring and transporting fuel, which can now be used for education, formal employment or other entrepreneurial activities (United Nations Development Programme, 2010b). Similarly, the cisterns programme as part of the Fome Zero programme in Brazil has relieved women of the duty of fetching water from distant sources and freed up time for education and other activities (United Nations Development Programme, 2010c).

Women's political representation

The importance of women's representation in political office is demonstrated by evidence that women parliamentarians are a critical component of adequately addressing gender issues, as parliaments with higher percentages of women are more likely to address women's issues (Ballington, 2008). Women face a number of initial constraints to entering politics: gender discrimination, psychological barriers on the part of candidates, a lack of political will to change gender balances, a lack of political networks, incumbency issues, security issues, and post-conflict democratic concerns (whereby women are often side-lined from transitions processes unless parties actively recruit them) (United Nations Development Programme and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2012). The most effective and relevant interventions to raise the representation rates have included quotas for women at various levels of government and special groups or wings within political parties devoted to women's issues. There are also a number of strategies to overcome the frequent lack of necessary funding for women's participation in politics, such as fundraising networks geared towards women candidates; internal party funds dedicated to women candidates; subsidies to women candidates either from the party or from national political organizations; limits to campaign or nomination expenditures; allocation of public funding to political parties with specific portions to women candidates; allocation of specific funds to training women; and examination of party budgets through a gendered framework (ibid.).

Two distinct strategies for women's quotas stand out: one for candidates and one for reserved seats within the legislative body. The former usually manifests itself as party quotas for the number of women candidates on party or electoral lists and 50 countries have already legislated such quotas (ibid., p. 24). Some countries such as Armenia have also had

Women's political representation is a critical component of addressing gender issues

Quotas for women in government have been effective in raising women's representation in politics

some success in boosting the number of women in parliament by first working to implement voluntary quotas at the party level, which subsequently led to changes in legislative quotas. In other countries, such as Cambodia, India, Mexico, Morocco and South Africa, parties have also established internal quotas for women, particularly for governing boards or other executive committees. There have also been steps to create women's wings within parties such as the Women's Secretariat of the FLMN in El Salvador and the National Secretariat for the Political Promotion of Women in the National Action Party of Mexico. There is also interesting evidence for differences in women's priorities when they are in positions of power. In Indian village councils, women were more likely to invest in improving drinking water resources whereas men were more likely to invest in irrigation and roads (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004). This may be related to the areas in which the different genders operate; fetching water, for example, is most frequently a woman's job in these areas.

Limited policy coherence

Going forward, it will be important to address gender equality in a broader context to ensure policy coherence

The approaches to gender equality described above have allowed for important advances in the efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women since the MDGs were adopted. Nonetheless, these approaches have, by and large, not been broad enough to realize the potential trade-offs in pursuing them. Improving in one area, such as political representation, has not automatically led to advances in other areas, such as literacy. For example, Mongolia has performed well on gender equality in education, but has not performed nearly as well on measures of economic and political equality, despite having laws enabling women's representation in Government (Khan and others, 2013). Mozambique has performed relatively well on the political front but still struggles with a low rate of female literacy. On the other hand, Vanuatu has comparatively high rates of female literacy, but had no female parliamentarians as of 2014. Likewise, while many countries have a minimum legal age of marriage of 18 years, many also permit child marriage if there is parental or guardian consent (United Nations, 2013a).

Policy recommendations

The policy interventions identified and discussed in this chapter have featured prominently at different stages in the period since the MDGs were formulated and adopted. The evidence supports the numerous ways in which these interventions have been critical in making headway towards reducing poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, and promoting gender equality and empowering women. Recommendations regarding those policies that still hold great potential for addressing the unfinished business of the MDGs and pursuing a broader sustainable development agenda are summarized as follows.

Enabling the transition towards universal social protection

Social protection will feature prominently in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs foresee the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including social protection floors, and substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable (goal 1.3). Social protection policies are also seen as an essential conduit to eliminating gender inequalities and improving equality in general (goals 5.4 and 10.4). They are also expected to result in spillover effects for other goals.

The expectation is that countries will transition towards universal social protection (USP) systems. For developing countries, this will be a challenging endeavour in many cases, especially for low-income countries where social protection systems have not yet been developed on the basis of a solid contributory system. Social assistance programmes, which are non-contributory, form the most important component of social protection in most developing countries, as noted.

Social assistance has typically been prioritized in countries where the state of the labour market and the overall economic and social situation does not provide enough opportunities to people. These policies do not necessarily promote incorporation of beneficiaries into the labour market or the economy at large—for which some of the economic policies discussed in chapter II are better suited. As developing countries pursue development goals after 2015, contributory social protection systems are expected to provide the basis for the transition towards USP systems. Yet, because contributory social protection systems will take time to be developed, social protection programmes that are mostly of a non-contributory nature will play a critical role in the short to medium term. However, implementation challenges of non-contributory social protection schemes will have to be addressed as follows.

First, the design of social protection programmes should be tailored to specific development and institutional conditions of individual nations. For example, CCTs with improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been more effective in middle-income countries. Community-based targeting schemes and unconditional or low-conditionality programmes may be better suited for low-income countries.

Second, consolidation of small social assistance programmes into a single consolidated programme of social protection can reduce duplication and improve efficiency. This may include a unique registry system as well as biometric information to keep track of beneficiaries in order to improve coordination and consistency during implementation.

Third, focusing on the family as opposed to the individual can help to address multiple dimensions of poverty and vulnerability, provided that a fair intra-household allocation of resources and consumption can be ensured.

Fourth, supplementary supply-side interventions can improve effectiveness of non-contributory social protection schemes. For example, CCTs can boost enrolment in education and the demand for health services, but simultaneous efforts to increase education and health-care personnel are needed to avoid unintended effects on the quality of these services.

Fifth, social protection programmes should create greater consistency with labour market policies, so that more people have access to better earning opportunities, and build the basis to develop a contributory system towards a truly universal social protection system.

Scaling and upgrading proven interventions in education

Relatively modest increases in expenditures in primary education still impact enrolment and completion rates in a significant way. There is room for considerably improving education outcomes despite limited resources, particularly in low-income countries. Proven interventions such as construction of schools, increasing the number of teachers, elimination of school fees and other costs, school feeding programmes do still pay off for the attainment of education goals. Spending more and better in developing countries should be aimed at upgrading these proven interventions as follows.

First, upgrading existing schools and services and curricula should be the focus where school access and coverage is nearing sufficiency. Upgrading sanitation facilities and accessibility will be particularly critical to improving enrolment and completion, especially if more girls and children with disabilities are brought into schooling. Building schools in communities or villages generally boosts enrolment and reduces dropout rates, especially of girls, as they require less travel time.

Second, the new sustainable development agenda posits universal secondary education among its priorities. School fees and other costs to education such as textbooks, uniforms and other related materials should be eliminated to the greatest degree possible not only in primary education but also at the secondary education level in countries where they are still common.

Third, continued efforts are also needed to reduce opportunity costs for school attendance in primary as well as secondary by adjusting the school schedule and location to specific circumstances.

Fourth, to increase the availability of good teachers, secondary and tertiary education has to be improved and teacher training facilities have to be upgraded and expanded including at the community level. Training programmes that teachers can go through while teaching can help to raise the level of education of both teachers and students and result in greater teacher effectiveness. But effective teachers will only be retained if their salaries and incentives for career development opportunities become more competitive.

Sixth, monitoring and evaluation with participation of community representatives need to be strengthened across education systems in order to address a variety of issues including absenteeism and lack of effort by teachers; tracking out-of-school students, both those that have dropped out and those that never attended; and monitoring the effectiveness of education.

Seventh, the fact that many economies are not equipped to absorb the increasing stock of better-educated workers in which they have been investing calls for expanding programmes to make connections between education and the labour market. Next to economic policies (see chap. II) there should be initiatives to give future job seekers the knowledge and skills demanded by the labour market. At the institutional level, aligning the educational system with the labour market will help produce graduates that have the skills for the existing and new industries. These challenges call for greater coherence between economic and social policies.

Strengthening the gender equality and development interface

The approaches to gender equality reviewed above hold great potential going forward. However, they should be designed and implemented not only for the sake of reducing gender gaps, but also for the beneficial synergies that exist between improved gender equality and achievement of other development-related goals, which can then have important feedback effects. Strengthening the gender equality and development interface will require addressing issues of existing approaches that may have diminished outcomes, and may then require different approaches. For example, while there have been significant increases in legislation related to eliminating gender discrimination, further progress may require greater shifts towards enforcement. At the same time, policymakers should make efforts to better understand potential feedbacks between these approaches and ensure there

is coherence between policies and women's rights. Going forward, the following policy pathways are important to keep in mind.

First, further legislative measures and their adequate enforcement are necessary to raise the quota of women in political representative bodies, in corporate boards, and in other economic, political, and social organizations in areas where the normal pathways for advancement have been circumscribed by prejudice and discrimination. Legal changes enhancing women's right to ownership and inheritance have to be accompanied by programmes ensuring that the changes develop roots in the wider culture and become part of the social conventions and norms of behaviour.

Second, systematic steps will be necessary to guarantee that women's work, regardless of the sphere of activity, and including work in family farming, household activities and child-rearing, and work in various informal sectors, is valued appropriately.

Third, more attention must be paid to potential conflicts in the outcomes of policies aimed at gender equality. For example, cash transfer programmes have resulted in families withdrawing girls from school to participate in family enterprises. These policies should be balanced across the different dimensions—including education, health, employment, ownership, and political participation. This will necessitate better use of the interlinkages among them and recognition of the central role of economic empowerment to be achieved mainly through expansion of formal employment and promotion of self-employment opportunities for women.

Fourth, increased monitoring and evaluation are necessary for following the progress made in implementing policies promoting gender equality. In particular, stakeholders should be alerted regarding the potential conflicts in the outcomes of policies mentioned above. Prompt actions will be necessary to resolve these conflicts when they arise.