

Chapter 3

Education and training

“Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.”

Beijing Platform for Action

The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 recognized that “investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth”, and through the Beijing Platform for Action, called on Governments to ensure equal access to education and to eradicate illiteracy among women.¹ Through the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 Governments reiterated their commitment to achieve universal primary education (Goal 2) and to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education by 2015 (Goal 3, Target 4). To assess progress towards the attainment of those strategic objectives and goals, women’s and girls’ access to education and educational outcomes must be monitored through the collection, analysis and dissemination of data.

The statistical data reviewed in the present chapter address some of the strategic objectives on education formulated in the Beijing Platform for Action, including the following: to ensure equal access to education; to eradicate illiteracy among women; to improve women’s access to vocational training, science and technology; and the Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3, as stated above.

The capacity of countries to monitor progress towards gender equality in education is assessed below with regard to both access to and outcomes of the educational process, using the following statistics (see box 3.1 for definitions):

Access to educational services

- Enrolment by level of education, sex and age
- School attendance by sex and age
- Number of teachers by sex

Outcomes of education experience

- Literacy by sex and age
- Educational attainment by sex and age

National statistical information on access to educational services and their outcomes are collected through (a) school administrative records gathered annually by the school systems and reported to ministries of education; (b) population and housing censuses; and (c) national household or other sample surveys. At the international level, national data on school enrolment and teachers as well as on literacy and educational attainment are reported to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). National census data on school attendance, literacy and educational attainment are reported to the United Nations Statistics Division. Country reporting to international organizations is an indication of national capacity to disseminate education information in a regular and timely way.

Since 1995 most countries or areas have reported the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary school at least once, but only less than a quarter have reported school attendance. Also, fewer than half have reported statistics on literacy and educational attainment from censuses.

Current state of statistics

1995-2003

Access to educational services

It is widely believed that millions of young girls never attend school and millions more never complete their education. According to the Beijing Platform for Action, “discrimination in girls’ access to education persists in many areas, owing to customary attitudes, early marriages and pregnancies, inadequate and gender-biased teaching and educational materials, sexual harassment and lack of adequate and physically and otherwise accessible schooling facilities”.² In order to assess the continuing validity of these statements and devise appropriate policies, data are needed on enrolment, school attendance and school completion, combined with other information such as the number and qualifications of teachers and the availability of teaching materials.

Women’s and girls’ access to education and educational outcomes must be monitored through the collection, analysis and dissemination of data

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Fewer than half of the countries have reported statistics on literacy and educational attainment from censuses

Box 3.1

Definitions

Enrolment refers to the number of pupils or students officially enrolled or registered in a given grade or level of education, regardless of age. Typically, these data are collected at the beginning of the academic year.

School attendance is defined as attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or programme, public or private, for organized learning at any level of education.

Technical and vocational education refers to a type of programme that is designed mainly to lead pupils to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade (or class of occupations or trades). Successful completion of such programmes normally leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification recognized by the competent authorities (e.g. Ministry of Education, employers' associations, etc.) in the country in which it is obtained.

Teaching staff (teachers) are persons employed full-time or part-time in an official capacity for the purpose of guiding or directing the learning experience of pupils

and students, irrespective of his/her qualification or the delivery mechanism (i.e. whether face-to-face and/or at a distance). It excludes educational personnel who have no active teaching duties (such as headmasters, headmistresses or principals who do not teach) or who work occasionally or in a voluntary capacity in educational institutions.

A literate person is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life.

An illiterate person is one who cannot, with understanding, both read and write such a simple statement.

Educational attainment is defined as the highest grade completed within the most advanced level attended in the educational system of the country where the education was received.

Sources:

Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, rev. 1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8), paras. 2.145, 2.150 and 2.153; and definitions provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Enrolment

Administrative records from the formal education system provide a major source of information on access to education, particularly on official enrolment levels, and are essential for planning the education process in terms of human and economic resources. Enrolment data by level of education and sex are needed to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals of achieving universal primary education (Goal 2) and promoting gender equality (Goal 3).

The present chapter considers data on enrolment from six academic years: 1995/1996, 1996/1997 and 1998/1999 to 2001/2002. The academic year 1997/1998 was excluded owing to a lack of data disseminated by UNESCO following changes in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)³ system in 1997 and other institutional issues. Data for the years 2002/2003 to 2004/2005 were not yet available at the time when the present analysis was conducted.⁴ Countries or areas were considered as being able to report

the number of students enrolled unless the data provided were deemed by UNESCO to be incomplete, inconsistent or to require an adjustment. Because the primary objective of the present analysis is to examine the capacity of Governments to report quality data, estimates and data adjustments by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) are not included in the analysis.⁵

In general, there was a high level of reporting of enrolment data to the international statistical system, with most of the 204 countries or areas reporting the number of children enrolled in both primary and secondary⁶ education at least once for the six academic years considered (chart 3.1). Relatively fewer countries or areas reported the number of students in tertiary education.⁷

Most of the countries or areas reporting enrolment data also provided data broken down by sex. Of the total reporting, only 2 did not provide this breakdown for primary education, 3 for secondary education and 12 for tertiary education. In most cases, however, enrolment data by sex was missing for

Most countries reporting enrolment data also provided data broken down by sex

Chart 3.1

Number of countries or areas that reported enrolment data, by level of education, for the academic years 1995/1996 – 2001/2002^a

	Primary	Secondary		Tertiary	
		Total	Vocational	Total	By field
All countries or areas	204	204	204	204	204
Enrolment					
Total, at least once	189	185	163	166	127
By sex, at least once	187	182	157	154	118
Total, at least three years	160	151	112	116	63
By sex, at least three years	155	143	104	104	62

Source:

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (November 2004).

^a The academic year 1997/1998 was excluded from analysis owing to a lack of data.

the analysed time period because countries did not report any data on enrolment at all: 15 did not report in the case of primary education, 19 in secondary education and 38 in tertiary education. It is important to note, however, that of the 38 countries or areas not reporting any data on enrolment in tertiary education, 11 do not provide tertiary education within their territories.⁸

In addition, not all the countries or areas reporting enrolment were able to do so frequently (i.e. for at least three out of the six academic years considered) and thus provide timely data necessary for evidence-based policies. Of a total of 204 countries or areas, 155 frequently reported the number of students by sex for primary education, 143 for secondary education and 104 for tertiary education. The population of the concerned countries or areas represents 92, 85 and 59 per cent of the world population respectively. Data for higher instruction seems to have been less systematically collected, processed and disseminated as compared with secondary and primary education.

Analysis by geographic region revealed that most of the countries in each region were able to provide, at least once, enrolment data by sex for primary and secondary education (table 3.A). However, a smaller proportion of countries from Africa, North America and Oceania were able to report enrolment data by sex frequently compared to countries from other geographic regions. In addition, a smaller proportion of the countries from the less developed regions including the least developed countries, were able to provide data frequently compared to countries from more developed regions (table 3.A).

Besides the need for enrolment data to be disaggregated by sex and level of education, monitoring progress towards achieving universal primary education requires that statistics on enrolment be further disaggregated by age of the student or pupil. Available data covering the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002, shows that while most countries reported the number of girls and of boys in primary education at least once in the four academic years covered, far fewer (138 countries or areas comprising 61 per cent of the world's population) provided enrolment data by sex and age for primary education at least once (chart 3.2 and table 3.B). For secondary education, less than half the world's countries or areas (101) comprising only 30 per cent of its population reported this data by age and sex at least once (table 3.A).

Data for higher instruction seems to have been less systematically collected, processed and disseminated as compared with secondary and primary education

Chart 3.2

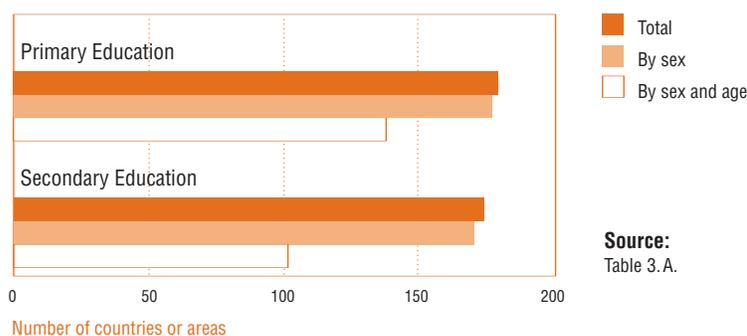
Number of countries or areas that reported enrolment data at least once, by level of education, for the academic years 1998/1999 – 2001/2002
**Source:**

Table 3.A.

Striking regional disparities were apparent in the reporting of enrolment data by sex and age

Striking regional disparities were also apparent in the reporting of enrolment data by sex and age. The region with the lowest proportion of countries reporting such data was Oceania, where, out of 17 countries, only 6 reported enrolment data broken down by sex and age for primary education and 5 for secondary education. Africa also showed relatively low levels of reporting with 39 out of 55 countries or areas reporting data on enrolment in primary education by sex and age and with 18 providing similar information for secondary education (table 3.A).

Finally, a special issue highlighted by the Beijing Platform for Action with respect to women's education concerns their access to technical vocational programmes and to fields of study that are traditionally male-dominated. Specifically, the Platform for Action called for improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology to help improve their employment opportunities.⁹ This requires further breakdown of enrolment data by field of study, which fewer countries were able to provide (chart 3.1). Data for the six academic years showed that 104 countries or areas frequently provided the numbers of female and of male students enrolled in technical vocational programmes,¹⁰ while only 62 countries or areas frequently provided the number of tertiary students by sex and field of study.

School attendance

Apart from school administrative records, another way to measure access to education—to know whether girls and boys are in school—is through the use of school attendance questions in population censuses and household surveys. School administrative data typically provide information for only those children who have officially enrolled in school and often provide limited information about children who are enrolled but who are not attending school. School attendance questions from censuses and surveys can fill in that gap by providing information on both school-age children who are participating in education and those who are not.

Moreover, data on school attendance combined with other basic information collected at the same time in a census or survey can give a picture of family and household factors that contribute to gender inequality in access to schooling. Surveys can be particularly useful in examining the factors that limit access to education, as they can accommodate more detailed questions on educational services and outcomes. Box 3.2 highlights some of the advantages and limitations of using household surveys to measure school attendance.

Box 3.2

Household surveys and school attendance

An important feature of household surveys is that they can provide detailed information on the characteristics of school-age children who are not participating in education, their families and the households they belong to. Such data is necessary to examine the factors underlying inequality in school participation. There are often sizeable differences in educational participation depending on the population subgroup. In Guinea, for example, children who live in rural areas or in households that score low on the household asset index, as well as those who have a mother with no education, are much less likely to report having attended school in the last year. Moreover, there are important interactions with residence, well-being and gender. One in eight girls from poor households attends school, compared to one in four boys from poor households.

This type of information is helpful in targeting national policy efforts, although it is important to appreciate that survey data may be weak in relation to severely disadvantaged groups since those groups are frequently underrepresented in household surveys. Poor coverage of such groups as migrants, refugees, the homeless, those in orphanages and other institutions or people from ethnic minorities may affect evaluations of the scope of a problem such as out-of-school children.

Inquiring about attendance at school is also not as straightforward as it might appear, and often surveys will produce markedly different estimates of attendance owing to differences in the methodology or in the survey timing in relation to the school year.

Source:

Global Education Digest 2003: Comparing Education Statistics across the World (Montreal, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2003).

Between 1995 and 2003, only 40 countries or areas representing a mere 14 per cent of the world's population reported census data on school attendance by sex and age (tables 3.A and 3B). Three additional countries reported census information on school attendance, but did not disaggregate the data by sex or age. Finally, one additional country provided school attendance data by sex, but did not break it down by age.

Important differences in the reporting of census data on school attendance by sex and age were evident among geographic regions and across development groups. Compared to other regions, a greater number of countries or areas from Europe (17 out of

Between 1995 and 2003, only 40 countries or areas representing a mere 14 per cent of the world's population reported census data on school attendance by sex and age

42) and Asia (11 out of 50) reported census data on school attendance broken down by sex and age. By contrast, in Oceania only one out of 17 countries or areas had, by 2003, reported school attendance data by sex and age from the census. In Africa, the figure was three out of 55 countries or areas (table 3.A).

In terms of development groups, greater reporting of census data on school attendance disaggregated by sex and age was apparent among countries in the more developed regions (19 out of 47) compared to countries in the less developed regions excluding the least developed countries, where only 18 out of 107 provided similar data. Reporting was lowest among the least developed countries where only 3 out of 50 countries or areas reported census data on school attendance by sex and age (table 3.A).

Although the worldwide availability of school attendance data by sex and age from censuses is low in general, similar information on this topic can be obtained from national household surveys. For example, data on school attendance by sex and age collected through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) or Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) is available for 74 of the 164 countries that did not report such information from censuses (see chapter 2, box 2.4 for a description of DHS and MICS). Considering school attendance data from those surveys brings the total number of countries with such data broken down by sex and age to 114.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys or Demographic and Health Surveys are a particularly important source of school attendance data in the least developed countries. Of the 50 least developed countries, 36 have data on school attendance disaggregated by sex and age through either MICS or DHS. This brings the total number of least

developed countries with such data from 3 to 39.

Teachers

The Beijing Platform for Action calls on Governments to “take actions to ensure that female teachers and professors have the same opportunities as and equal status with male teachers and professors”.¹¹ It also calls for the promotion of non-stereotyped images of women and men through education. In this respect, women teachers are important, serving as role models and helping to attract and retain girls in school. It is therefore important to monitor the prevalence of women teachers at all levels of education. The primary source of information on the number of teachers and proportion of women teachers is the administrative data collected by ministries of education for all three levels of education.¹²

As with the reporting of enrolment, more countries or areas were able to provide data on teachers in primary education than for higher levels of education. For the six academic years considered between 1995/1996 and 2001/2002, 176 countries or areas provided the total number of teachers in primary education at least once, compared to 149 countries or areas providing the number of teachers for tertiary education (chart 3.3).

The number of countries or areas reporting total number of teachers without breaking down the data by sex ranges from 8 for primary education to 23 for tertiary education. In a greater number of cases, data on numbers of female and male teachers is missing for the analysed time period because the countries or areas did not report any data at all: these range from 28 not reporting the number of teachers in primary education to 55 not reporting on tertiary education.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys or Demographic and Health Surveys are a particularly important source of school attendance data in the least developed countries

More countries or areas were able to provide data on teachers in primary education than for higher levels of education

Chart 3.3

Number of countries or areas that reported the number of teachers, by level of education, for the academic years 1995/1996 – 2001/2002^a

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
All countries or areas	204	204	204
Teachers			
Total, at least once	176	144	149
By sex, at least once	168	136	126
Total, at least three years	136	75	87
By sex, at least three years	119	64	60

Source:

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (November 2004).

^a The academic year 1997/1998 was excluded from analysis owing to a lack of data.

Particularly limited is the capacity of countries or areas to report teacher data frequently (chart 3.3). In general, of the countries that reported teacher data by level of education at least once, a much smaller number were able to provide such data frequently. That is the case especially for reports of teachers in secondary and tertiary education. Compared to 119 countries or areas that frequently reported the numbers of female and male teachers in primary education, only 64 and 60 countries or areas respectively provided this data frequently for secondary and tertiary education.

Education outcomes: literacy and educational attainment

Statistics on literacy and educational attainment by sex and age are reflections of the outcome of the educational process for each generation of women and men. Such information may be used to assess the quality of the labour force, to adjust the national school systems and to evaluate and reformulate policies on lifelong learning for women and men who are in or out of the school system.

According to the Beijing Platform for Action, more than two thirds of the world's 960 million illiterate adults in 1995 were women, and eradicating illiteracy is one of its strategic objectives. Moreover, the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", stated that little progress had been made in eradicating illiteracy and called for a 50 per cent improvement in the levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women. In order to assess whether a 50 per cent improvement in the levels has taken place, it is necessary to know past national levels of literacy and to monitor them on an ongoing basis.

It is important to note that not all the countries or areas that collected statistics on literacy and educational attainment in the 2000 census round have as yet reported them to the United Nations Statistics Division. So far, out of the 178 countries or areas that conducted a census, 77, comprising 64 per cent of the world's population, have reported literacy by sex and age. For educational attainment, only 71 countries or areas, comprising 48 per cent of the world population, have reported the data by sex and age (chart 3.4 and table 3.B). It is, however, expected that more data will come in from the 2000 round of censuses as time goes on.

As in the case of school attendance, comparable data on literacy and educational attainment by

sex and age is available from MICS and DHS for a number of countries that have not reported such data from censuses. For example, 38 countries or areas, comprising 14 per cent of the world population, have survey data on literacy by sex and age, while 60 countries or areas, comprising 38 per cent of the world population have survey data on educational attainment by sex and age. Taking into consideration the availability of literacy and educational attainment data from those surveys, the total number of countries with literacy data by sex and age is 115 and the total with educational attainment data by sex and age is 131 (chart 3.4).

Chart 3.4

Number of countries or areas for which data on literacy and educational attainment by sex and age are available, by source of data, 1995 – 2003

Source	Literacy	Educational attainment
Total	115	131
Population census	77	71
DHS or MICS	38 ^a	60 ^a

Source:

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004); data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (April 2005); data from the Demographic and Health Surveys website <http://www.measuredhs.com> (March 2005); and data from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys website <http://www.childinfo.org> (June 2005).

^a Considers only countries that did not report the data from censuses to the international statistical system for the period 1995-2003.

As is the case with other education statistics, there are notable differences between geographic regions in the reporting of census data on literacy and educational attainment (chart 3.5). The relative number of countries or areas reporting is highest in Europe and Asia and lowest in Africa and Oceania.

In Africa, 39 out of the 55 countries or areas conducted a census between 1995 and 2004, but so far only 14 have reported data by sex and age on literacy and 9 on educational attainment. Most of the existing data on literacy and educational attainment in this region is available from household and other sample surveys: for example, an additional 26 countries or areas in Africa have data by sex and age on literacy and 36 on educational attainment from MICS or DHS.

There are also differences in the reporting of data on literacy and educational attainment among development groups. Most countries in the more

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Chart 3.5

Number of countries or areas that conducted a census between 1995 and 2004 and reported data on literacy and educational attainment by sex and age from the censuses, by geographic region

	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania
All countries or areas	55	27	13	50	42	17
Conducted a census 1995-2004	39	26	11	44	41	17
Reported literacy	14	7	7	29	16	4
Reported educational attainment	9	6	3	24	25	4

Source:
Table 3.A.

developed regions do not regularly report data on literacy because it is considered virtually universal and thus the information is not collected in their censuses. Nonetheless, those countries report educational attainment data from censuses more than the countries in the less developed regions excluding the least developed countries (tables 3.A and 3.B). The reporting of literacy and educational attainment data from censuses is lowest among the least developed countries. Thirty-four out of the 50 in that group conducted a census between 1995 and 2004, but so far only 12 have reported data by sex and age on literacy and 8 on educational attainment. National household surveys have helped to improve the availability of data on literacy and educational attainment in the least developed countries. Of those that have not yet reported these data from censuses, 23 have data by sex and age on literacy and 30 on educational attainment through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys or Demographic and Health Surveys.

Progress in statistics 1975-2003

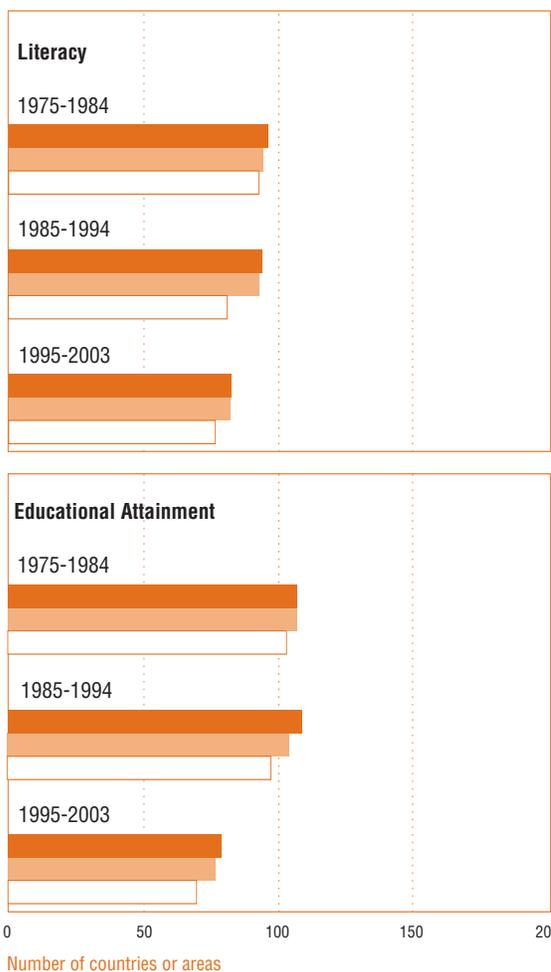
Due to recent changes in the compilation of school administrative data by UNESCO, it is not possible to examine progress over time in the reporting by Governments of statistics on enrolment. In the case of literacy and educational attainment data from censuses, national reporting has been, in some respects, similar in all three periods considered. Since 1975, most of the countries or areas providing census data on educational outcomes have been able to provide it by sex. Likewise, data by sex and age was provided by the majority of countries or areas (chart 3.6).

Although the number of countries or areas that have reported education data from the 2000 census round to the United Nations system is lower than in the previous periods (chart 3.6), that number is expected to increase. First, the countries or areas conducting the census in 2004 were not included in the analysis. Second, the time required

for processing detailed census tabulations reflects on the data reported for the period 1995 to 2003. For example, Mexico and Panama reported educational attainment by sex and age in the 1980 and the 1990

Chart 3.6

Number of countries or areas that reported data on literacy and educational attainment from censuses, for three periods



■ Total
■ By sex
□ By sex and age

Source:
Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004); and on data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates (April 2005).

census rounds but have so far reported only totals from their 2000 round. Jamaica and Malawi reported educational attainment by both sex and age in the 1980 and 1990 census rounds, but have so far reported only by sex from the 2000 round.

Challenges

Reporting and statistical capacity

Reporting reliable data on education by sex to the United Nations system is dependent both on statistical capacity and on the importance attributed to gender issues in education in a country. The present chapter shows that important gaps remain in the reporting of key education statistics needed for national planning and to monitor progress towards national and international goals including the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education (Goal 2) and gender equality and the empowerment of women (Goal 3).

Lack of reporting is greatest for education data from censuses, especially with regard to school attendance. Timeliness in the reporting of the data continues to be a problem for many countries in the less developed regions. The reporting of education data from school administrative records is much better. Nonetheless, important challenges remain in the reporting of official enrolment data and teacher data. For example, statistics on primary enrolment by sex and age are still not available for many countries, which limits the calculation of primary net enrolment ratio used to track progress towards attaining universal primary education. The capacity of countries to provide statistics on the sex distribution of teachers is also quite low, especially with respect to secondary and tertiary levels of education.

To effectively monitor the attainment of Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 and the education objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, efforts need to be directed towards improving the collection of official enrolment data at the national level. In particular, the following data needs to be routinely collected: enrolment data by level of education, sex and age; enrolment in secondary education by type of programme; and enrolment in tertiary education by field of study. Data on the number of teachers by sex at each level of education must also be routinely collected.

In addition, there are important coverage problems for data on enrolment and teachers. Students and teachers in private schools not dependent on the national budget, and in certain religious

schools or in flexible forms of education (such as evening school or distance learning programmes) are sometimes excluded from official counts. Efforts should, therefore, be directed at improving the coverage of education statistics to ensure that data include all relevant institutions and education programmes.

International comparability of education statistics

The statistics analysed in the present chapter cover the basic aspects of gender equality in education, and they have been reported to the international statistical system for decades. However, more needs to be done with respect to international comparability. Some countries do not classify educational programmes at the same International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels, and certain educational programmes cannot be easily classified within the ISCED system. Definitions—and consequently measurements—of literacy also vary from one country to another. Some countries use self-declaration or proxy measurements of literacy based on educational attainment instead of direct assessment. In contrast, countries where basic literacy is considered virtually universal are using a new concept that relates literacy to improved living conditions (see below). The commitment of Governments and international agencies is needed in order to generate common definitions and measurements.

New concepts regarding life skills

An increasing number of countries in more developed regions are applying a new concept to assess different levels of literacy skills: functional literacy. While basic literacy is the ability to read and write with understanding a simple statement related to one's daily life, functional literacy is the ability to use literacy for personal development and for the effective functioning of the group or community to which the person belongs.¹³ The use of the concept may be beneficial not only in the more developed regions but also in the less developed regions. Women play a key role in improving health, nutrition and education in the family; therefore their ability to seek, read and use information is essential. That ability also plays an important part in empowering women to participate actively and meaningfully in society.

It is necessary to collect data on functional literacy and on scientific and technological knowledge, including computer literacy. The latter is

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There are coverage problems for data on enrolment and teachers. Students and teachers in private schools and in certain religious schools or in flexible forms of education are sometimes excluded from official counts

required to assess the extent to which girls' and women's access to science and technology and information technology has improved, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Quality of education and non-formal education

Data are needed for other aspects of education that are mentioned in the Beijing Platform for Action. Compilation of data at the international level is particularly challenging for such topics as the quality of education and non-formal education. In terms of tracking educational achievement, only a few countries have a system of collecting data through standardized tests. Moreover, not all the elements concerning the quality of education can be easily quantified and transformed into statistics. For example, gender discrimination promoted by curricula and teaching materials or the gender awareness of educators needs to be assessed through more in-depth analysis.

A significant proportion of the world's women are already out of formal schooling, but they should still have the opportunity to acquire more knowledge, capacities and skills. Women with little or no education or women who are unemployed in particular should be able to attend educational and training programmes. Further information—potentially collected through censuses or surveys, but also through administrative records from the private and public sectors—is needed in order to assess women's access to non-formal education such as academic and life skills education offered by non-governmental organizations or vocational training offered by community or private sector groups.

Education for special groups

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that special support in access to education is needed for some subnational groups, including pregnant adolescents and young mothers, indigenous women and girls, rural and farming women, migrants, refugees, internally displaced women and women with disabilities. Disaggregation of data beyond sex and age are required in order to capture information for those groups. Education data for the subnational groups would show their actual access to and level of education and would support further programmes to meet their education needs. Although the information may currently be collected through censuses or surveys at the national level in some countries, reporting requirements at the international level have yet to be established.

In conclusion, reliable data are required to guide efforts to increase girls' and women's access to education at all levels, from expanding early childhood care and education to providing lifelong learning opportunities for adults. The quality and availability of data on education largely depends on the strength of national statistical systems and the resources at their disposal. For many countries, the capacity to provide complete and timely data on access to and attainment in education needs to be strengthened. Work is also needed on the concepts and statistical standards involved in literacy, life skills, early childhood, educational attainment and educational quality. It will be important to strike a balance between, on the one hand, ensuring that countries improve their capacity to report the basic education statistics reviewed in the present chapter and, on the other hand, broadening and deepening the types of data collected in order to address new and emerging concepts and issues.

The quality and availability of data on education largely depends on the strength of national statistical systems and the resources at their disposal

Compilation of data at the international level is particularly challenging for such topics as the quality of education and non-formal education

Table 3.A
Number of countries or areas that reported selected education statistics, 1995 – 2003

	Geographic region						Development group			
	World	Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions ^a	Least developed countries
All countries or areas	204	55	27	13	50	42	17	47	107	50
Access to educational services										
Enrolment in primary education^b										
Total, at least once	189	53	25	13	47	40	11	45	96	48
By sex, at least once	187	52	25	13	46	40	11	45	95	47
By sex and age, at least once ^c	138	39	16	10	33	34	6	39	65	34
By sex, for at least three years	155	41	17	10	41	39	7	44	76	35
Enrolment in secondary education^b										
Total, at least once	185	50	24	13	47	40	11	45	94	46
By sex, at least once	182	50	24	13	45	40	10	45	92	45
By sex and age, at least once ^c	101	18	13	8	27	30	5	32	49	20
By sex, for at least three years	143	35	15	11	38	38	6	43	69	31
Vocational, by sex, for at least three years	104	20	9	6	30	35	4	38	47	19
Enrolment in tertiary education^b										
Total, at least once	166	48	16	12	42	39	9	44	82	40
By sex, at least once	154	45	14	9	40	39	7	44	73	37
By sex, for at least three years	104	20	10	5	30	35	4	40	47	17
By sex and field of study, for at least three years	62	12	3	1	15	29	2	33	19	10
School attendance^d										
Total	44	4	7	4	11	17	1	19	21	4
By sex	41	4	4	4	11	17	1	19	18	4
By sex and age	40	3	4	4	11	17	1	19	18	3
Outcomes of educational experience										
Literacy^d										
Total	82	15	8	7	30	16	6	16	53	13
By sex	81	15	8	7	30	16	5	16	53	12
By sex and age	77	14	7	7	29	16	4	16	49	12
Educational attainment^d										
Total	80	12	10	3	25	25	5	29	42	9
By sex	77	12	8	3	25	25	4	29	39	9
By sex and age	71	9	6	3	24	25	4	29	34	8

Sources:

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on enrolment data (November 2004) and literacy data (April 2005) provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates; and on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

b Reported data for the academic years 1995/1996 to 2001/2002 (excluding the academic year 1997/1998).

c Reported data at least once for the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002.

d From population censuses only.

Table 3.B
Percentage of the world and regional populations in countries or areas that reported selected education statistics, 1995 – 2003

	World	Geographic region						Development group		
		Africa	North America	South America	Asia	Europe	Oceania	More developed regions	Less developed regions ^a	Least developed countries
All countries or areas	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Access to educational services										
Enrolment in primary education^b										
Total, at least once	99	99	99	100	99	99	94	100	99	99
By sex, at least once	99	99	99	100	99	99	94	100	99	99
By sex and age, at least once ^c	61	61	97	77	53	71	93	82	52	78
By sex, for at least three years	92	66	94	98	96	99	93	100	92	83
Enrolment in secondary education^b										
Total, at least once	96	78	98	100	99	99	94	100	96	91
By sex, at least once	96	78	98	100	98	99	94	100	96	91
By sex and age, at least once ^c	30	28	66	85	13	66	31	64	16	58
By sex, for at least three years	85	59	94	100	90	79	93	87	86	77
Vocational, by sex, for at least three years	48	32	29	28	49	78	92	60	44	53
Enrolment in tertiary education^b										
Total, at least once	93	78	97	100	94	99	94	100	92	86
By sex, at least once	69	71	94	87	58	99	93	100	59	78
By sex, for at least three years	59	36	90	69	55	79	92	87	52	51
By sex and field of study, for at least three years	37	22	27	12	39	60	74	52	32	42
School attendance^d										
Total	14	4	86	22	4	25	0	42	8	5
By sex	14	4	85	22	4	25	0	42	7	5
By sex and age	14	2	85	22	4	25	0	42	7	3
Outcomes of educational experience										
Literacy^d										
Total	65	34	27	78	80	40	22	24	83	22
By sex	65	34	27	78	80	40	21	24	83	22
By sex and age	64	32	26	78	80	40	21	24	82	22
Educational attainment^d										
Total	51	31	91	9	54	53	75	61	54	19
By sex	50	31	70	9	54	53	75	61	51	19
By sex and age	48	23	69	9	53	53	75	61	49	17

Sources:

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based on enrolment data (November 2004) and literacy data (April 2005) provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics excluding UIS estimates; and on data from the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* system (November 2004).

a Excluding the least developed countries.

b Reported data for the academic years 1995/1996 to 2001/2002 (excluding the academic year 1997/1998).

c Reported data at least once for the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002.

d From population censuses only.

Notes

- 1 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 69, 80(a) and 81(a).
- 2 Ibid., para. 71.
- 3 The ISCED levels were developed by UNESCO in order to define levels of education uniformly across countries and enable the compilation of internationally comparable statistics. ICSED 1997 is available from:
http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/isced/ISCED_A.pdf.
- 4 Analysis of enrolment data for the present report includes data available as of November 2004.
- 5 Where feasible, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) publishes estimates of enrolment data when countries do not report the requisite data; when countries report only totals but not data disaggregated by sex, age or level of education; or when data adjustments are necessary to account for issues such as undercoverage and, occasionally, overcoverage. Although not included in the present analysis, UIS estimates are included in annex table A8 and indicated by the footnote "UIS estimate."
- 6 Countries or areas reporting at least the number of students in general education programmes were counted as being able to provide data.
- 7 Countries or areas reporting at least the number of students enrolled in ISCED level 5A of tertiary education for the academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002 as well as countries reporting at least the number of students enrolled in universities or equivalent institutions for the academic years before 1998 were counted as being able to provide data. See also note 8.
- 8 At the time of the preparation of the present report at least 11 countries or areas did not provide tertiary education within their territory: Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Maldives, Monaco, Nauru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.
- 9 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 82.
- 10 It should be noted that not all countries provide vocational education at the secondary level. At the time of preparation of the present report the following countries did not provide such education: Bahamas, Ireland, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Oman, Palau, Philippines, Qatar, Samoa, United Arab Emirates, United States, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Zimbabwe.
- 11 See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, para. 83(d).
- 12 Additional data can be found in population censuses and labour force surveys using information on occupations.
- 13 See the definition of "functional literacy" available from:
<http://www.uis.unesco.org> (April 2005).
Links: Literacy/Technical guides/Glossary