



UNITED NATIONS

WE CAN END POVERTY

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND BEYOND 2015

FACT SHEET

GOAL 3

Promote gender equality and empower women

TARGET

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015

FAST FACTS

- ✧ Steady progress has been made towards equal access of girls and boys to education, though disparities remain between regions and education levels.
- ✧ Globally, the share of women employed outside of agriculture rose to 40 per cent, but rose to only 20 per cent in Southern Asia, Western Asia and Northern Africa.
- ✧ The global share of women in parliament continues to rise slowly and reached 20 per cent in 2012—far short of gender parity, though an increase of one percentage point was seen during 2012.

WHERE WE STAND

Gender gaps in access to education have narrowed, but disparities remain among regions in all levels of education, particularly for the most excluded and marginalized. Gender parity in primary schooling worldwide has been achieved. There has been major progress across all developing regions in reducing gender gaps in primary school attendance. However, girls continue to face barriers to schooling, particularly in Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia. Although more girls are now in school in sub-Saharan Africa, only 93 girls are enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys.

Access to secondary and university-level education remains highly unequal. Substantial gains have been made towards closing the gender gap in secondary education in Western and Southern Asia, though girls continue to be at a disadvantage in those regions. Disparities are greatest at the university level. In Southern Asia, only 77 girls per 100 boys are enrolled in tertiary education. The situation is most extreme in sub-Saharan Africa, where the gender gap in enrolment has actually widened from 66 girls per 100 boys in 2000 to 61 girls per 100 boys enrolled in 2011.

Poverty is the main cause of unequal access to education, particularly for girls of secondary-school age. Women and girls in many parts of the world are forced to spend many hours fetching water, and

girls often do not attend school because of a lack of decent sanitation facilities. Child marriage and violence against girls are also significant barriers to education. Girls with disabilities are also less likely to go to school. If they get pregnant, many girls drop out of school.

Women are gaining more power in the world's parliaments, boosted by quota systems. In 2012, the number of women members of parliament globally jumped to 20.4 per cent at the end of 2012 from 19.6 per cent at the beginning of 2012—still far short of gender parity but a rare annual increase of nearly one percentage point. Affirmative action continues to be the key driver of progress for women. Among 22 of the 48 countries where elections were held in 2012, the use of either legislated or voluntary quotas was largely responsible for the above-average increase. Where quotas have been legislated, women took 24 per cent of parliamentary seats; with voluntary quotas, they occupied 22 per cent of seats. Where no quotas were used, women took just 12 per cent of seats, well below the global average.

Women are gaining ground in the labour market, but in every developing region still tend to hold less secure jobs. Women's share of paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased slowly from 35 to 40 per cent between 1990 and 2010, though it remains under 20 per cent in Western Asia, Northern Africa and Southern

Asia. Women still enter the labour market on an unequal basis to men, even after accounting for educational background and skills. They are often relegated to vulnerable forms of employment, with little or no financial security or social benefits, particularly in Western Asia and Northern Africa, where paid opportunities for women are limited. Globally, women occupy only 25 per cent of senior management positions.

WHAT IS WORKING?

Somalia: Scholarships help keep girls in school.

A UNICEF-supported programme in Somalia offers a comprehensive scholarship package to help overcome the barriers that prevent girls from enrolling in and staying in school, participating effectively in class and progressing to higher levels in education. There are currently 453 girls at the primary, secondary and university levels receiving these education scholarships, which include funding for registration and tuition fees, pocket money, bus fare, school uniforms and shoes, textbooks, supplies and stationery.

Brazil: An online tool tackles violence against women and girls. To help address the problem of sexual violence in Rio de Janeiro's favelas, in 2013 UN Women, UNICEF and UN-Habitat launched an online website which also works as a smartphone app that brings together information on support services for women and girls who are survivors of violence. It provides abuse hotline numbers and information about rights, as well as the responsibilities and locations of Specialized Women's Attention Centres, which provide psychological, social and even legal support. The tool also details steps to take after being raped, along with geographical positioning systems so users can locate the closest women's centre, police station, medical centre and public prosecutor's office.

Rwanda: Women farmers yield profits and better futures. In Rwanda's Kirehe district, [UN Women](#) is working with 15 cooperatives to increase women's participation in agriculture and decision-making in their families and communities. Women farmers are trained in budgeting skills and male farmers and district officials are being encouraged to better include and provide for women. As a result, more couples are sharing financial and agricultural decisions, and crop yields have increased.

Uruguay: Young women aim to boost their role in politics. The country ranks 103rd out of 189 countries in representation of women in Parliament,

and there is also a generation gap; out of a total of 99 parliamentarians, there are only three elected members under the age of 30, all three of whom are men. In order to help change this situation, in 2012 UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA conducted a unique training programme aimed at young women politicians, who spent time with political leaders acting as tutors. The 2014 national elections will, for the first time, require women to make up at least 30 per cent of candidates.

Yemen: Girls overcome barriers to education. Girls in rural areas face cultural and financial barriers to attending school, including shortages of female teachers. To remedy that, the government, with World Bank support, recruited and trained more than 1,000 female teachers to work in rural areas and granted conditional cash transfers to encourage parents to allow girls to attend school, reaching more than 39,000 students from 2004 to 2012.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

The [UN Girls' Education Initiative](#) (UNGEI) actively promotes girls' education and gender equality. It works with civil society actors and governments in select countries to support key legislative and policy changes that are making education more accessible to girls. In Nepal, for example, the initiative has helped double the number of girls receiving scholarships and in Uganda it resulted in a new policy to help get pregnant girls and child mothers into school.

The [UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#), managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN System, supports national and local action to address violence against women and girls. Since 1996, the Fund has delivered more than \$86 million in grants to 351 initiatives in 128 countries and territories.

UNESCO partners with Procter & Gamble to empower girls through literacy programmes. In Senegal, for example, the partnership has provided educational kits and digital resources to train and support more than 1,200 teachers who then devoted 600 hours of literacy and life skills teaching to girls. Similar efforts are being undertaken by UNESCO in Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho and the United Republic of Tanzania, with partners including the Packard Foundation and the GEMS Foundation.

Sources: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013, United Nations; [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#); [UNDP](#); [UNFPA](#); [UNICEF](#); [UN Women](#), [World Bank](#).



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