

Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender in Education

A Gender Review of the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report

WORKING PAPER



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**United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
(UNGEI)**

**Transforming Policy and Practice
for Gender in Education:
A Gender Review
of the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report**

**Technical Paper
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1. Introduction: Revisiting the UNGEI agenda from 2007 to 2008

1.1. Key issues identified by UNGEI

Last year, representations were made to the Education for All (EFA) Working Group (WG) by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), emphasizing the need for gender analysis when viewing progress made toward EFA. First, a set of framing statements were submitted, beginning with the notion that the realization of girls' education is dependent on gender equality, which means rights to education, rights within learning systems and rights through education from birth to lifelong learning. Further, it was argued that a commitment to equity is the action necessary to create equality in access, processes and outcomes for the education of girls and boys. UNGEI noted that inclusion is not limited to gender equity; however, girls are often affected by more than one form of exclusion and are the most common social group not in school. For that reason, a gender perspective is the key organizing principle for targeting the inclusion of out-of-school pupils. A gender-equity perspective also benefits boys and other marginalized groups.

While focusing on girls' education, UNGEI acknowledged that the achievement of quality education requires a holistic and multisectoral approach. Thus, to ensure quality of education for girls, UNGEI acknowledged that there are favourable conditions that must be developed to encourage girls to stay in school and perform well. For example, teachers are essential for ensuring both inclusion and quality in education, and female teachers are an important part of the equation in many contexts. Life skills and application of learning need to be emphasized as a means for developing quality and equitable education, especially for girls.

UNGEI recognized that girls are especially disadvantaged in fragile states and during emergencies, and are at higher risk of being excluded from education. Communities can be either a force for positive change or a challenge to gender equality. Civil society plays an especially important role in interacting with and empowering communities to play this positive role.

Turning to last year's recommendations, UNGEI proposed that equity – realizing the right to education and ensuring inclusion – was a sound starting point, and that governments and donors should commit to ensuring that global and national policies and programmes use inclusion as a key approach. Gender equity and equality must be guiding principles, so that the most marginalized girls are integrated into quality educational systems. These two approaches must be applied in policy formulation, planning, programming and monitoring. Further, governments need to enable civil-society organizations to play a major role in the adoption and application of the inclusion approach with a gender focus. This is especially significant during emergencies and in post-crisis transition states.

To achieve and reap the full benefits of quality girls' education, the EFA goals that focus on early childhood, life skills, children and youth participation and women's literacy must be given greater attention and funding.

If quality education and learning are to be achieved, it will be essential to employ a life-cycle approach to allocating resources in order to reach girls, particularly those who are at higher risk of facing multiple disadvantages (such as poverty, disability, violence, child labour and discrimination), if they are to gain access to and benefit from quality education. Gender mainstreaming through pedagogies and curricula should empower and support the active role of girls and women in their learning, equipping them with life skills and preparing them for civic and economic participation. It will be important to support governments and communities in strengthening multisectoral approaches to accelerate girls' quality education and promote gender equality. A comprehensive package of interventions, strengthened partnerships and coordinating mechanisms will be required.

The financing of EFA will require the adoption of a transformative, gender-oriented approach to education budgeting to ensure the recognition of education as a sound long-term investment. Dedicated and predictable funding needs to be allocated to education for all excluded children, especially girls and boys in fragile states. Civil society has an important role to play in the articulation of social demands and financing needs for gender equality in education, as well as in keeping governments accountable for delivering on girls' rights to education.

1.2. Progress since 2007–2008

Given these principles and strategies, the question now arises regarding the extent to which the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) has taken cognizance of these statements and recommendations. What now presents itself as the UNGEI agenda for further influence on the EFA movement? The analysis of the 2009 GMR that follows will also trace the extent to which UNGEI's concerns have been reflected in reporting progress toward EFA.

2. Overview of the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009

As an initial comment, the GMR is an extremely intimidating document of more than 400 pages. It has to be asked whether the effort put into such a huge task is commensurate with the benefits deriving from it. It must also be asked whether many busy professionals and government officials can devote sufficient time to read this massive document in its entirety. As a recommendation *en passant*, UNGEI might like to propose a different approach with Overview and Highlights sections in one volume and specific topics plus annexes provided in companion volumes.

The GMR notes that remarkable progress has been made toward the achievement of EFA goals, with some poorer countries progressing well. However, 'business as usual' will not achieve the Dakar goals. Governments have failed to tackle inequalities, especially those affecting women and girls; hence, good governance is identified as the key factor in making progress. Broadly speaking, the GMR notes that equity is not sufficiently emphasized in governance reform.

Turning to specific areas, the GMR first deals with Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) noting that child malnutrition and mortality are still major issues, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Global disparities in provision of ECCE continue, with sub-Saharan Africa very low in enrolments. There are also considerable disparities within countries.

Recommendations from the GMR include the need to strengthen links between education planning and child health provisions, target health interventions and achieve more equitable spending in health sectors. There is also a need to prioritize ECCE and provide incentives, as well as strengthen government anti-poverty commitments.

Universal primary education is dealt with next, and the GMR notes that average net enrolments have risen by a factor of six, compared

with pre-Dakar levels. Some 75 million children are still out of school, and 55 per cent of them are girls. In the 134 countries surveyed, around 29 million children will still be out of school by 2015. Children from poor homes are still the least advantaged, but improved policies in some countries, e.g., Tanzania and Ethiopia, have led to higher enrolments. Those countries with the poorest governance indicators are still lagging behind in provisions.

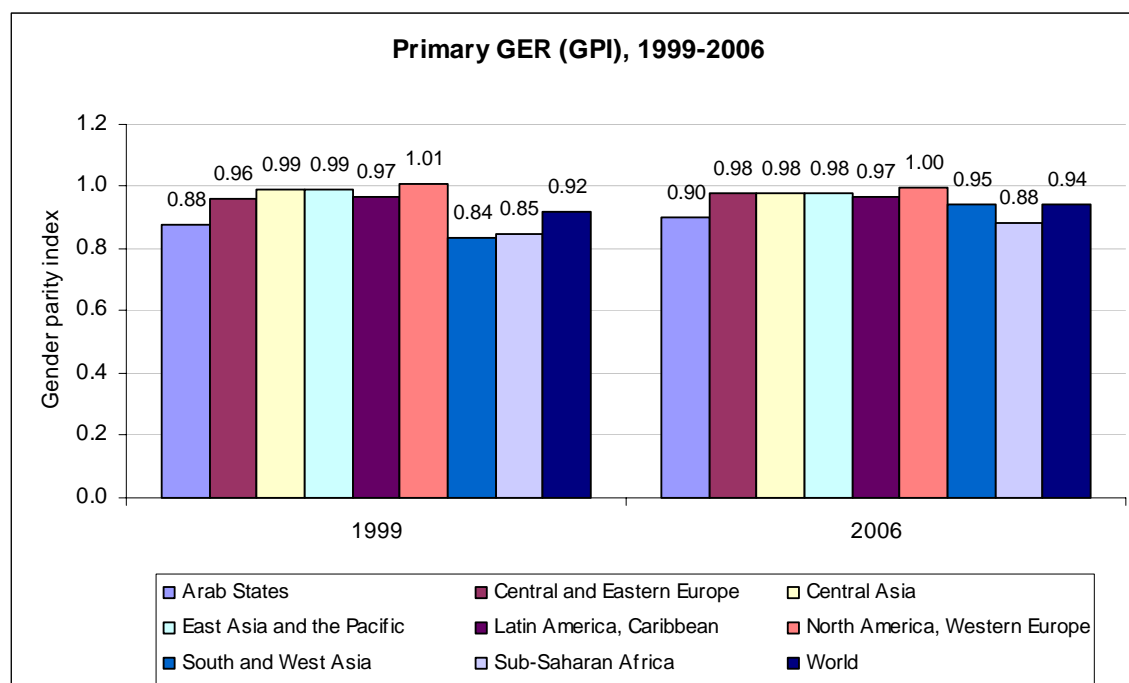
At the secondary level, 75 per cent of children remain out of school. Recommendations from the GMR include the need to fix ambitious long-term goals with the support of realistic planning and budgeting. There is also a need to support equity for girls that is backed by practical strategies. Quality remains problematic, while expanding access, participation and completion, as well as ensuring progression, are

important issues. Better learning, better materials and better-trained teachers with smaller class sizes will make a difference to the quality of secondary education.

The GMR states that lifelong education and adult literacy are not being prioritized. These areas remain conceptually unclear and are poorly monitored. Some 16 per cent of the world's 776 million adults (12 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women) lack basic literacy skills, and these figures are unlikely to decrease much according to current trends. Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia are furthest behind: 19 countries are below the adult literacy target of 55 per cent, due to poverty and other forms of disadvantage.

Gender receives some attention in the GMR (specifically, 11 pages, including extensive tables, out of a total of 241 pages). The report notes that gender parity in primary and secondary education has been achieved in 59 of 176 countries surveyed, an increase of 20 countries from 1999. Worldwide, there are about as many countries with gender disparities at the expense of girls as at the expense of boys. However, more than half the sub-Saharan African countries, as well as those in South and West Asia and the Arab States, have not yet achieved parity (see Table 1). Overall, only 37 per cent of countries surveyed have achieved gender parity.

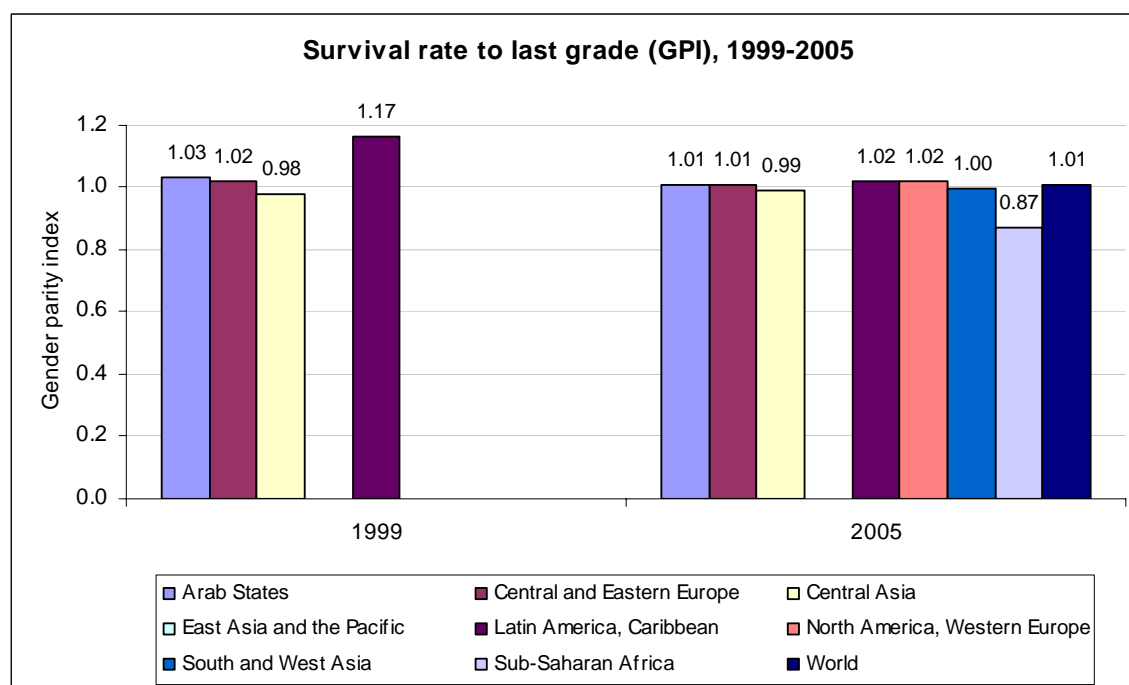
Table 1



(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Table 5)

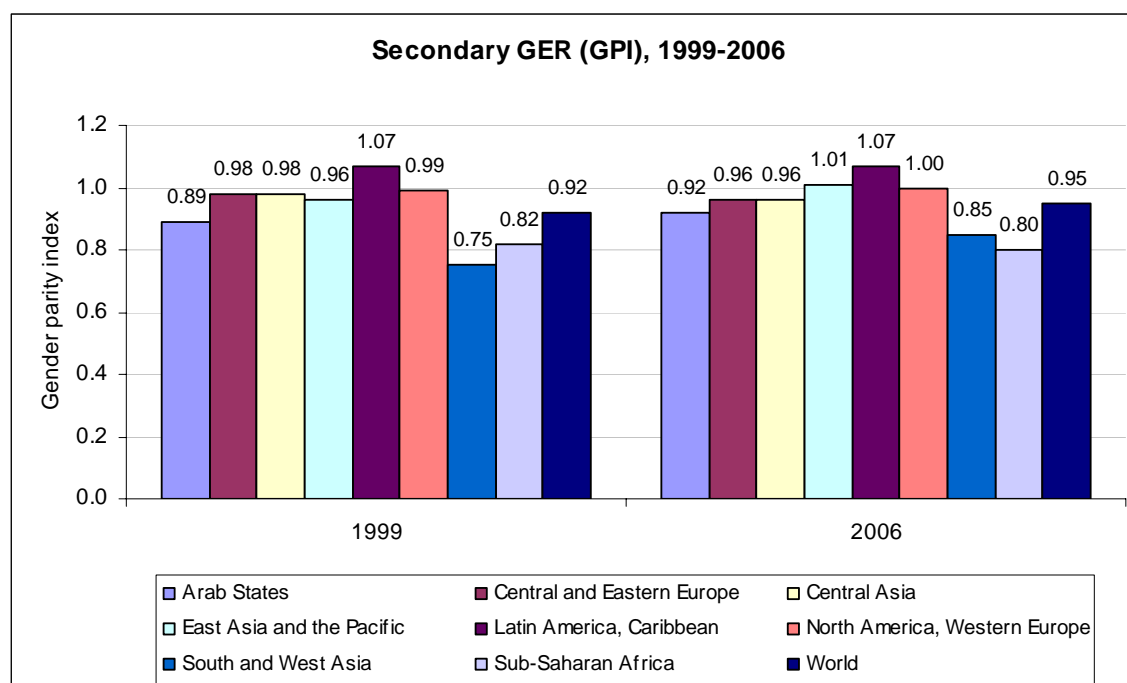
Substantial progress has been made at the primary level, but greater efforts are needed to achieve gender parity by 2015. Access to school is where inequity begins, despite the embracing of education as a human right. Inequity for girls is likely to continue throughout the schooling period. Where overall enrolments are low, there is also a tendency for girls to be under-represented. It is reported that some countries did manage spectacular gains in parity (e.g., Nepal).

Further good news is that girls in many countries are less likely to repeat grades and are more likely to complete the schooling cycle (see Table 2).

Table 2

(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Table 7)

At the secondary level, there are different patterns and a different scale to the parity issue: Developed and transition countries have generally reached parity, but poorer countries are below the world average. Expansion of secondary school enrolments has led to a drop in gender disparities in most regions except sub-Saharan Africa (see Table 3).

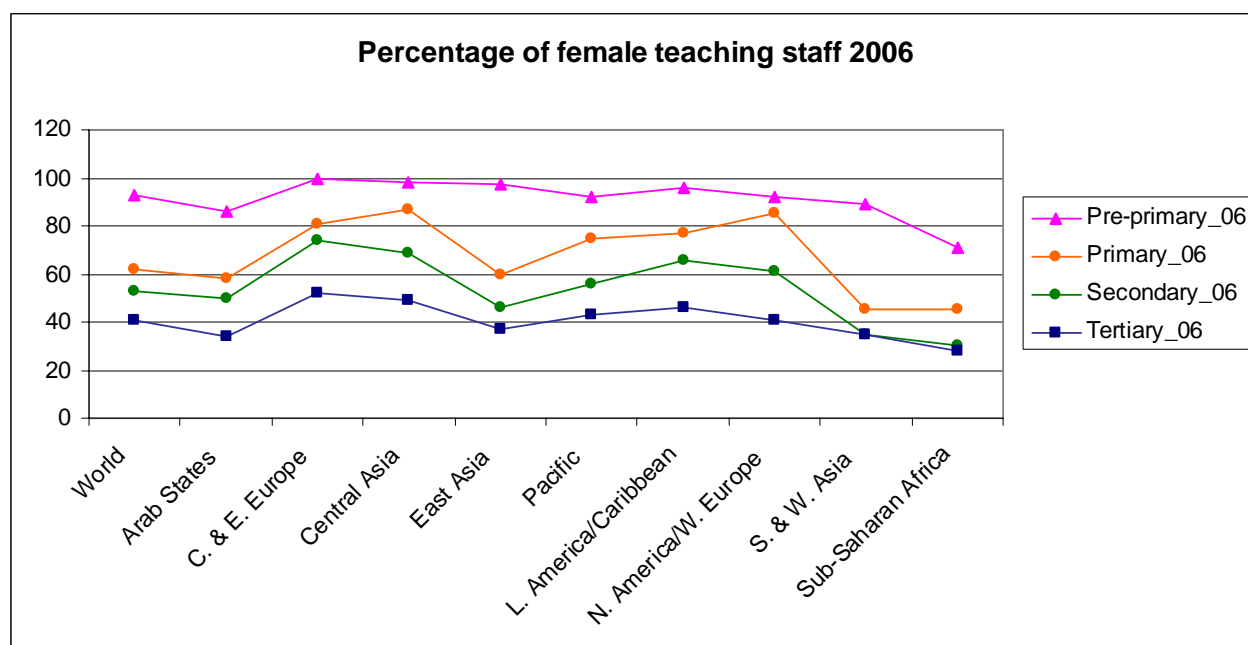
Table 3

(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Table 8)

The creation of incentives has been crucial in achieving this shift. Within countries, gender disparities have also narrowed. Tertiary education worldwide shows more female enrolments than male, especially in the Caribbean and the Pacific, although there are great differences among regions.

The report notes that poverty magnifies gender disparities and that girls' progress in school is hampered by poor quality, as evidenced by teacher attitudes, poor materials and gender relations. In poorer countries with low school-attendance rates, girls from poor homes figure prominently in the statistics. In Mali, girls from richer homes are four times more likely to attend primary school than the poorest girls. This increases to a factor of eight at the secondary level. Being born into a minority or geographically located group can magnify disadvantages for girls. Cultural practices that encourage early marriage, enforce seclusion of girls or attach more importance to boys' education represent significant barriers to girls' education.

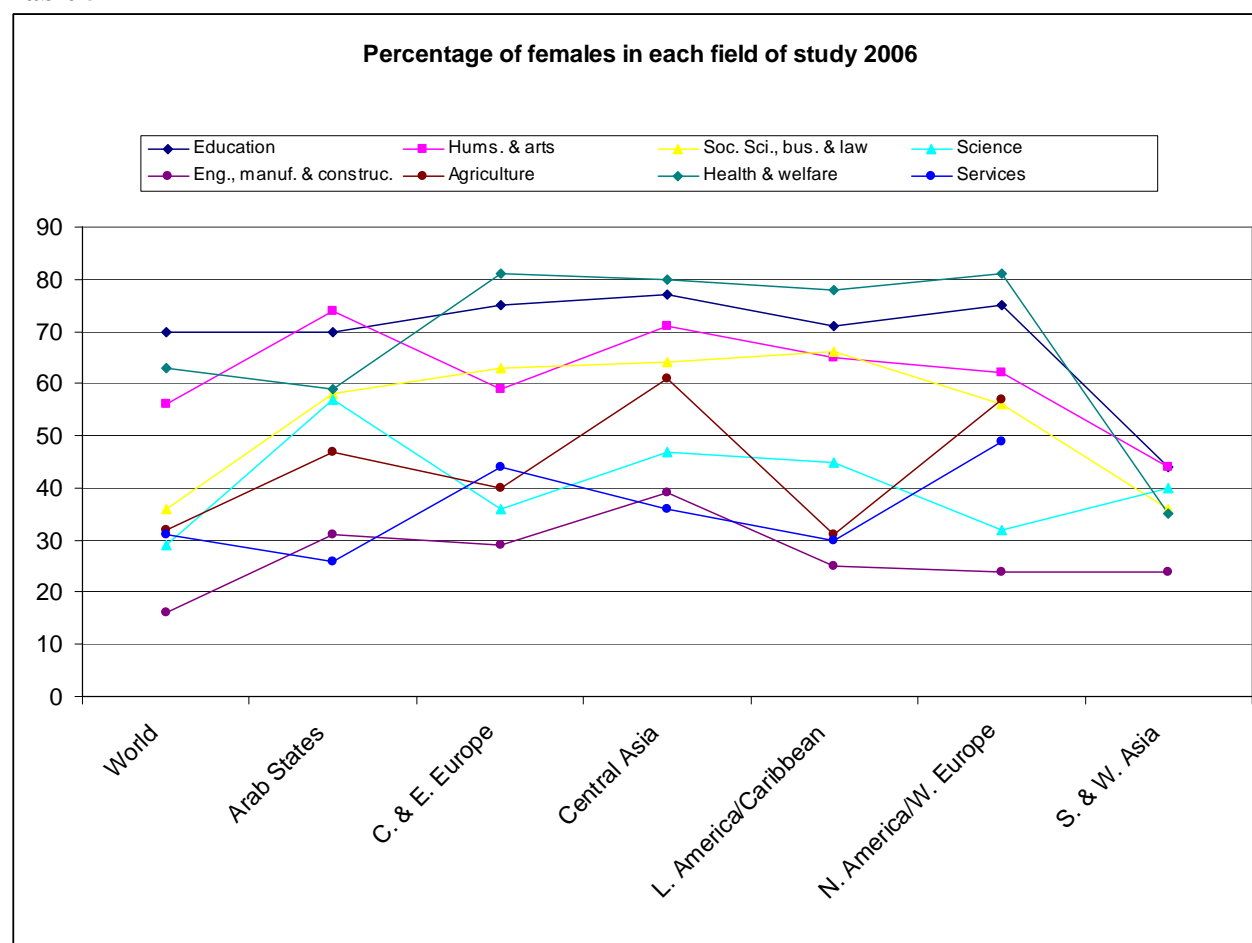
Despite these difficulties, the GMR states that girls continue to outperform boys in reading, literacy and language arts, and that they are increasingly performing at levels equal to or greater than those of boys in mathematics. In addition, the science gap is small, although boys tend to perform better. Social conditioning and gender stereotyping still exist widely. Globally, female teachers are over-represented at the lower levels of schooling, and in many countries girls do not have women teachers as role models at the secondary level (see Table 4).

Table 4

(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Tables 10A, 10B)

The presence of female teachers is recognized as an incentive for girls' enrolment. Capacity development in transformative gender relations is frequently lacking in teacher education programs, resulting in a number of negative practices in the classroom. At the tertiary level, subject choice still seems to be a gender issue, with those such as education and health seen as being 'female' (see Table 5).

Table 5



(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Tables 9B)

The GMR recommends public policies and governance initiatives that will help overcome these gender-related hindrances. The provision of incentives, stipends and buildings close to home will help, as will the appointment of local teachers. Overcoming long-standing cultural barriers will take longer, but the political will must be exercised.

The GMR notes the need for governments to commit to the reduction of disparities in wealth, location, gender and ethnicity. They must set targets and monitor progress more effectively. Sustained political will is essential if the world community is to reach educational targets. That will require clear policies and interaction with civil society, the private sector and marginalized groups.

There is also a need to strengthen poverty-reduction policies and strategies. Quality standards have to improve and national spending on education must be increased. Putting equity at the centre of financing strategies and decentralizing for equity are recommended as essential policy initiatives. Sound functioning of public-sector education is a key principle for governments to pursue. Strengthening the recruitment, deployment and motivation of teachers is also a critical area.

In considering the quality of education, the report shows that there are large achievement gaps among students in rich and poor countries. There are marked inequalities within countries, too. Low learning achievement is common in developing countries, as the South African Centre for Missing and Exploited Children and other evidence show. Student background, the organization of education and poor material

support remain the key factors leading to low quality. Sub-Saharan Africa will need 1.6 million to 3.8 million new teachers by 2015. There are large regional and national disparities in pupil/teacher ratios; within countries, these disparities are often more marked.

There is also a need to strengthen policy commitments to improve facilities, train teachers better and develop more relevant curricula. There must be greater focus on teachers and learning to ensure that all children acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. The development of better monitoring and assessment capacities in critical areas, such as textbooks, class size, language of instruction and use of instructional time, will be essential quality inputs. Countries must be encouraged to participate in regional and international learning-assessment exercises.

The report next focuses on the financing of education. It notes that national spending has increased in some countries, which has led to an improved EFA performance. However, between 1999 and 2006, the share of national income devoted to education declined in 40 of the 105 countries surveyed. Low-income countries are still spending less on education; some are committing less than 4 per cent of gross national product (GNP). Low political commitment to education is still evident, especially in some high-population countries. Inequalities in global wealth are still reflected in educational spending.¹

As far as international aid to education is concerned, commitments to basic education are stagnating: A few donors provide more than half the aid to basic education. There is a need to triple aid to basic education annually to meet the targets set. The EFA Fast Track Initiative has not galvanized sufficient support, and commitments to the Catalytic Fund are falling short. There has been mixed progress regarding the aid agenda. Some donors are willing to work through national machinery; others are less committed to this approach.

There is an obvious need to increase aid for basic education. Some US\$7 billion is needed to cover gaps in current priority areas. It will be essential to enlarge the group of donor countries committed to basic education and equity in aid to basic education, focusing on low-income countries. The Fast-Track Initiative should be further supported to close the financing gap. There remains a need to improve aid effectiveness in line with the Paris Declaration.

3. Has the 2009 GMR fully recognized the gender perspective?

In the analysis that follows, the agenda for the November 2008 EFA Working Group meeting provides a framework for the discussion.

3.1. The role of education in light of global challenges

3.1.1. The findings

The major global challenge the GMR identifies is that of poor governance; this is quite problematic, as the evidence adduced is rather general. It cannot be denied that a well-functioning government is more likely to get its education system in order, but a direct link between good governance as a principle and getting more children in school is more difficult to prove. It is arguable that some highly corrupt or centralized but wealthy countries manage their school systems very well. Certainly, researchers² would suggest that the separation of the four important elements for effective schooling – supporting inputs (in

¹ Recent figures suggest annual spending of US\$8,400 per pupil in the United States, US\$5,500 per pupil in OECD countries, and US\$134 per pupil in sub-Saharan Africa. The purchasing power of the dollar in the different regions needs to be taken into account, but the inequities remain great (Source: AED).

² For example, Ward Heneveld and Helen Craig, *Schools Count: World Bank Project Designs and the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, The World Bank, Washington, DC, 1996.

other terms, governance), school climate, enabling conditions and the teaching-learning process – is hardly possible.

It remains to be seen whether fixing the governance problems in poor countries will solve their educational problems, or whether there are equally demanding challenges in the form of teacher supply and preparation, adequate learning materials, good use of time, engagement of communities and sufficient funding to run the whole system.

Note is made in the GMR of the key role of education as a catalyst for human development, and its impact on health, nutrition and poverty reduction. Economic growth is seen as the key to cutting income poverty, and a strong link is identified between education and economic growth and productivity. Educational opportunity and poverty seem closely linked. Integrating EFA plans with poverty-reduction strategies is recommended by the GMR, as is situating EFA plans within a wider social and economic framework. Sectoral programmes have helped with this, but too often poverty reduction strategies have not included education as a crucial factor in this approach. The linking of EFA too closely to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has led to an over-emphasis on quantitative measures. Poor targeting, especially in terms of equity, and poor linkages with broader reform programmes have created problems in many countries. However, the report also notes that education helps in building more democratic societies.

The GMR argues that, because of poor governance and lack of financing, several key EFA targets will not be met, including Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015. In addition, it states that child malnutrition and poor health are barriers to achieving UPE. Even fast-growing economies, such as India's, do not necessarily overcome the child health and mortality problems that afflict poorer societies.

Political leadership seems to be the key issue, in addition to increased public investment in education. Abolishing school fees and targeting disadvantaged groups are important strategies within EFA. Consultative planning processes are important for community involvement in EFA.

Quality in education is linked in the Global Monitoring Report to good governance; where there is insufficient finance, response to local needs and accountability, quality are reduced. Disparities in access, participation and completion lead to low achievement and dropout.

The place of development aid in the movement toward EFA is discussed in global terms in the GMR. The Paris Declaration was supposed to encourage closer coordination among donors and a reduction in transaction costs. This has not happened. Donors have also failed to deliver on their commitments, despite the comparative success of development aid in addressing educational challenges. The Fast Track Initiative has insufficient support from donors; current aid allocations will not allow EFA targets to be met even if recipient countries use aid wisely.

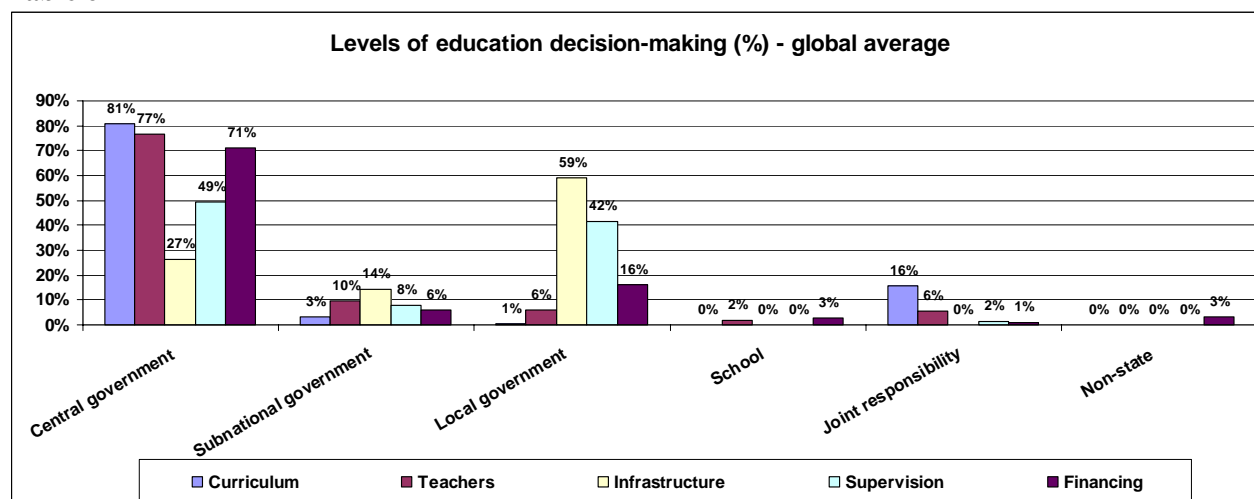
An important point is made in the GMR discussion of global challenges: Education is a basic human right, not a commodity to be bought and sold.

3.1.2. Discussion and matters arising. The question has to be raised of whether governance is an appropriate linking concept when assessing progress made toward EFA. Why is the focus not on supporting inputs, which includes some governance issues but goes beyond them to incorporate ideas such as strong community and parental support, adequate facilities and material support, and so on?

Is the EFA movement likely to bring about shifts in governance practices, or should it focus on what is achievable within the education system while continuing to draw attention to good governance as an enabling factor in achieving quality education for all? Strategies suggested for good governance include

decentralization of control. Table 6 shows how, globally, the central government continues to take overall responsibility for all functions of education, with the exception of school infrastructure and supervision, which are largely undertaken by local government.

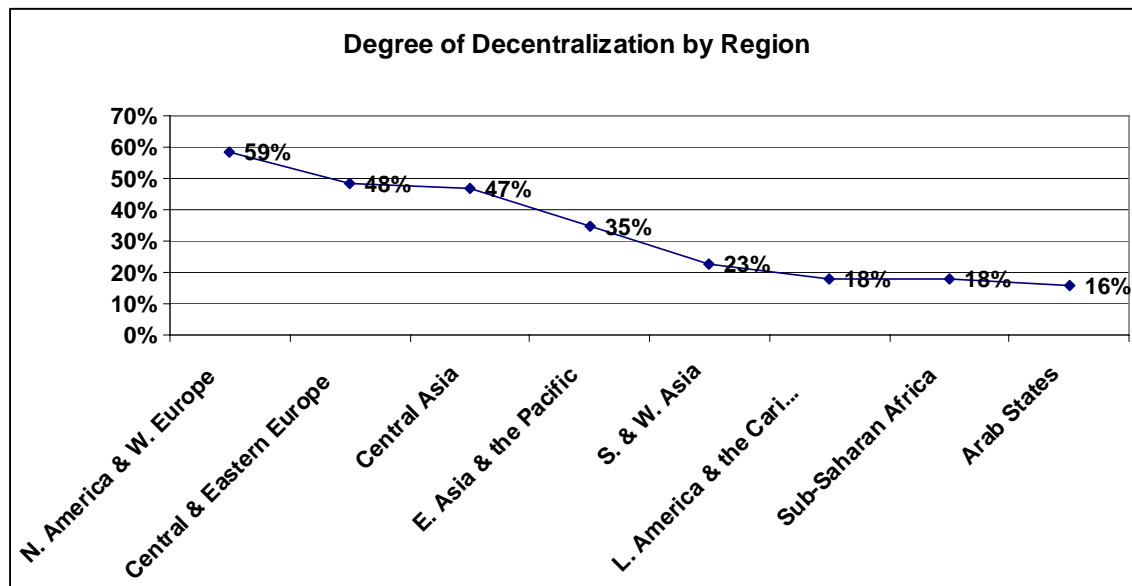
Table 6



(GMR 2009 Global and Regional Patterns in Education Decision-making Annex)

Moreover, Table 7 indicates that education functions are most highly decentralized in North America, in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, and in Central Asia. Conversely, education remains the most centralized in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States, the regions with the lowest gender-specific EFA index (GEI) rankings.

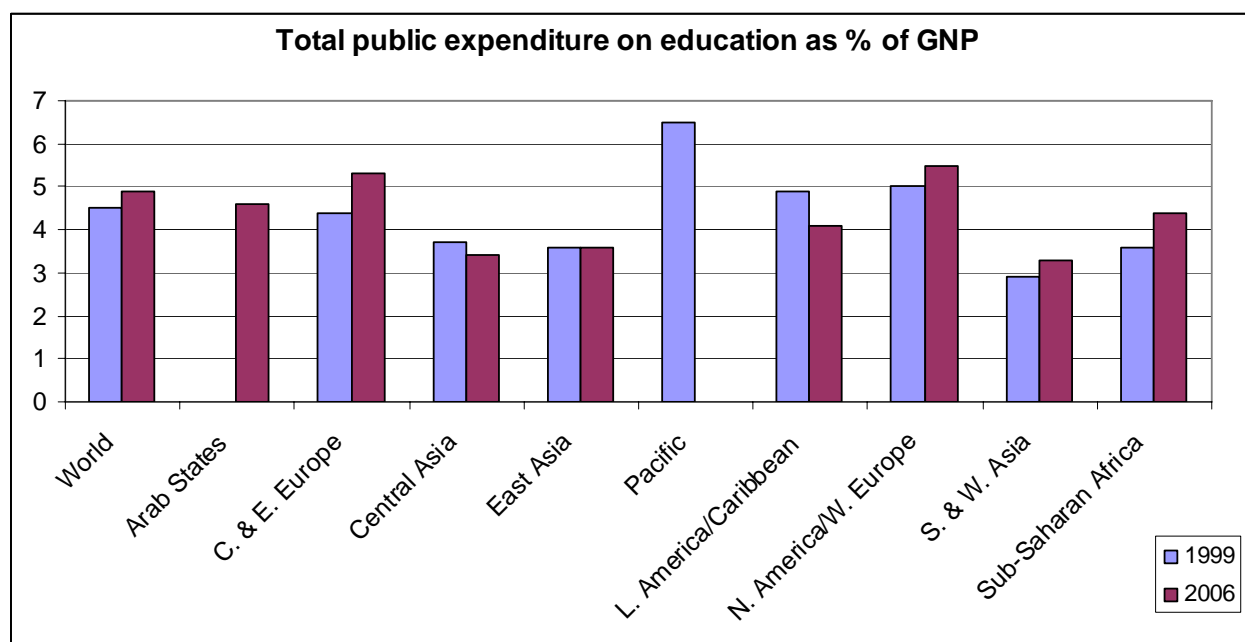
Table 7



(GMR 2009 Global and Regional Patterns in Education Decision-making Annex)

However, the GMR admits that decentralization has not always worked well, especially where financial burdens have been shifted to local communities. ‘First World’ solutions, such as more competition, voice and choice are also promoted, despite several caveats regarding their effectiveness, and despite the human rights language employed in the GMR. Moreover, decentralization is not a panacea and does not automatically result in women’s empowerment. As patriarchal structures and discourses permeate all levels of society through culture, they must be dismantled before decentralization can result in any meaningful and long-lasting change for women.

It is also noted that greater levels of financing may not necessarily improve educational access or equity. However, most countries are spending more on education. As Table 8 suggests, the total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP has increased or remained constant in all regions, with the exception of Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Table 8

(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Table 11)

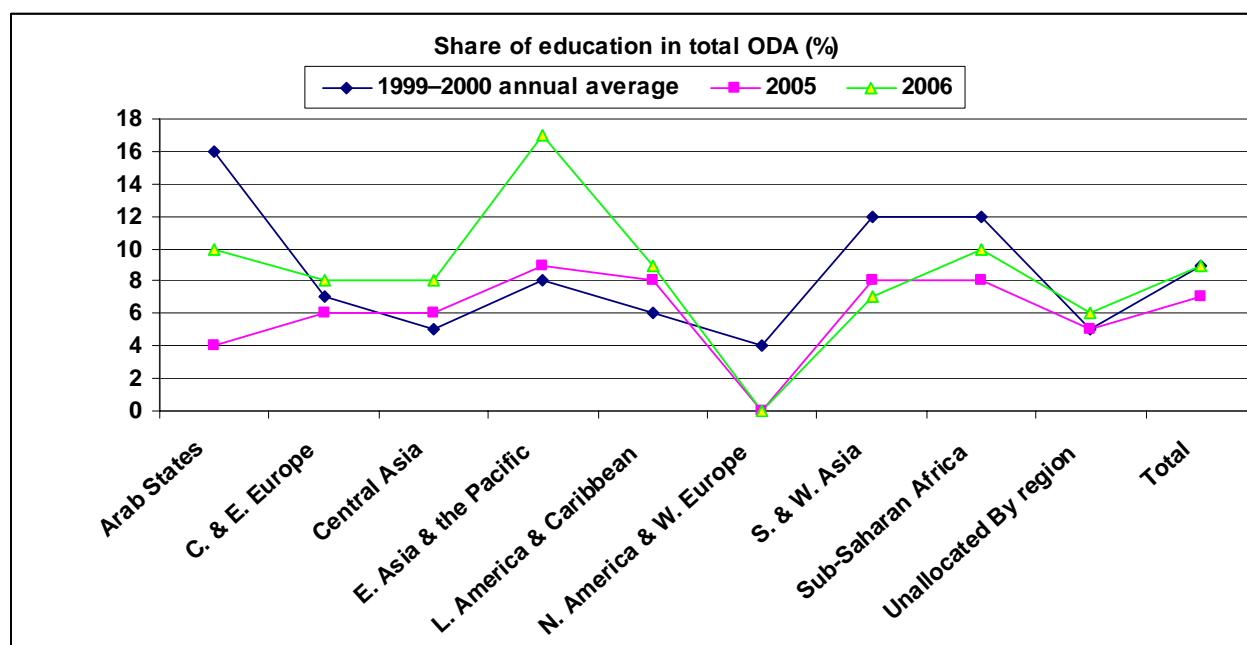
On the other hand, India and Pakistan, which are high-population countries, are spending less per pupil. The report notes that global wealth inequalities are reflected in global spending on education; inequalities may be reinforced, especially through decentralization, which the GMR continues to recommend.

A further set of important points regarding global challenges to EFA is made concerning the acquisition and use of information. More and better information is now available to education policy makers and planners, but few examples exist of policy shifts as a result of evidence from information generated in a variety of arenas. It is also unclear that the capacity exists to use more and better information.

Recommendations from the GMR include “getting serious” about equity, as well as strengthening links between education and poverty reduction. How to persuade governments to address inequities more seriously is again well beyond the remit of the education sector working on its own. Countries that are struggling with vast gaps between the rich and the poor (e.g., India) – which can lead to consequences for their health and social indicators – need deep structural changes before poverty and inequity can be seriously addressed. The GMR requires donors to deliver on their aid commitments if targets are to be approached, let alone met.

As Table 9 indicates, the share of education in total Official development assistance (ODA) has remained relatively flat since 1999. However, the distribution of aid to education has shifted by region. In East Asia and the Pacific, the share of education in ODA has increased significantly, whereas it has decreased significantly in the Arab States and South and West Asia during the same period. The distribution of aid to education has shifted only marginally in the other regions, while North America and Western Europe no longer receive any ODA.

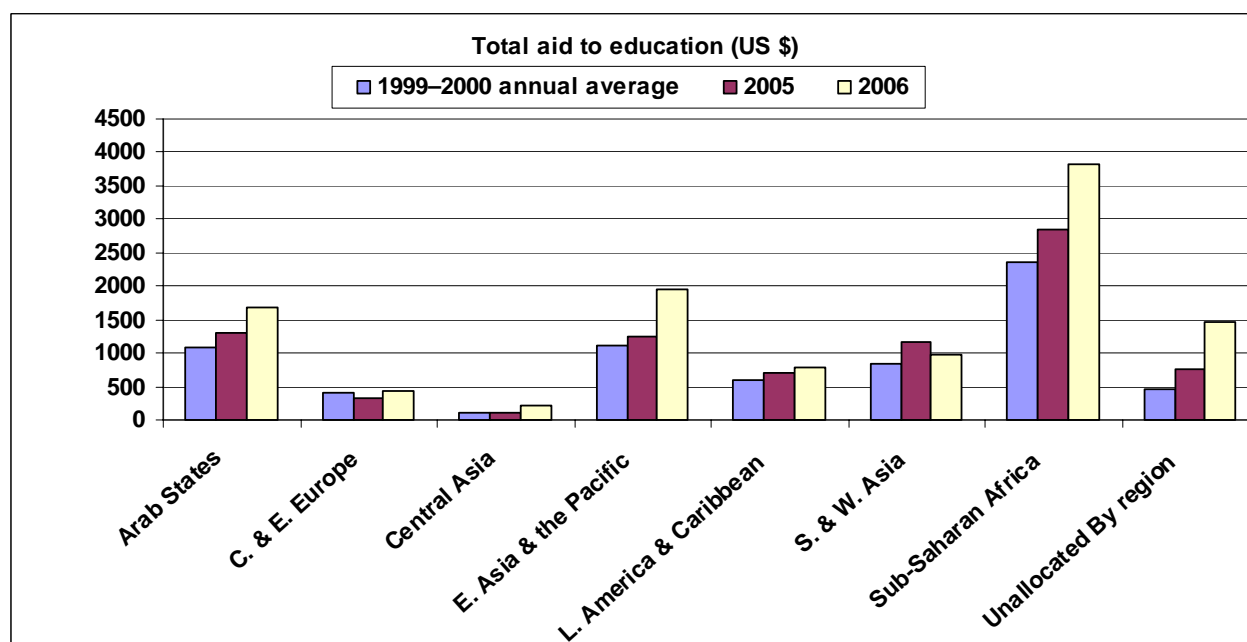
Table 9



(GMR 2009 Aid Tables Annex: Table 4)

On the other hand, Table 10 illustrates how total aid to education has increased from 1999 to 2006, with sub-Saharan Africa being the largest recipient of aid.

Table 10



(GMR 2009 Aid Tables Annex: Table 4)

Living up to the promises made could add further impetus to “getting serious” about equity, but as far as education systems are concerned, there is a need to focus more sharply on what is achievable within

systems, e.g., greater voice for communities (especially women), more effective teachers' unions and more participatory policy formulation.

Overall, the analysis of global challenges is not particularly focused on transforming gender relations, which requires addressing structural barriers rooted in countries' political, economic and socio-cultural institutions. It assumes a top-down model (get the governance right and everything else will follow), and pays very little attention to civil society or even families. Yet, in the equity analysis, it is noted that the provision of incentives to families (stipends, abolition of fees, etc.) results in higher levels of enrolment and completion. There are sufficient clues as to what works under what circumstances.

It should also be mentioned that the GMR is weak on qualitative data and that future reports should attempt to remedy this. The section on school management and school development plans is noticeably weak, particularly because it draws examples largely from the rich world. Interesting examples could have been drawn from Bangladesh and Zanzibar, but the GMR instead relies on familiar examples and lack the capacity to seek data from further afield. Moreover, most quantitative data provided are not gender disaggregated in the 'Statistical tables', 'Global and regional patterns in education decision-making' and 'Aid tables' annexes.

3.2. Placing equity at the core of governance reform

3.2.1. The findings

Equity gets considerable attention in the 2009 GMR. It is noted that good ECCE has a strong track record in reducing inequalities, although significant differences remain in child health and mortality rates between rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor communities. Education is a major factor in redressing such imbalances. In the meantime, 12 per cent of primary school-aged children worldwide – or 29 million – remain out of school. In sub-Saharan Africa, close to one third of all children are out of school, despite progress in enrolments. In addition, too many children remain locked into patterns of dropout and repetition. There is a need to focus more specifically on equity issues: Children from poor families account for 30 per cent to 40 per cent of non-attendees. Ethnicity, language, poverty, gender, child labour and home location are key factors in exclusion from school.

At the secondary level, increased participation is evident, but there are large regional disparities. Transition economies have higher enrolments; sub-Saharan Africa has only 25 per cent of the group enrolled. Tertiary enrolments also show great disparities, with 5 per cent enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa and 32 per cent in the Latin American region.

A major backlog of unmet needs remains in lifelong learning and literacy; policy makers insufficiently focus on these areas. In addition, the Dakar Framework goals are unclear. Overall, increased enrolment figures in many countries have masked quality concerns. Large differences in test scores tend to reflect inequalities in socio-economic status, family status, home language and access to ECCE.

3.2.2. Discussion and matters arising

The discussion of equity incorporates gender. Inequities are not confined to girls and women, but it is probably helpful to consider the gender question within the broader framework. Key issues identified in the GMR include:

- Improvements in gender parity in many countries, with sub-Saharan Africa still far behind.
- Initial access to school as a significant factor in girls' enrolment and completion rates.
- Low-attendance countries show poor female enrolment patterns.
- Poorer girls are less likely to be schooled.
- The need for more female teachers.

- The effectiveness of incentive schemes.
- The need for political will to change the gender perspective and overcome cultural barriers to girls' education.

These issues do not represent a new agenda. Most of them were incorporated into UNGEI's analysis in 2007–2008. Although it is not expected that great progress could be made in one year, it is disappointing that the GMR analysis has not been more influenced by gender concerns. The challenges to EFA are still not sufficiently viewed through the gender lens. Moreover, the central themes of 'Global and regional patterns in education decision-making' and 'Aid to education' are inappropriately viewed as 'gender neutral' in the annex.

3.3. Financing Education for All: Respecting the compact

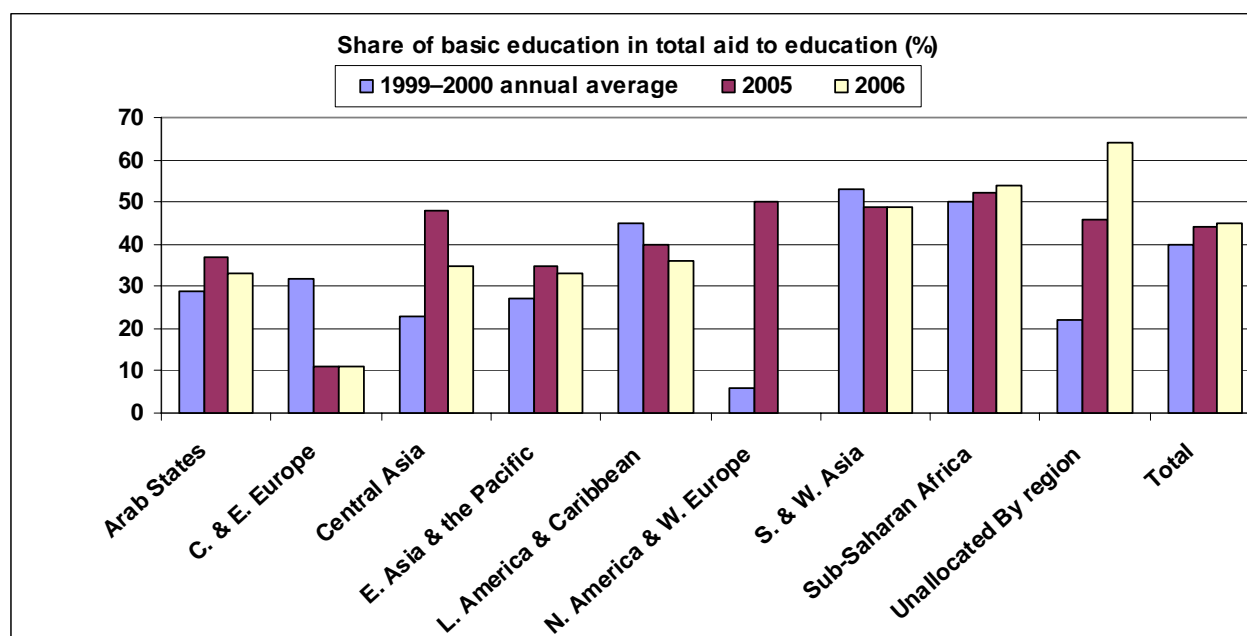
3.3.1. The findings

Countries vary enormously in their financial capacity for education, although most have increased their share of national income devoted to education since 1999. India and Pakistan have stagnated at a figure around or below 3 per cent of GNP each. South and West Asian countries tend to spend less public money on schooling. Generally, inequalities in spending reflect global inequalities – poor countries tend to spend less – but efficient use of funding is a further important issue. Pro-poor spending is still uncommon, and public expenditure on education has the potential to reinforce inequity rather than redress it.

Some governments have promoted school grants and other forms of focused financing, but have achieved mixed results. Decentralization may widen gaps between richer and poorer regions in a country, and clear rules are needed to ensure that the poorest areas do not fall behind. Locally raised revenue may create greater inequalities, as has occurred in China, Indonesia and the Philippines. Nigeria represents another case where the decentralization of education financing has penalized poorer states. In contrast, South Africa, Uganda and Viet Nam have developed more equitable systems of locally-based financing in support of national goals.

Turning to the development aid dimension, the GMR notes that, in general, donors are not delivering on their commitments as far as finance is concerned. As indicated earlier, there is a financing gap of some US\$7 billion if the fairly limited goals for basic education are to be met. As Table 11 indicates, of the total aid to education, there has been no major shift in the allocation of aid to basic education. The only region where the share of basic education in the total aid to education has dropped significantly is Central and Eastern Europe.

Table 11



(Aid Tables Annex: Table 4)

Broadly speaking, aid to education does work better than in most sectors, especially where it helps with the abolition of school fees or provides stipends and scholarships for girls. Unfortunately, aid commitments – such as those of the G8 countries – have not been fully delivered,³ with the figures for 2005–2006 below those for 2003–2004. As noted above, contributions to the Fast Track Initiative may leave countries short of about US\$1.1 billion for EFA. Despite repeated assurances from the G8 and other powerful bodies, aid flows are not sufficiently robust at present, nor are the processes required for donor harmonization and the alignment of practice.

Gender, for example, is often interpreted in different ways by different donor agencies. Some donors interpret gender from a human capital perspective and view women's empowerment as a means to achieving economic growth. In this case, it is likely that funding will be allocated to initiatives focusing on women's practical gender needs (e.g., literacy education). Conversely, other donors may interpret gender from a human development or human rights perspective and prioritize women's strategic gender needs (e.g., life skills education). In this way, aid is often allocated in uncoordinated ways to education initiatives with competing gender priorities. This results in a lack of coordinated service delivery and development efforts that may not effectively address the needs and interests of girls and women.

Once again, the GMR emphasizes governance as the obverse of the aid question. Only where governments use aid money wisely and effectively can development assistance deliver real results. For example, the annex indicates that the total aid to education (1999–2006) and gender parity in education (1999–2006) are not correlated. In other words, an increase in aid has not resulted in an increase in gender parity at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. However, an increase in total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP appears to be positively correlated (0.5) with gender parity in primary education, while there is no correlation with gender parity in early childhood and secondary education. This suggests that simply increasing aid to and government expenditure on

³ The GMR for 2009 was prepared before the full effects of the current global financial crisis were understood; some countries have indicated that they will not reduce development aid, but the longer-term financial picture remains unclear as of November 2008.

education are not enough to have a major effect on gender parity in education. Rather, spending that is planned and specifically targeted to benefit girls and women is needed to increase gender parity.

Programme-based assistance has largely replaced projects, and more than half of aid to education is now delivered through sector-wide approaches (SWAs). However, the use of national systems remains limited and, in 2007, the 54 countries surveyed received more than 14,000 donor missions, of which only one fifth were coordinated. Transaction costs thus remain high for many governments. Donors point to corruption and weak system capacity as barriers to trusting national systems; recipients still complain about demanding and unrealistic donor reporting systems. Improved national management systems, greater sectoral coherence and better monitoring of donor activities can benefit donor-financing activities. Flexible approaches will be essential, as will the avoidance of using finance to influence change.

3.3.2. Discussion and matters arising

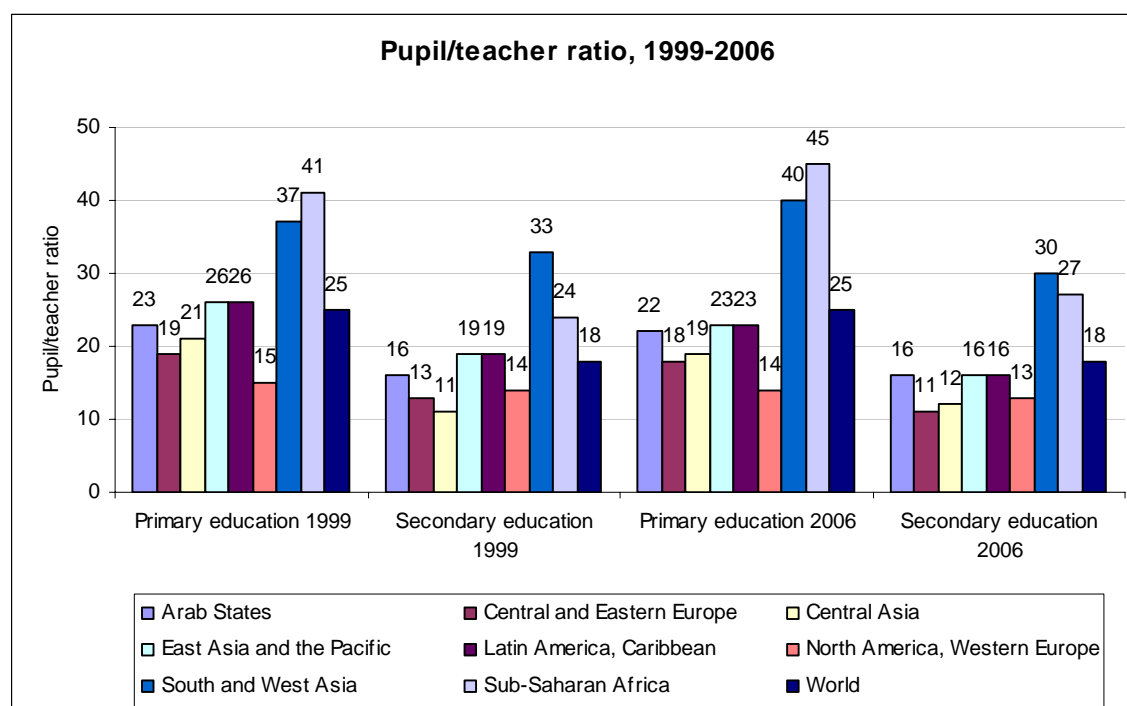
The GMR discussion of the financing of education is weak in gender analysis, despite UNGEI's recommendations from last year concerning the need for more gendered budgeting. The report notes that most countries finance the bulk of their own education provision (86 per cent of finance for basic education in sub-Saharan Africa), but there are still a few low spenders. The use of the money available is, in fact, the crucial factor, and wrongly targeted funding can actually reinforce inequalities.

Decentralization is identified as a problematic issue within educational financing, especially where burdens are shifted from central to local governments and communities. Development aid is seen as a disappointing story in which countries need to renew their pledges despite the current crises. The rise of sectoral programmes is noted as an improvement on other modalities, but the accompanying reduction in technical expertise within the donor community and the rise of the generalist in development aid must be deplored. The weaknesses of instruments like the Fast Track Initiative are noted, but no new modalities are recommended, simply a call for fulfilling existing commitments within a more efficient environment.

3.4. Addressing the EFA teacher gap

3.4.1. The findings

Impressive net enrolment gains are recorded in the GMR, but serious questions of quality are also raised, and teachers and the teaching service are included in the analysis. School factors, such as the physical condition of buildings, instructional time, availability of materials and the acute shortage of teachers (18 million needed by 2015) are identified as critical issues in the pursuit of quality. Pupil/teacher ratios are noted as being misleading, with great variations among and within countries. As can be seen in Table 12, it is evident that there is a teacher shortage in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia. This is particularly acute at the primary level.

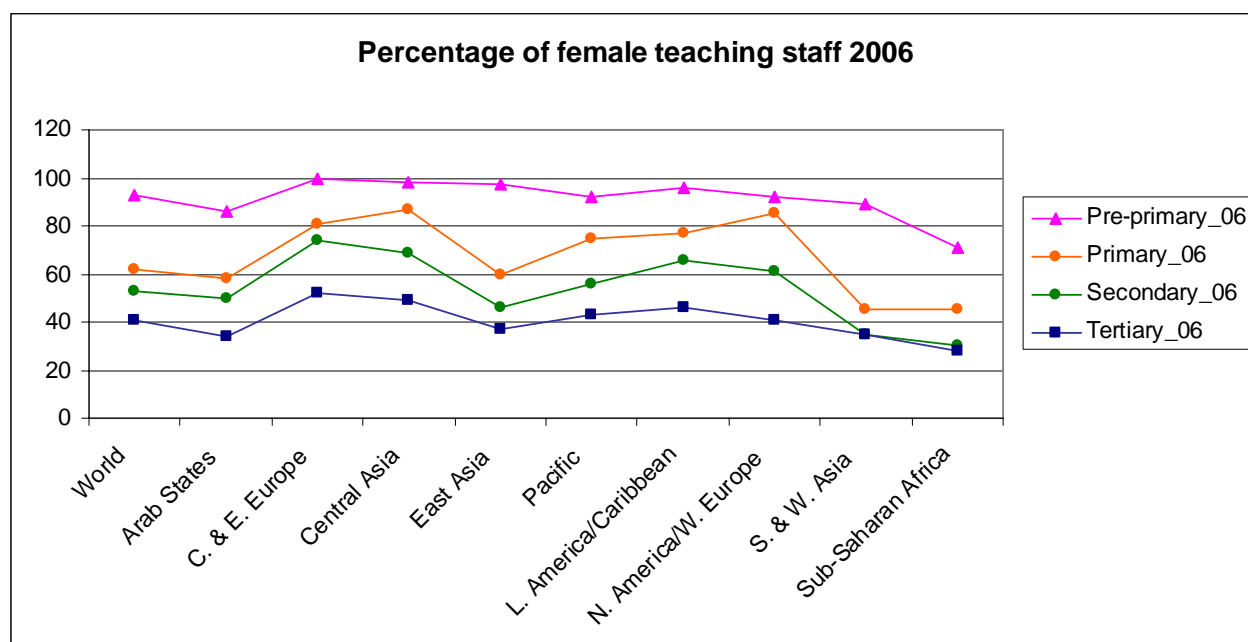
Table 12

(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Tables 10A, 10B)

Teacher absenteeism is a common problem: Low motivation and poor morale are causal factors, arising from poor salaries and conditions. Teachers generally get little support in their work, although the GMR notes that the quality of the teacher heavily influences the quality of learning. Despite a rise in 'high-stakes' testing, more countries are using contract teachers and are struggling to achieve quality in the teaching force.

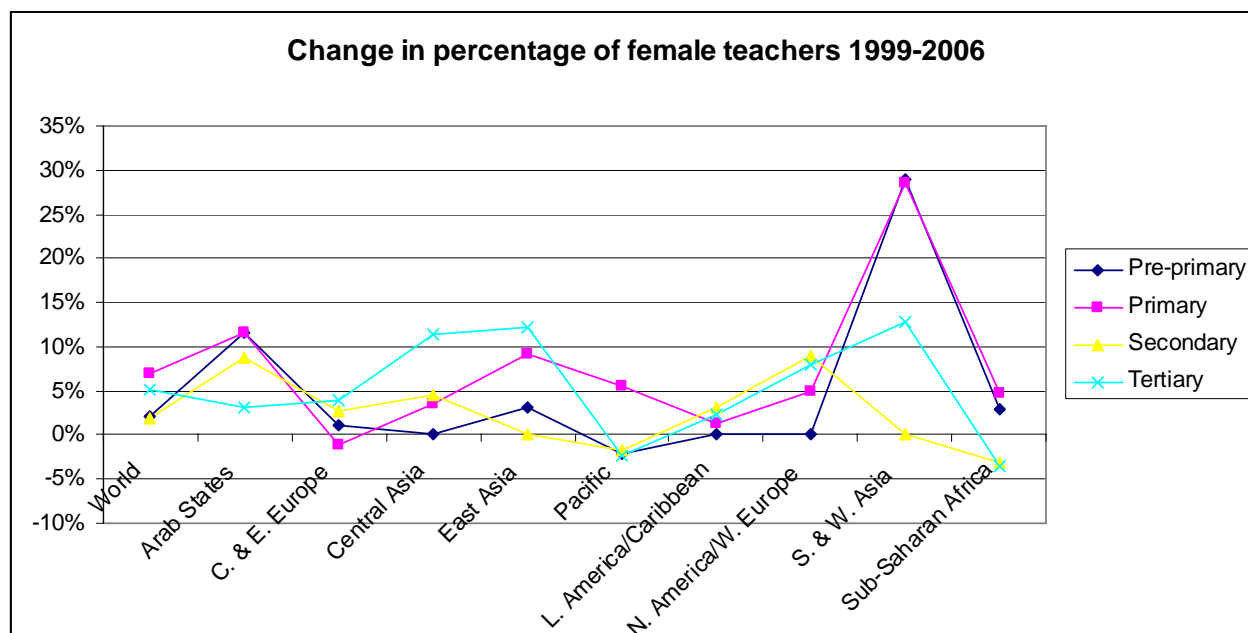
3.4.2. Discussion

The gender dimension does not figure strongly in this section of the GMR. Throughout the report, various references are made to the importance of female teachers as role models and as part of the environment, which will help to attract and retain girls in school. Table 13 illustrates that the vast majority of pre-primary and primary teachers are female. There is more gender parity, however, in relation to secondary education teachers, and the majority of tertiary education teachers are male, particularly in the Arab States, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 13

(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Tables 10A, 10B)

Table 14 shows that, between 1999 and 2006, there was an increase in the number of female teachers in most regions of the world. The largest increase during this period was in female pre-primary and primary teachers in South and West Asia. However, the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa saw a slight decrease in the number of female secondary and tertiary teachers.

Table 14

(GMR 2009 Statistical Tables Annex: Tables 10A, 10B)

The 'feminine' nature of the staffing of ECCE and the early grades in basic education are noted.

No new strategies are suggested for getting more female teachers or ensuring that the school programme is fair to girls as well as boys. Gender does not figure in the foreground of the discussion on the teacher gap.

4. Conclusions

4.1. What broad conclusions may be drawn from the GMR?

The broad findings of the 2008 GMR are that the role of education in building support for democracy – as well as education being a human right – are principles worth emphasizing. It is also underlined that EFA goals remain attainable but that several key targets will not be met by 2015. Gender disaggregation is not very evident throughout the report or the annex, and there is a need for greater emphasis on equity in all its forms. Gender equality is noted as being harder to measure than parity; this is perhaps a plea for more qualitative data to be added to future GMRs. Within school systems, the completion rate is still a problem for too many children, and low mastery of the curriculum is common. Banalities are still evident in the report, e.g., “The state of a nation’s schools can have an important bearing on prospects for success in education” (p. 13). What is meant is that the physical facilities within which schooling takes place have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Governance and reform of decision-making are identified as key factors in the push for EFA. Most of the discussion and reporting is predicated on these issues, which may or may not be the dominant factors in getting everyone into a good quality school for the duration of the recommended programme. The quality of governance is a powerful facilitating factor, but not necessarily the most significant one, nor one which the EFA movement can do much to change.

It is essential that future GMRs focus more sharply on what the education sector can do despite broader constraints, such as excessive bureaucracy or political unwillingness to delegate control beyond the centre. There are plenty of strategies possible within the school, district and province that could improve governance in the sense of ‘doing things right’, as well as in the sense of ‘doing the right things’. The GMR should identify good practice in terms of, say, teacher deployment or local interpretation of the curriculum, and promote these within the sector, rather than focus on the more general problems of inefficiency or corruption. These issues need to be identified and attention should be drawn to them, but the equally important role of the GMR is to identify what can be managed better within education systems so that global challenges, equity, financial constraints and teacher gaps can be addressed more effectively.

4.2. Has the GMR fully addressed gender concerns?

“The case for gender equality in education is important in its own right,” the GMR states (p. 7). The issue of gender, however, does not come through the report as a salient or dominant one. More emphasis is given to the management and financing of education. The headline messages continue to emphasize quantitative progress so far, as well as the shortfalls, persistence of inequalities and power of good governance to change things. For example, the summary of the GMR hardly mentions women and girls apart from the section on gender equity. In a few cases, the same statistic is repeated (55 per cent of out-of-school children are girls). It has to be firmly stated that the GMR still does not present a strong position regarding gender and inequity.

From the list of concerns put forward by UNGEI in 2007, many areas remain comparatively neglected. The “favourable conditions” that must be developed to encourage girls to enter and stay in school are not flagged as policy priorities, although sporadic mention is made of incentives and scholarships for girls. The place of women and girls in fragile states receives little attention, and there is a significant gap in the GMR’s treatment of communities and their role in educating young people – girls in particular. Inclusion

as a key approach is perhaps reflected in the report's focus on equity and equality, but gender remains insufficiently emphasized.

The role of civil society and the adjustment of the content of education to cover life skills and women's literacy are other areas that need further attention. UNGEI recommended dedicated and predictable funding to address the needs of all marginalized and excluded groups, especially in fragile states. These issues still demand urgent attention.

4.3. Key messages to be emphasized for the Working Group and the High Level Group

In summarizing the significant gender issues still to be addressed adequately in the GMR, UNGEI proposes the following:

4.3.1. In times of global crises, e.g., financial collapse, food and fuel shortages, and climate change, women and girls are affected disproportionately. Investment in girls' education is key to mitigating the effects of such crises for all and accelerating progress toward the EFA goals and the MDGs. Therefore:

- Donors should prioritize and increase aid, investing in education in support of national policies.
- National governments should prioritize and protect investment in girls' education and initiate or scale up specific educational and social policy measures to mitigate the effects of global crises on women and girls.

4.3.2. Effective governance must be driven by a gender perspective. Experience has shown that policies to increase resources (both human and financial) to tackle issues of inequality must be matched by policies to strengthen more equitable national and local governance. Such strategies as greater community engagement, school-based management and empowerment of women as well as men have been shown to ensure greater accountability of resources. Without gender-sensitive governance, disparities will be exacerbated.

4.3.3. As increasing numbers of households are pushed into poverty, educational participation and outcomes for girls will be the first to suffer. To ensure equality in education, public spending for education must increase. Failing to invest in education will have a significant impact on economic development and social equity, especially for women and girls. To ensure effectiveness of public expenditure in education, gender equality must be an integral part of public sector programmes, policy and practice. This will result in decreased repetition/dropout, increased completion and learning achievement, and overall system efficiency with an impact on broader development goals.

4.3.4. To address the teacher gap, it is recommended that governments be supported to adopt a gendered approach to the teaching profession by:

- Increasing the number of trained women teachers and emphasizing the nurturing and caring components of teaching to retain both boys and girls in school.
- Instituting more gendered approaches to budgeting in order to enhance the development of the teaching force, including targeting female recruitment, training, deployment and retention.
- Implementing more coherent national and regional visions and policies to ensure greater equality in the teaching force and support institutions responsible for quality assurance, teacher education and professional development.

The challenge is to ensure that these concerns are reflected in the 2009–2010 GMR.

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