

## VIII. GROSS ENROLMENT FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL COMBINED

### International goals

*All countries should further strive to ensure the complete access to primary school or an equivalent level of education by both girls and boys as quickly as possible, and in any case before the year 2015 .... Countries that have achieved the goal of universal primary education are urged to extend education and training to, and facilitate access to and completion of education at secondary school and higher levels (para. 11.6 of ICPD Programme of Action).*

*... By the year 2000, universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children; closing the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005; universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015 (para. 36(a) of WSSD Programme of Action, and (similarly stated in) para. 80(b) of FWCW Platform for Action).*

*The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted at the World Conference on Education for All, set a goal of universal access to primary education by the year 2000 (para. 8) and includes paragraphs emphasizing gender equality in access to education (e.g., article 3.3).*

*The World Declaration and Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted at the World Summit for Children, has a paragraph on universal access to primary education, with special emphasis on girls (appendix II(iv)).*

*Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, includes several paragraphs on primary and secondary education (e.g., paras. 25.5, 25.14(d) and 36.4).*

*The Habitat Agenda refers to universal access to education and gender equality in education (paras. 32, 36, 45(l) and 119(b)).*

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### DEFINITION

The gross enrolment ratio for primary and secondary school combined refers to the total enrolment, regardless of age, in primary and secondary education per 100 persons of the population of primary- and secondary-school age, according to national regulations.

### RECENT SITUATION

Education is now clearly recognized as one of the key components of policies aimed at solving issues of international concern. Without educational policies, policies aimed at alleviating poverty, reducing infant mortality and improving public health, protecting the

environment, strengthening human rights, improving international understanding, and seeking to gain or regain competitiveness in advanced technology are essentially incomplete (UNESCO, 1990).

While progress has been made towards the goal of education for all over the past few decades, wide disparities remain.

Of the 164 countries with data available, about one third (59 countries) have an enrolment ratio of 90 or more, approaching the conference goal of universal access to education, and another third have an enrolment ratio in the 70-89 range (table VIII.1 and figs. VIII.1 and VIII.2). On the other hand, nearly one fifth of the countries (28 countries) still have enrolment ratios of less than 50. Most of those countries are in Eastern, Western and Middle Africa.

In the more developed regions, 80 per cent of the countries are found in the highest category and nearly one fifth in the second highest (70-89). Only one country, Yugoslavia, falls in the category of enrolment ratios of 50-69, and none is in the lowest group. In the less developed regions, the largest group (40 per cent) have enrolment ratios of 70-89. One fifth of the countries are in the highest category (90 or more) and nearly one quarter are in the lowest category (less than 50).

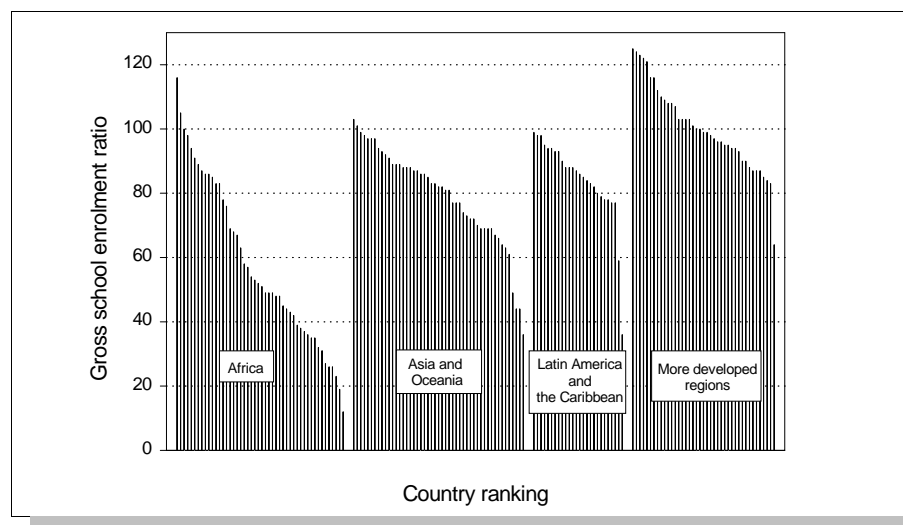
There are striking differences in enrolment between Africa and the other two less developed regions in table VIII.1. Nearly half of African countries have enrolment ratios below 50, while in the other regions under 10 per cent of countries have such low ratios (including Haiti in Latin America and the Caribbean and Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea in Asia and Oceania). The highest enrolment ratios are found in Latin America

**Figure VIII.1.** Gross enrolment ratio for primary and secondary school combined, 1990-1996 (both sexes)



Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999 (Paris, UNESCO Publishing and Bernan Press, 1999).

NOTE: Estimates are not presented for countries or areas with populations under 150,000.



**Figure VIII.2.** School enrolment ratio, 1990-1996, by country ranking and region

Source: *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999* (Paris, UNESCO Publishing and Bernan Press, 1999).

NOTE: Bars show level of gross enrolment ratio for individual countries. Includes 5 countries with data earlier than 1990.

**Table VIII.1.** Distribution of countries according to gross enrolment ratio for primary and secondary school combined, 1990-1996

|                                 | Percentage of countries with gross enrolment ratio of: |       |       |              |       | Number of countries |       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
|                                 | 90 or more                                             | 70-89 | 50-69 | Less than 50 | Total | With data available | Total |
| World                           | 36                                                     | 34    | 13    | 17           | 100   | 164                 | 184   |
| More developed regions          | 80                                                     | 17    | 2     | 0            | 100   | 41                  | 43    |
| Less developed regions          | 21                                                     | 40    | 16    | 23           | 100   | 123                 | 141   |
| Least developed countries       | 2                                                      | 19    | 21    | 57           | 100   | 42                  | 45    |
| Africa                          | 13                                                     | 19    | 21    | 48           | 100   | 48                  | 53    |
| Asia and Oceania <sup>a</sup>   | 22                                                     | 51    | 18    | 8            | 100   | 49                  | 57    |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 35                                                     | 58    | 4     | 4            | 100   | 26                  | 31    |

Source: *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999* (Paris, UNESCO Publishing and Bernan Press, 1999).

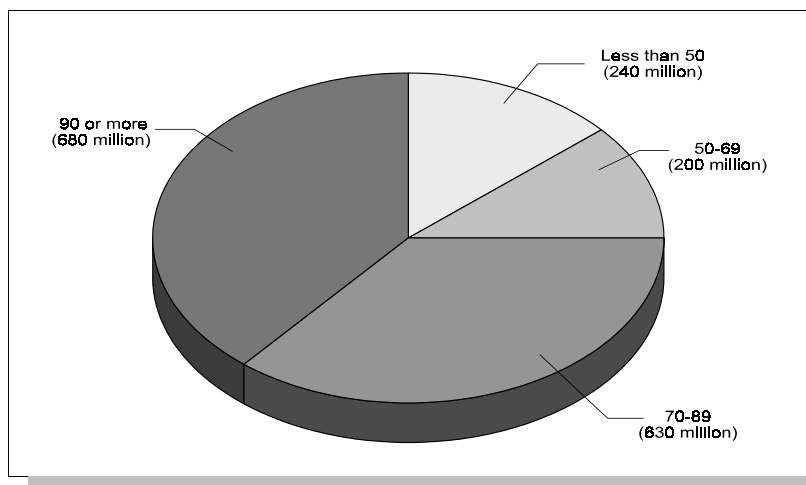
NOTE: Excludes countries and areas with populations under 150,000. Includes 5 countries with data earlier than 1990. Due to rounding, the sum of the subcategories may not be equal to 100 per cent.

<sup>a</sup> Excluding Japan, Australia and New Zealand, which are included in the more developed regions.

**Figure VIII.3.** Distribution of under-15 population by school enrolment ratio, 1990-1996 (both sexes)

Source: UNESCO *Statistical Yearbook 1999* (Paris, UNESCO Publishing and Bernan Press, 1999).

NOTE: For countries with enrolment data, representing 99 per cent of the under-15 population. Includes 5 countries with data earlier than 1990.



and the Caribbean, where one third of the countries have ratios of 90 or more. In Asia and Oceania, about one fifth of countries have enrolment ratios that high. Most of the least developed countries have enrolment ratios under 50, and only one country (Malawi) has a ratio of 90 or more.

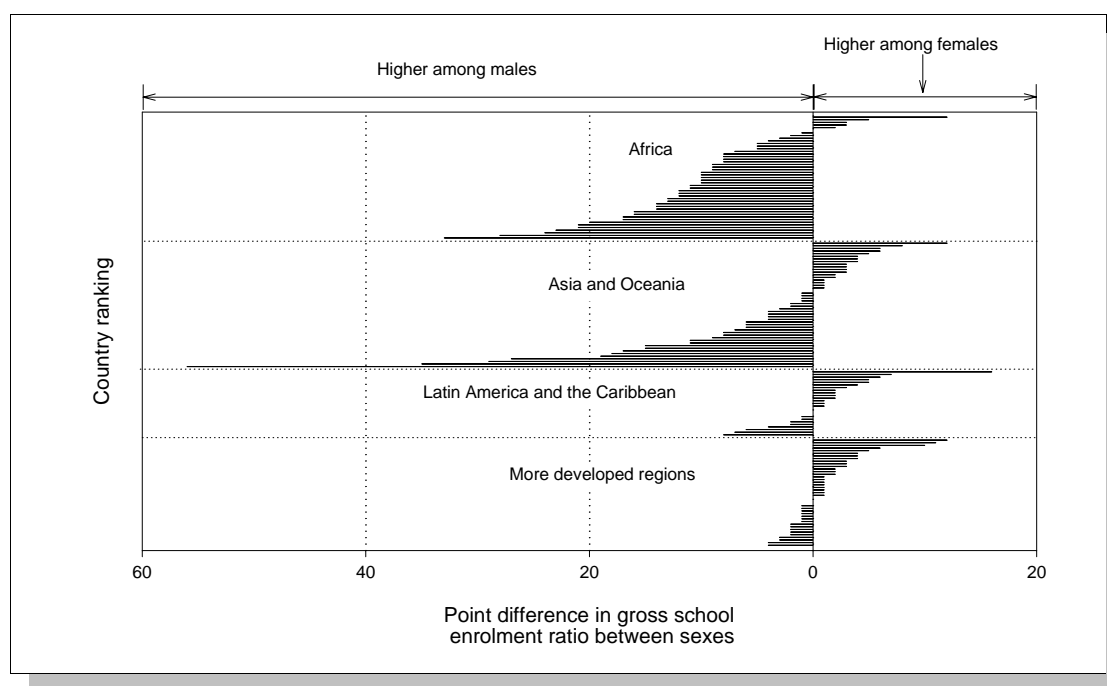
Nearly 40 per cent of world population under age 15 live in countries with enrolment ratios of 90 or more, and a roughly equal number live in countries with enrolment ratios of 70-89 (fig. VIII.3). However, around 240 million children (13 per cent) live in countries with enrolment ratios under 50, indicating very limited access to education.

Table VIII.2 and figure VIII.4 show gender gaps in school enrolment ratios. In most countries, boys have higher enrolment ratios than girls, and the differences are substantial in many countries, particularly where levels of enrolment are low overall.

At the global level, in more than one third of countries, school enrolment ratios are higher for boys than for girls by 5 points or more. In about half of the countries, gender gaps are within 5 points. The differences between the more developed regions and the less developed regions appear significant. In the more developed regions, the large majority of countries (88 per cent) have gender gaps of less than 5 points, whereas in the less developed regions nearly half of the countries have substantially higher enrolment ratios for boys than for girls. The gender gap is particularly large in the countries classified as the least developed. Within the latter group are the countries with the largest gender differences of all, in Yemen (56 points), Nepal (35 points) and Togo (33 points).

Over three quarters of the African countries have enrolment ratios for boys exceeding those for girls by more than 5 points, as do over one third of the countries in Asia and Oceania. At the same time, half the Asian and Oceanic countries have small gender gaps in enrolment (i.e., within 5 points). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the gender gap in school enrolment is much more limited than in the other less developed regions. In one fifth of the countries enrolment ratios for girls are higher than for boys by 5 or more points. In other less developed regions, substantial gender gaps favouring girls are less common.

**Figure VIII.4.** Sex difference in school enrolment ratio, 1990-1996, by country ranking and region



Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999 (Paris, UNESCO Publishing and Bernan Press, 1999).

**Table VIII.2.** Distribution of countries according to difference in school enrolment ratio between sexes, 1990-1996

|                                 | Percentage of countries with enrolment ratio of: |                               |                                           |       | Number of countries |       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
|                                 | Male higher than female: 5 points or more        | Difference less than 5 points | Female higher than male: 5 points or more | Total | With data available | Total |
| World                           | 36                                               | 54                            | 10                                        | 100   | 162                 | 184   |
| More developed regions          | 0                                                | 88                            | 12                                        | 100   | 41                  | 43    |
| Less developed regions          | 48                                               | 42                            | 10                                        | 100   | 121                 | 14    |
| Least developed countries       | 83                                               | 15                            | 3                                         | 100   | 41                  | 45    |
| Africa                          | 79                                               | 17                            | 4                                         | 100   | 47                  | 53    |
| Asia and Oceania                | 37                                               | 53                            | 10                                        | 100   | 49                  | 57    |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 12                                               | 68                            | 20                                        | 100   | 25                  | 31    |

Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999 (Paris, UNESCO Publishing and Bernan Press, 1999).

NOTE: Excludes countries and areas with populations under 150,000. Includes 5 countries with data earlier than 1990. Due to rounding, the sum of the subcategories may not be equal to 100 per cent.

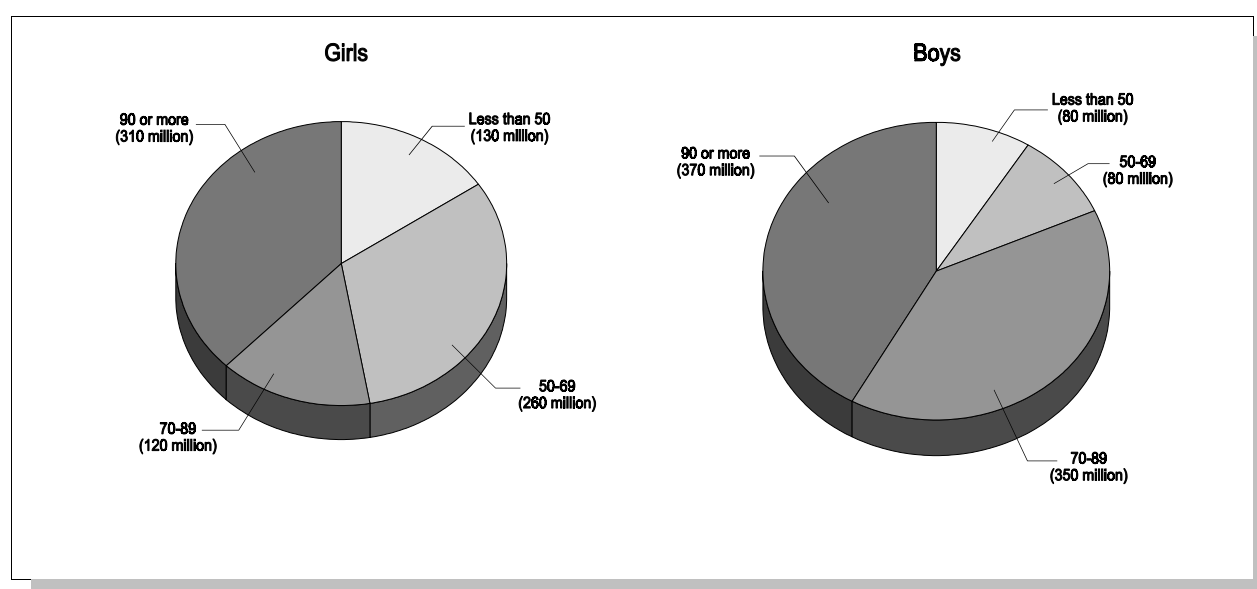
<sup>a</sup> Excluding Japan, Australia and New Zealand, which are included in the more developed regions.

Over 80 per cent of boys under age 15 live in countries with male enrolment ratios of at least 70, and around 40 per cent in countries with ratios of 90 or more (fig. VIII.5). About 10 per cent live in countries with male enrolment ratios below 50. Thus, the large majority of boys live in settings where it is usual for boys to attend school, even if attendance cannot be taken for granted. By contrast, only about half of girls live in countries with female enrolment ratios of 70 or more. The percentage of girls living in countries with near-universal female enrolment is only a few points lower than the corresponding percentage for boys, but many fewer girls are found in settings with enrolment ratios of 70-89. Around one third of girls live in countries with enrolment ratios for girls of 50-69, and around 15 per cent in countries with ratios of under 50.

### SOURCES OF DATA, COVERAGE AND QUALITY

International statistics on school enrolment are compiled by UNESCO and published in its *Statistical Yearbook* series and on the Internet. Data are available for 162 countries by sex and for 164 countries for both sexes combined, or approximately 90 per cent of the countries included in the present report. This wide country coverage is one of the advantages of using the gross enrolment ratio, as compared with the net enrolment ratio, which includes in its numerator only those students of primary- and secondary-school age. The data pertain to the latest available year between 1990 and 1996, depending on the country; several exceptions are noted in the annex. Since the school year, in a number of countries, does not coincide with the academic year, the year is the one in which the school or academic year starts.

**Figure VIII.5.** Distribution of under-15 girls and boys by school enrolment ratio, 1990-1996



Source: UNESCO *Statistical Yearbook 1999* (Paris, UNESCO Publishing and Bernan Press, 1999).

Data on total enrolment are normally available for most countries on an annual basis, collected through national school censuses. The data included here were gathered mainly from official replies to UNESCO questionnaires and surveys but also from official reports and publications, supplemented by information available to the United Nations from other national and international sources.

The ratios have been calculated taking into account the different national systems of education and the duration of schooling at the first and second levels. The age groups used to calculate enrolment ratios for the primary and secondary levels have been determined by UNESCO according to the following rules:

(a) For countries that have a single school system at each level, the age group is defined in conformity with the normal entrance age and normal duration of general schooling at the first and second levels;

(b) In the case of countries with several systems of different duration, the system followed by the majority of the pupils is used;

(c) The durations used are those that are operative in the year considered.

The age group for the combined ratio for the first and the second levels is defined by taking the range covering the two age groups defined for the first and second levels. Although school-age ranges vary by country, they are typically 6-11 years for primary school and 12-17 years for secondary school.

Enrolment ratios for the second level are based on the total enrolment, including general education, teacher-training and technical and vocational education.

It should be noted that the gross enrolment ratios at the first and the second levels include all pupils, whatever their ages, whereas the population is limited to the range of official school ages. Therefore, for some countries, the gross enrolment ratio can exceed 100. In many less developed regions, the official entry age may not be adhered to by large sectors of the population because of lack of funds. Furthermore, in the majority of countries, secondary education is disaggregated into two stages, with the first stage coinciding with compulsory education and the second stage including technical and vocational training. This indicator may not capture the qualitative changes taking place in secondary education in many countries, particularly with respect to vocational education and second-chance programmes.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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