

UNICEF in Ghana

Basic Education and Gender Equality



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Essential Statistics

Gross primary enrolment rate
95%

Net primary enrolment rate
83%

Gender parity index (primary)
0.96

Gross pre-primary school
enrolment rate
90%

Net pre-primary school
enrolment rate
62%

Primary completion rate
88%

Children aged 6–11 out of school
630,000

Source: Ministry of Education, data for the
school year 2007/2008

**“Education is the most
powerful weapon you can
use to change the world.”**

Nelson Mandela, former President of
South Africa and Elder Statesman

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children

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Issue

Education is one sector in Ghana that deserves praise for its noteworthy achievements. The abolition of school fees and provision of subsidies in 2005 had a very positive effect on enrolment and in reducing gender gaps. Today, Ghana's net primary school enrolment and completion rates of more than 80 per cent are far ahead of sub-Saharan averages. Ghana is therefore making steady progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on universal primary education and gender equality in education. Early childhood education for children aged four to five, though now a formal part of the school system, is not performing as well. Demand outstrips supply, options to train preschool teachers are limited and preschools and nurseries do not always adhere to the strictest child friendly standards.

Another concern is the quality of education. Proficiency levels for core subjects such as English and Maths continue to be low. Many schools do not have enough classrooms to accommodate the swell in enrolment, nor do they have running

water and separate toilets for boys and girls. Children with disabilities and those coming from very poor and vulnerable homes are not adequately catered for. Around 40 per cent of primary school teachers are untrained. Corporal punishment and other forms of corrective measures are widely practiced in schools. A recent study on corporal punishment found that 94 per cent of surveyed school children either experienced or witnessed punishment in school. The education system uses 90 per cent of its budget on salaries, leaving little for other critical needs. An estimated 630,000 primary school age (6–11 years) children are still missing from classrooms.

This calls for efforts to continue removing children's barriers to education, reducing disparities in the provision and access to education, increasing retention and completion and improving in learning outcomes. Education is not only a fundamental human right but it also breaks the cycle of poverty and unfulfilled potential that so many Ghanaians still find themselves trapped in.



UNICEF in action

Basic Education and Gender Equality, the second focus area of the UNICEF Midterm Strategic Plan (MTSP), contributes to both MDG 2 on achieving universal primary education and MDG 3 on gender equality in basic education. In Ghana, UNICEF's work in this area involves:

Strengthening basic education. UNICEF focuses on long-term strategies that will help Ghana achieve universal primary education. These include building the capacity of education authorities at all levels to advance girls' education; working with community leaders to increase primary school enrolment; preventing school drop-out and teacher absenteeism as well as identifying out-of-school children through a community-based monitoring system; improving school health and safety, and teacher training. UNICEF supports the development and implementation of national quality standards that provide a holistic school development framework based on a child friendly school approach.

Supporting early childhood development. UNICEF is one of Ghana's strongest partners in early childhood development (ECD). UNICEF support involves building partnerships and advocating for greater national investment in ECD, developing a model for cost-effective quality preschool education and improving the standards of preschool education by training teachers and other stakeholders. UNICEF supports the development and pilot implementation of a quality preschool model in order to inform and influence national ECD expansion strategies.

Between 2006 and 2009, UNICEF helped to achieve promising results

in basic education and gender equality, taking Ghana one step closer to the MDGs.

Reduced gender gaps. UNICEF support to girls' education contributed to the enrolment of more than 30,000 new students, of which 55 per cent were girls, in 15 low performing districts. Gender disparity has been significantly reduced in these districts. On average the Gender Parity Index improved by 0.06 points in 2007/8 compared to 2004/5 levels.

Improved teaching quality. Close to 1,000 education support staff and teachers have been trained in multi-grade teaching to accommodate the different age groups found in typical Ghanaian classrooms. A manual on multi-grade teaching has been introduced to all 38 teachers' training colleges.

Ending corporal punishment. There is political will and commitment to end corporal punishment in schools. Preparation to put this into practice has begun, with a study conducted that captured the voices of children.

Healthy and safe schools. School health has been placed high on the education agenda and a strategy document will lead the way towards a policy and programme. In 2008, 5.5 million school children were dewormed in all 10 regions.

Enhanced capacity for ECD. The national ECD curriculum, standards and teachers' guides were developed. More than 7,000 preschool teachers from five regions were trained in 2008 and 2009 on the new curriculum and standards.



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A TWO WHEELED FRIEND HELPS GIRLS TO SCHOOL

Girls face numerous hurdles in getting an education. Some of these barriers are due to entrenched cultural beliefs that a girl's place is in the home. Schools are often far away and public transport is scarce. In Ghana 96 girls are in school for every 100 boys. With support from UNICEF, the government has come up with a creative and innovative solution to boosting girls' education – bicycles.

Since 2001, UNICEF has provided 4,400 bicycles to the Ghana Education Service for distribution to girls in seven districts in the Northern, Upper East and Eastern Regions. Testimonies from the girls show that the bicycles greatly improved their school attendance and even academic achievement.

Planned impact for children

While these programmes and strategies have proven results, taking education to its next level in terms of quality and decentralised education management requires greater investment. The education programmes strive to achieve the following results by 2011:

Increased access to education towards universal basic education by 2015. At least 90 per cent net enrolment ratio (increase by 260,000 students) and 90 per cent net admission rate in primary education achieved in five regions.

Higher rate in girls' enrolment and retention. Gender parity achieved in primary enrolment in 28 disadvantaged districts.

Enhanced policy and planning environment. The Education Strategic Plan 2010–20 developed with a special emphasis on the enhancement of quality and the reduction of inequalities and disparities in education.

Improved school quality. Holistic school development standards put in place as an overarching framework for quality education and the creation of a healthy, safe, protective and joyful school environment.

Stronger management capacities at decentralised levels. All districts (64 districts) in five regions will develop and implement gender-sensitive district education plans.

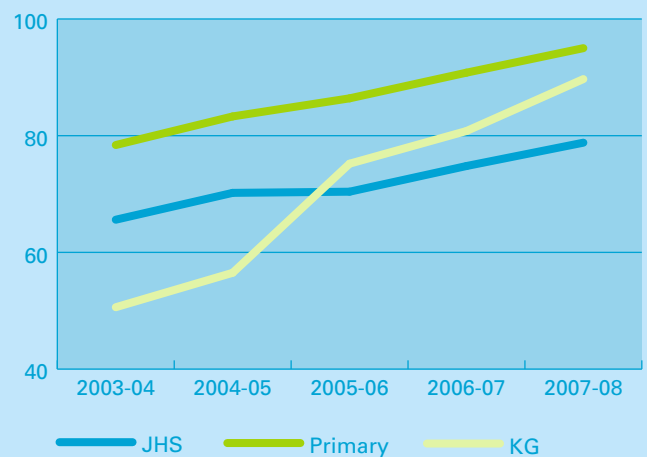
Expanded quality preschool education. A quality preschool education model developed and piloted in selected districts. Based on the evaluation of the pilot, a costed package of interventions developed for national roll-out.

Improved teacher capacity. All preschool teachers and head teachers trained in five regions on national curriculum, standards and assessment tools.

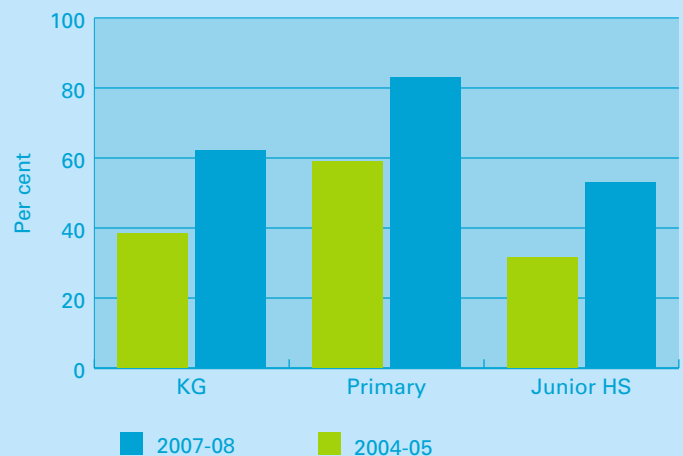


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Gross enrolment ratio, 2003–07



Net enrolment rates, basic education, 2004–07



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