

NET ENROLMENT RATE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION		
Education	Education Level	Core indicator

1. INDICATOR

- (a) **Name:** Net Enrolment Rate in Primary Education.
- (b) **Brief Definition:** The number of children of official primary school age (according to ISCED97²⁶) who are enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total children of the official school age population.
- (c) **Unit of Measurement:** expressed as a percentage (%).
- (d) **Placement in the CSD Indicator Set:** Education/Education Level.

2. POLICY RELEVANCE

- (a) **Purpose:** Net Enrolment Rate is considered to be a measure of the education coverage in a specific level of a country's education system.

(b) **Relevance to Sustainable/Unsustainable Development (theme/sub-theme):** Education is a process by which human beings and societies reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of people to address environment and development issues. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values, and skills consistent with sustainable development and effective public participation in decision-making. Policy-makers concerned with children's access and participation in education would find this indicator, alongside the Gross Enrolment Ratio or GER (defined later in "Linkages to Other Indicators"), particularly useful. A sharp discrepancy between the GER and the NER indicates that enrolled children enter late to the first grade or do not progress regularly through the grades and that the system's internal efficiency could be improved. Appropriate policies and measures could then be adopted to address problems of grade repetition and drop-out as well as bottlenecks with regard to retention in school.

- (c) **International Conventions and Agreements:** Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All (EFA),

(d) **International Targets/Recommended Standards:** The MDG goal 2 is "to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling". The goal for EFA is similar. Progress towards this goal is

²⁶ *International Standard Classification of Education.* Primary education is defined by ISCED97 as programmes normally designed on a unit or project basis to give pupils a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics along with an elementary understanding of other subjects such as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music.

monitored, amongst other indicators but principally, by the NER with a view that the general target should be 100% for every country of the world.

(e) Linkages to Other Indicators: This indicator is often analysed along side the Gross Enrolment Ratio for Primary Education (GER). This is defined as the number of pupils (of any age) who are enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total children of official school age population (according to ISCED97).

Gross Enrolment Ratio is widely used to show the general level of participation in a given level of education. It indicates the capacity of the education system to enroll students of a particular age-group at a specific level of education. It can be a complementary indicator to NER by indicating the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment. GER can be over 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged pupils/students because of early or late entrants, and grade repetition. In this case, a rigorous interpretation of GER needs additional information to assess the extent of repetition, late entrants, etc.

3. METHODOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

(a) Underlying Definitions and Concepts: Net primary enrolment rate in primary education is the number of pupils of official primary school age (according to ISCED97) who are enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total children of the official school age population. Where more than one system of primary education exists within the country the most widespread or common structure is used for determining the official school age group.

(b) Measurement Methods: Determine the population of official school age by reference to the theoretical starting age and duration of ISCED97 Level 1 (primary education) as reported by the country.

Divide the number of pupils enrolled in primary education who are of the official school age by the population for the same age-group and multiply the result by 100. This method requires information on the structure of education (i.e. theoretical entrance age and duration of ISCED97 Level 1), enrolment by single years of age and population of the age-group corresponding to the given level of education.

$$NER_h^t = \frac{E_{h,a}^t}{P_{h,a}^t} * 100$$

Where :

NER_h^t = Net Enrolment Ratio at level of education **h** in school-year **t**

$E_{h,a}^t$ = Enrolment of the population of age-group **a** at level of education **h** in school-year **t**

$P_{h,a}^t$ = Population in age-group **a** which officially corresponds to level of education **h** in school-year **t**

Example: If the entrance age for primary education is 7 years with a duration of 6 years then a is (7-12) years.

(c) Limitations of the Indicator: A high NER denotes a high degree of enrolment in education by the official school-age population. The theoretical maximum value is 100%. NERs below 100 percent provide a measure of the proportion of primary school

age children who are not enrolled at the primary level. This difference does not necessarily indicate the percentage of students who are not enrolled at all in education, since some children may be enrolled at other levels of education. When the NER is compared with the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) the difference between the two ratios highlights the incidence of under-aged and over-aged enrolment.

Net Enrolment Rates may exceed 100% due to inconsistencies between population and enrolment data. In this case the indicator is adjusted by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) using a capping factor so that the Gender Parity Index²⁷ of the new set of values remains the same as for the original values but setting the higher of the male and female NERs to 100% and adjusting the other values proportionately.

Nationally-published figures may differ from the international ones because of differences between national education systems and ISCED97; or differences in coverage (i.e. the extent to which different types of education – e.g. private or special education – or different types of programmes e.g. adult education or early childhood care and education – are included in one rather than the other) and/or between national and UNPD population data.

(d) Status of the methodology:

(e) Alternative Definitions: The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) estimates the number of out-of-school children using an adaptation of NER. (Note that there is no internationally agreed upon title for this adaptation of NER as of yet.) The adaptation uses an alternative numerator calculation which includes the number of children enrolled in either primary *or secondary* school. This is felt to be a more “honest” measure since children who are enrolled in secondary school but are of primary school age should not be considered a failure of the system and so should be included in the count.

4. ASSESSMENT OF DATA

(a) Data Needed to Compile the Indicator: Basic data required to derive this indicator include enrolment by single year of age for at all ages that are encompassed in the official definition of primary school level (in accordance with ISCED97) in a country.

Corresponding demographic age related data is required for all ages encompassed by the definition of primary school level.

(b) National and International Data Availability and Sources: At the national level, data on enrolment by age in primary school are available in about 140 countries. For sound measurement, this indicator should be supported by consistent data for gender and area (such as rural/urban zones). At the international level the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) undertakes an annual data collection of the latest available enrolment data from each country of the world. It then combines these with demographic age data from UN Population Division to form the indicator.

²⁷ *Gender parity index is the ratio of female to male values of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes.*

(c) Data References:

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics web site: <http://www.uis.unesco.org>
UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Education Digest (GED), 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006.

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Reports (GMR), UNESCO.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2006, United Nations.

5. AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDICATOR

(a) Lead Agency: The lead agency is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The contact point is the Director, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); email: uis.unesco.org; fax: (1-514) 343-5740.

(b) Other Contributing Organizations: The UN Population Division in New York provides the population counts that comprise the denominator of this indicator.

6. REFERENCES

(a) Readings:

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Education Digest (GED), 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006.

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Reports (GMR), UNESCO.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2006, United Nations.

The Human Development Reports, UNDP.

The World Development Indicators Reports, the World Bank.

World Education Report (UNESCO), 1995, 1998.

International Standard Classification of Education 1997, UNESCO

(b) Internet site: <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (UNESCO Institute for Statistics)