

# What Works in Expanding School Participation

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## ABSTRACT

Based on a 2007 report by the Education Policy and Data Center, *Window on the Future:2025*, this paper analyzes the experience of 18 countries which the report identifies as likely to see the fastest growth in secondary school attainment between now and 2025. The paper identifies some of the key government policies responsible for the rapid expansion in primary enrollment and completion prior to 2005, and explores the likelihood of continued expansion and the implications of expansion for individuals and the countries as a whole.

## INTRODUCTION

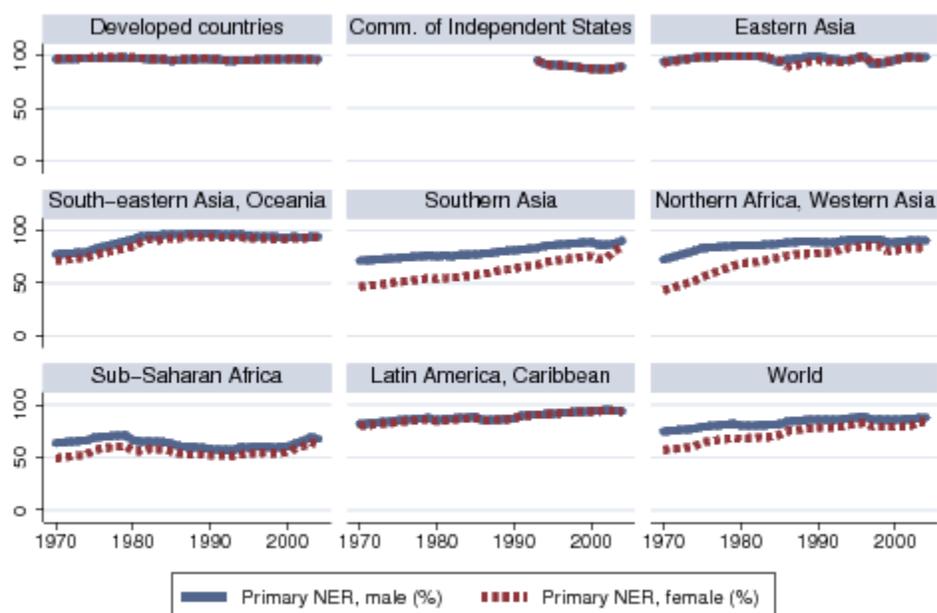
When historians explore the antecedents and consequences of the profound social, economic and political changes which occurred during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid expansion of the number of children in school and the reduction in adult illiteracy will stand out.

<sup>1</sup> The author, Ann Van Dusen, is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Georgetown University and this paper is based on a course the author taught at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Spring 2008. The class explored the reasons for the rapid expansion in primary level education before 2005 and the likelihood that selected countries would be able to sustain the expansion at the secondary level over the following 20 years. I am indebted to EPDC and the students in MSFS 629 for a very rich discussion on this important topic, and to George Ingram, David Sprague, Annabette Wils, and Ben Sylla for their comments on this paper.

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In *Window on the Future: 2025*,<sup>2</sup> The Education Policy and Data Center projects youth and adult education levels for 83 countries between 2005 and 2025. Eighteen of these countries are projected to make the most significant progress in youth secondary education levels, with an average increase of more than 20% in the next 20 years. These projections are based on enrollment rates. The success of these countries at the secondary level is based on their progress at the primary level over the previous 15 years, measured in terms of increasing enrollment, retention, promotion and completion rates. To answer the question “what works in expanding education attainment in poorer countries,” it is useful to examine these country experiences and the lessons that can be derived from them.

**Figure 1 Primary school net enrollment rate (NER), 1970-2004<sup>3</sup>.**



Friedrich Huebler, October 2006, huebler.blogspot.com

Data sources: (1) UNESCO Institute for Statistics, [global education database](#), October 2006; (2) UNESCO Institute for Statistics, [pre-1998 database](#), March 2005.

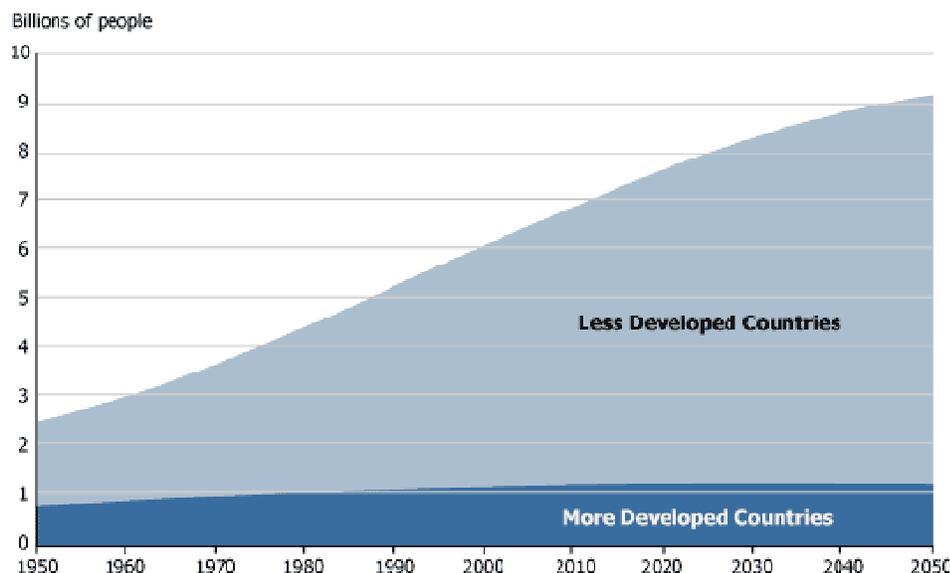
The reasons for the rapid expansion in the number of young people with some schooling over the past 15 years are multiple. *Demographic momentum* is certainly one important factor. With successively larger cohorts of youngsters entering school age, the pressure on all public services, education and health chief among them, increases. Sheer numbers count.

So, too, do the demands of the *changing global economy*, which has put a premium on technical literacy and mobility. It has become increasingly clear to youth and their families that the road to prosperity lies in education and, increasingly, in schooling beyond the basic primary level. It has also become clear that pursuing employment may increasingly mean leaving home – whether to move to more urban areas or to move overseas. Schooling, or at least basic literacy and numeracy, may represent the best chance to pursue employment opportunities, wherever they may be.

<sup>2</sup> Annababette Wills, *Window on the Future: 2025: Projections of Education Attainment and its Impact*, FHI 360, Education Policy and Data Center, 2007

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Huebler, *Trends in Primary School Enrollment 1970-2004*, 28 September 2006

**Figure 2. World Population Growth, 1950-2050<sup>4</sup>.**



A third reason for the rapid expansion of children in schools has been the *growing attention and resources for basic education from the international community*. Education has traditionally been one of the core areas for investment for sustainable development, but it has only been in the last two decades, and especially since agreement on the Millennium Development Goals, that international resources and pressure to expand access to basic education has had real impact. Research on the importance of education and “what works,” advocacy with donor and recipient governments, expansion of institutional capacities of international and local NGOs as well as government agencies, and rapid growth in the number of donors and the size of their education portfolios have all played an important role in encouraging and supplementing the work of national governments to expand educational opportunities for all children.<sup>5</sup>

**TABLE I**

### High Growth, High Potential

Countries with increased youth secondary level of education >20% (2005 and 2025 values shown in parentheses)

Bangladesh (57% → 84%)	Gambia, The (40% → 63%)
Belize (45% → 68%)	Honduras (41% → 65%)
Benin (33% → 55%)	Malawi (24% → 45%)
Bolivia (67% → 88%)	Morocco (51% → 76%)
Brazil (49% → 73%)	Mozambique (19% → 49%)
Burundi (12% → 43%)	Nepal (53% → 83%)
Chad (20% → 53%)	Pakistan (42% → 63%)
Comoros (41% → 65%)	Togo (44% → 74%)
Cote d'Ivoire (39% → 60%)	Uganda (32% → 51%)

<sup>4</sup> Carl Haub, Global Aging and the Demographic Divide, Population Reference Bureau, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Donor resources are small in comparison to what governments and household spend on education. Nevertheless, donors can and have encouraged countries to do more in basic education, and this outside pressure has been useful. Donors have also pushed countries to reallocate funds from tertiary to primary levels within national education budgets, which, interestingly, has stimulated the growth of private colleges and universities around the world.

A fourth important reason for the expansion of school systems is the desire and *commitment of the governments* of poorer countries to create a more educated work force and citizenry. Some of this desire is, to be sure, the result of pressure from both within and from external donors. National pride has also played an important role. Some of the national efforts have been highly dependent on foreign resources and technical assistance. And undoubtedly, national governments have sometimes mitigated the effectiveness of education programs through inattention, corruption, or half-hearted support. But what is clear is that the rapid expansion of the cohort of educated citizens in poorer countries would not have been possible without the engagement of national governments. It is the policies that countries which have seen the greatest expansion in school attainment have employed that is the subject of this essay.

## **POLICIES USED TO EXPAND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

How have the 18 countries which are expected to see the most rapid expansion in secondary level attainment over the next two decades gone about removing impediments and reducing the disincentives to increase school attendance? Without a doubt, the most important immediate cause of the impending expansion of secondary schooling is the rapid expansion in the number of children who have completed primary schooling. It is therefore useful to explore what policies these governments adopted to successfully expand primary attainment, discuss whether these same policies will be effective at the secondary level, and highlight some of the intended and unintended consequences of these policies and other outstanding issues.

*Reduction or elimination of school fees.* One of the major impediments to universal access to schooling is the array of official and unofficial fees which families must pay to enable their children to attend school. Public education is most certainly not free, even in countries committed to free, compulsory basic education. Most families pay a variety of fees, ranging from tuition and examination charges, to the costs of uniforms or textbooks, to payments for private (but necessary) tutoring, to school infrastructure charges. Many countries, including *Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Nepal, Cote d'Ivoire, and Uganda*, have witnessed phenomenal growth in school enrollment simply by reducing or eliminating some of the most burdensome fees for poorer households.

In Uganda in 1997, school fees were abolished, lowering the cost of education, the main obstacle for school attendance, and resulting in an enormous surge in enrollment -- from 2.9 million in 1996, to 5.3 million in 1997, to over 7 million in 2000.

Unfortunately, the government of Uganda has not been able to address several major consequences of the rapid expansion, including inadequate numbers of schools and classrooms, the financial burden that parents continue to bear (\$8 annually on average), and the sharp decrease in quality of education.

In February 2007, the Ugandan government announced a plan for free secondary education for 250,000 students. The plan will create space for 90% of the student who pass their primary exams to continue onto secondary school. The policy is aimed at poor families in rural communities. While creating space for secondary students is critical, it must be accompanied with complementary programs if quality is not to deteriorate further.

***Incentive programs for disadvantaged children, especially girls, to encourage families to allow their children to attend school.*** There are a variety of charges, both direct and opportunity costs that have worked to keep poorer children out of school. When children's labor is needed at home or in the fields, allowing them to attend school represents a significant cost to the family. In addition, in some societies the economic value and likelihood of marriage for girls is considered to be compromised by continued schooling, thus adding to the disincentives to letting children attend school. *Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Chad, Cote, d'Ivoire, Honduras, Malawi, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, and Uganda* have all implemented incentive programs for particularly vulnerable populations, ranging from reduced school fees, to special payments to families, to school feeding programs, to encourage families to allow their children to attend school.

In Brazil in 2003, President Lula brought together a variety of cash transfer programs into the Bolsa Familia ("Family Stipend") Program. This program gives monthly stipend of R\$15 (US\$8) for each child attending school (up to a maximum of three children) for families with per capita income below R\$120 per month. The stipend is given to the head female in the household via a citizen "debit" cards. The program reaches 11 million families, 44 million Brazilians, or 24% of population. Participation in primary education has risen to 97.3% of 7-to-14 year olds

In Bangladesh, the Female Stipend Programme, introduced in 1994, was designed to increase female secondary enrollment rates, assist girls in passing the higher secondary certificate examinations and qualify for employment, and improve retention rates among girls to protect them from early marriage. This initiative provided scholarships that covered monthly tuition, monthly stipends, book purchase subsidies, and examination fees. Within five years of being introduced in a quarter of Bangladesh's administrative districts, the program helped to increase girls' enrollment there to 44 percent (twice the national average). The program was then expanded across the country. The program requires girls to attend at least 75 percent of school days, meet a minimum standard of academic and examination performance, and remain unmarried until they receive the higher secondary certificate.

Bangladesh also introduced a Food for Education program in 1993 that provided wheat or rice to poor households on the condition that all primary aged children (6-10 years old) in the household attend school at least 85% of the time. This program covered 2.1 million students, or 12 percent of all primary students, and helped reduce drop-out rates.

***Elimination of promotion exams.*** Just getting children enrolled is, of course, not enough. High rates of repetition and drop out are evidence of poor preparation and inadequate attention to education quality and the social and economic factors that militate against remaining in school long enough to acquire basic skills. High repetition and dropout rates (the two are linked, as children who have repeated grades are more likely to drop out) also represent huge "inefficiency" costs to developing country education systems. Governments have not only tried to reduce the opportunity costs (see above) and improve the quality of instruction (see below), but have also in some instance sought to remove the proximate cause of repetition and drop out: the promotion exam. In some instances, promotion exams may not be geared to what the children have been taught, or may be administered in a language other than the students' mother tongue, or may explicitly be used to winnow the cohort that will advance to the next level<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The policy of having a national exam at the end of secondary school to control where and what a student studies beyond secondary has led to the burgeoning role and influence of private tutors. Hiring private tutors is a major family expense in many countries and most of the time these tutors are the same teachers that should be doing a better job in the regular school day. Interestingly, the national exam was in many instances introduced because of distrust of teacher evaluations and the inability of the system to ward off inappropriate pressure from those with influence. The distortions caused by these exams are now embedded in many countries' education systems and it will take major initiatives with full support from the top to make meaningful changes.

Automatic promotion, sometimes called social promotion, has been used in many countries as a policy response to student repetition. Sometimes the logic for automatic promotion is purely economic; sometimes it is based on the premise that children should advance according to their age or attendance rate rather than according to their academic achievement. *Bangladesh, Gambia, Ghana, Honduras, and Uganda* have all experimented with eliminating some or all promotion exams, which has expanded retention and reduced costs of repetition<sup>7</sup>.

In Uganda, the argument for automatic promotion was economic. Mr John Mbabazi, the Director of Education at the Ministry of Education, told MPs that the government had no money to pay tuition fees for repeating pupils. "We depend on donor money which is not enough, so we believe automatic promotion of pupils will help us to reduce the big numbers in primary schools." This policy of allowing children to advance automatically, however, raises concerns about the increasingly poor quality of primary schooling.

In Benin, the National Forum on Education, organized in 1991, created the National Curriculum, which is based on numeracy and literacy. According to the new National Curriculum, there is only one national examination, the Certificat d'Etudes de Primaire Ecole (CEPE), taken country-wide by all primary school pupils who are completing their final year.

***Instruction in mother tongue, especially in early grades.*** A vast number of poorer countries are multi-ethnic, multi-lingual societies – sometimes the result of colonial legacies, sometimes the result of geography and poverty. In countries where the national education systems require instruction in the dominant language, children from other linguistic groups are at a disadvantage from the beginning and tend to be underrepresented in school attendance and completion. In Bolivia, for example, indigenous students are twice as likely as non-indigenous to repeat a grade. On average Bolivians stay in school eight years, but indigenous children stay only 5 years. Countries that have allowed instruction in local languages, including *Bolivia, Burundi, Honduras, Malawi and Uganda*, have found that they are able to retain minority students longer. Some of these students are then able to move to instruction in the dominant language later in their school career.

In Malawi, the Education Reform Law (ERL) of 1994 introduced major reforms to primary school, including bilingual and intercultural education. Malawi has embraced mother tongue education, where the national language, Chichewa, is used as a medium of instruction in the first four years of primary schooling.

Uganda has adopted a policy that stipulates that the relevant local language will be the language of instruction in rural areas during the first four years of primary education. Uganda has more than 30 languages. One of the major hurdles has been the high cost of preparing and producing text books and other basic learning materials, but the government has reportedly been able to produce material in about 20 languages.

Burundi has two official languages (French & Burundi) and a split bi-lingual education system: Kirundi (the majority of the population's first language) is the language of instruction from grades 1-3; French is used for grades 4 and up. While beginning schooling in Kirundi helps comprehension in the lower grades, the switch to French instruction in grade 4 continues to drive high dropout rates. In addition, the return of 500,000 refugees from Tanzania has required primary instruction in English/Swahili as well. The Ministry of Education provided evening "catch-up" language classes for non-Kirundi/non-French speaking refugees, and in 2007, introduced courses in Swahili and English at the primary level to promote the integration of these refugees.

<sup>7</sup> Risdal Kasasiri, "Uganda: Government insists on automatic primary school promotion," *The Monitor*, 31 January 2008.

**Teacher training.** Virtually every country in the world, wealthy and poor alike, has learned the hard way that, absent enforcement of compulsory schooling, families are extremely reluctant to allow their children to remain in school where they are learning little and/or are exposed to dangers ranging from the lack of safe transport over long distances to school to sexual harassment by teachers and peers. At the heart of the school quality and safety dilemmas are teachers; indeed, many education policy analysts have argued that the single most important government intervention to improve school quality is teacher training. In many poor countries, pupil-teacher ratios routinely exceed 40:1 (often considered the highest range for successfully performing education systems) and the ratio of pupils to *trained* teachers is even higher. According to Chad's PRSP, for example, over 50% of teachers are not professional teachers, but rather, drawn from the community.

Almost every country that has experienced rapid growth in its in-school population has had to address the dearth of trained teachers. *Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Honduras, Malawi, Morocco, Nepal, Togo, and Uganda* have approached the issue of teacher training in a variety of ways, and with a variety of results.

In Burundi, many new teachers lacked formal training; many were hired and put to work immediately to meet the short-term demands from the surge in enrollments in 2005. New teachers are being trained "in-service" during the school year when not in the classroom, and are being trained informally using radio technology and tape recorded curriculum training.

In Morocco, the Ministry of Education developed a series of quality improvement plans in which primary-level teacher training featured prominently. The Government created multimedia centers in teacher training colleges and in primary schools. The primary school completion rate improved significantly, climbing from 55.3 in 1999 to 80.3 in 2005.

In Pakistan, the National Education Policy 1998-2010 has focused on such efforts as merit-based recruitment of teachers and pre-service and in-service training of teachers to improve what is generally regarded as poor quality public education.

**Increase teacher salaries.** Governments are realizing that many of the same factors that inhibit school attendance on the part of students also play a role in discouraging teachers. Issues of isolation and security, especially for women, make teaching in rural areas or far from their homes extremely difficult. Individuals who have the qualifications to teach may find non-teaching jobs more lucrative, more attractive and higher status. Individuals with the qualifications to teach may have family or community obligations which make it difficult if not impossible to handle the requirements of a full time teaching job as well. A number of countries, including *Brazil, Malawi, Pakistan, and Uganda*, have used both contract teaching and higher salaries for regular teachers to encourage individuals with at least secondary education to become teachers.

In Brazil, the government proposed an education plan in 2007 to double the minimum teacher salary to R\$800/month; local governments (for example, Natal) proposed to raise the salaries even further, all in an effort to attract and keep qualified teachers.

In Malawi, a head count of all teachers led to the discovery and removal of roughly 4000 "ghost" teachers from the payroll of the Ministry of Education, thus freeing up new funds for teachers' salaries. Within 4 years, Malawi was able to raise teachers' salaries to a living wage (Moulton et al, 2002).

***Innovative recruitment and redistribution of teachers.*** Countries without the resources to make teaching sufficiently lucrative, or without sufficient people with the minimum qualifications from which to recruit, have implemented programs to recruit and train teachers from the communities where they will teach. Often these teachers have less training, lower salaries, and less supervision than regular teachers in the civil service; but sometimes this is the only way to extend schooling to remote rural areas or to minority communities. Countries which have successfully expanded primary enrollment in recent years, including *Benin, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Honduras, Nepal, Pakistan, and Uganda*, have instituted programs to recruit teachers from and redeploy teachers to educationally underserved areas in recent years.

In Burundi, the “free primary” policy led to shortage of teachers. In 2005-2006 alone, 6,500 teachers, an increase of 37%, were recruited; still more are needed, as are an estimated 3,400 new classrooms in the next four years to support new enrollments.

In Benin, there are only two main training institutes responsible for training teachers. Primary school teachers must hold the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle which is obtained after four years of secondary education, and must pass an entrance examination. The teacher's job is demanding and low-paid, and many leave for more profitable fields. Despite incentives, including free housing built by local communities and bonuses from local communities, the pupil/teacher ratio remains very high at up to 65: 1.

In Uganda, the government defines an effective teacher as one that attends school regularly. Attrition is a major concern, and an estimated 33% of primary teachers abandoned their position each year. The government has been working aggressively to recruit qualified teachers.

In 2000, the student to teacher ratio in Bangladesh was 55:1, down from 71:1 in 1995 as a result in part of massive teacher recruitment efforts. However, because so many of these teachers were not trained or were undertrained, the repetition rate from 1995 to 2000 rose from 7% to 15%<sup>1</sup> and dropout rates continued to increase.

***Decentralization.*** Agreements reached in Dakar in 2000 encouraged national governments to decentralize the education system in order to promote participation and accountability, in addition to sharing costs with the communities themselves. Some of these efforts involve school-based management, development of PTAs and community school councils or the shift of responsibility for school infrastructure to the local level. Most principals and headmasters are, however, teachers, with seniority and little or no administrative or managerial training, and so what education functions get devolved need to be carefully thought through. While decentralization can also reinforce and even exacerbate inequalities and may open up new channels for official corruption, it is likely that an increasing number of national governments will look for ways to share responsibility for national education goals with local communities, as have *Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Chad, Honduras, Malawi, Nepal, and Togo*.

In Bangladesh, the Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1990, along with social mobilization efforts (e.g., community rallies, use of mass media, creation of village committees), helped to increase local awareness of the need for education and contribute to the increase in school enrollment and completion rates.

In Brazil, the National Fund for Compulsory (Primary & Lower Secondary) Education Development and for Enhancing the Value of the Teaching Profession (FUNDEF), enacted in 1997, created a fund that pooled sub-national education funds and redistributed them to state and municipal primary schools based on enrollment figures. This fund rewards states and municipalities when enrollment rates rise, since they will receive a larger amount of financing. As a result, there has been a 6% increase in initial enrollments in the north and teacher salaries are 50% higher.

**Basic education infrastructure.** So obvious that it is often overlooked, one of the principal impediments to expanding educational access is the availability of schools, textbooks and basic teaching materials. Unfortunately, the promise of technology (radio, computers) to overcome these basic pedagogical gaps is a distant dream for many countries. And especially in extremely poor countries and countries emerging from civil strife, simple school construction and reconstruction may be the first step to expanding the education system. In *Burundi*, for example, only 40% of schools are built with permanent materials; 75% have latrines; 31% have a borehole; and only 5% have electricity. In *Pakistan*, the National Education Census (published 2006) showed that 28% of the public educational institutions surveyed from primary to college level were without boundary walls, 41% were without drinking water, 57% were without electricity, and 7% were without a building. There was also a lack of resource materials that would facilitate children's learning. Teachers in Pakistan may not be provided either textbooks for teachers or a copy of a curriculum. A Teaching Kit supplied to teachers in the mid-seventies was never updated. In *Benin*, as a result of recent efforts, the ratio of textbook to student has decreased from 8:1 to 2-3:1, still too high to achieve a quality education.

As part of its Secondary Education Sector Improvement Plan (SESIP) framework, the government of Bangladesh established a Management and Quality Support System in 1999 that included construction of new secondary schools in under-served areas, the establishment of community and satellite schools, and the building of new classrooms in overcrowded schools.

With help from the World Bank, Togo launched the Education Rehabilitation Project in the mid 1990s designed to reverse the rapid deterioration in the education sector following years of social and political unrest and a decade of declining enrollment and quality. A major focus of the project was the development of better schools through school construction and rehabilitation and provision of textbooks. (World Bank, 1995)

**Distance and non-formal education alternatives.** With the increasing availability of communications technologies ranging from radio to computers, a number of countries have used broadcast and other communications technologies to reach children, including out of school youth in remote areas, with instruction on a wide range of subjects. In some countries, the focus is science and math, and these distance instructional technologies supplement the work of the teacher in the classroom. In others, distance education is the only education available for youth and adults who are not in school. *Bangladesh*, *Brazil*, *Honduras*, and *Malawi* have all used distance learning to expand schooling opportunities for hard to reach populations. Non-formal education programs – that is, programs that work outside the formal school system with populations that the formal system has difficulty reaching – have played a major role

both in providing basic skills to hard to reach groups and an avenue into the formal education system for those who might not otherwise have the chance. Non-formal education programs are provided by a variety of government ministries as well as private entities and for the most part reach a tiny fraction of the population. Occasionally, however, as in the case of *Bangladesh*, *Burundi*, *Gambia* and *Chad*, they have been scaled up to reach sizeable portions of the school-age population.

In Bangladesh, a non-formal education program begun by BRAC has provided alternative schooling for children from poor families in rural areas. This 2-3 year program gives 8- 16-year olds the opportunity to obtain alternative education that enables them to transfer to formal government schools. 65% of students in BRAC schools are female, compared with 46% in government schools. The pupil-teacher ratio is 33:1, and costs are kept low by using one-room schoolhouses and paraprofessional female teachers with at least nine years of schooling. Flexible schedules allow students to continue performing necessary household chores and agricultural activities. Community involvement is high, with families having a role in selecting teachers, participating in school management committees, and setting the school calendar. BRAC serves approximately 11% of primary school children throughout Bangladesh. Dropout rates are lower than at government schools, and BRAC graduates are 2.6 times more likely to achieve basic education skills than graduates of the formal education system.

**Early child development programs.** In very poor settings where children are malnourished and their parents are illiterate themselves, children begin school with several strikes against them, if they start at all. Having had no experience with sitting quietly, working in groups, listening and attending, or working with school materials, the first school experience can be overwhelming and discouraging. Many of these children will drop out within one or two years. Early Child Development programs have been shown to improve child retention at primary levels, and can also be a good entry-point for health interventions, by offering mothers trainings on appropriate health and nutrition practices and on broader children's needs<sup>8</sup>. A number of countries -- *Brazil*, *Burundi*, *Cote d'Ivoire*, *Gambia*, and *Honduras* -- have found that investments in early child development and education programs pay off in terms of students who are better ready to learn and therefore better able to survive in school.

In the Gambia, early childhood education was provided mainly by the private sector and NGOs. But the Gambian government adopted operational policy guidelines for the opening, management and supervision of pre-school institutions to ensure the quality of pre-school education, expand material for ECD in teachers' resource centers and identify training needs of pre-school staff. Further, it made most public resources available for community based and managed programs in the most disadvantaged areas.

<sup>8</sup> Diane Coury, Susan Opper and Judith Nahayo, "Early Child Development in Burundi: Community Delivery System (or community-driven response) to Improve the Well-being of Young Children," unpublished, accessed 16 June 2008.

**Curriculum development.** Another major reason for poor academic performance and high drop out rates at the higher primary and secondary levels is the disconnect between the curriculum and the pedagogical methods being used on the one hand and the information and skills needed to succeed in the community and the job market. Rote learning and lack of attention to problem solving, group learning, math and science, and other important skills produce students who are ill prepared for the world of work and citizenship. When it becomes clear to students and their families that additional years of poor quality or irrelevant schooling do not lead to enhanced employment opportunities, youth tend to drop out of school. In a growing number of countries the gender gap actually is reversed at secondary and tertiary levels, reflecting both the lack of jobs that require the skills being taught at the secondary level in general, and more specifically, the lack of job prospects for young women. Curriculum reform in countries such as *Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Chad, Malawi, Morocco, Nepal, and Pakistan* has often gone hand in hand with efforts to improve teacher quality. When it has not, the results have been decidedly mixed.

In Chad, the 1994 National Reform on Education focused on “Chadization” of the curriculum – changing from a system modeled on a French centralized structure and curriculum to a more decentralized and locally appropriate curriculum.

**Double-shifting and extension of the school year.** In an effort to reach more students, increase the amount of time students are in school, and take maximum advantage of the enrolled population, countries have resorted to double shifts in daily instruction and increase the number of days students spend in school each year. These reforms rarely increase the quality of instruction by themselves and usually put an extraordinary burden on the teachers and facilities. But they are undoubtedly responsible for some of the increase in the number of children who have the opportunity to attend school.

Burundi moved to implement free compulsory education in 2004, resulting in a jump from 50% to 87% primary enrollment between 2004 and 2005. To accommodate the large increase in pupils, the country introduced double shifts for teachers, which resulted in shorter, less personalized, more physically cramped (i.e. shared desks) instruction. Even with the double-shifts, the average class size in Bujumbura province was 150 students in 2006. 60% of Burundi’s students are being taught in the double-shift system.

In the Comoros in the 1990s, poor working conditions and a 19-month backlog in teacher salary payments resulted in regular teacher strikes that shortened the school year to less than 100 days. The World Bank’s “Third Education Project” 2000-2003 enabled Comoros to extend the school year to 180 days, formalize local school committees and construct or rehabilitate 150 classrooms, which significantly increased classroom capacity and improved the gross entry rate in first grade to 90% (from 80% in 1998).

In Honduras, the school year was extended from 135 to 200 days to help improve instructional quality, but with this change came greater concern about teacher absenteeism. 40% of single teacher schools were assigned a second teacher to help address this problem. The government has also been using salary incentives, labor contracts, and training to increase teacher effectiveness.

## LESSONS

A number of lessons can be quickly drawn from the varied experience of this vast array of government policies in countries that have experienced rapid expansion of primary school attainment. The first and perhaps most obvious is that government leadership and commitment matter. In Uganda, for example, the government was determined to expand access to schooling, even at the expense of educational quality and achievement, and it invested heavily to do so. In Morocco, the government showed equal determination to reduce gender disparity in schools, and with considerable success. In Pakistan, by contrast, central government leadership has been modest at best, resulting not only in a burgeoning parallel private school system but also stark discrepancies in school access along regional, ethnic and economic lines.

External funding has played a major role, and virtually all “high growth, high potential” countries have benefited from a wide array of international public and private resources for its education expansion.

Peace or at least some measure of political stability has also played an important role in enabling expansion, and the high growth countries where the potential for continued secondary expansion is least assured – Togo, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire – are precisely those which have recently experienced or are continuing to experience a great deal of civil strife. In these countries, past growth may not be a good predictor of future trends.

A final lesson is that there is no single action that will bring about a successful education system and appropriate policy involves a series of integrated and mutually supportive actions. Enrollment can expand, but without attention to adequate teaching staff and materials, quality will suffer. Programs to encourage retention – be they early child development programs or the elimination of promotion exams – can be effective in keeping children in school; but without a relevant curriculum and qualified teachers, school graduates are not likely to find meaningful jobs, and as the number of educated unemployed rises, the incentives to complete schooling decrease. Decentralization can expand the resource base for education and can increase accountability. But without well defined norms and attention to equity issues, decentralization can replicate if not exacerbate economic and other inequalities in the country.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

These “high growth, high potential” countries have all used combinations of the above policies to achieve dramatic expansion in their school populations, setting in motion a youthful tidal wave that pressures their under-resourced secondary systems. It is clear that the highest rates of economic return to schooling are now at the level of secondary schooling, and this is especially so for young women. A secondary education is now virtually a prerequisite for “modern” employment. But a continued expansion of the secondary school systems is not simply a question of more of the same. Secondary school expansion is both more expensive and more complex than primary school. For example, while it has been possible to recruit and quickly train teacher candidates from local communities for primary level positions, it is much more difficult to find the qualifications and achieve the standards required at the secondary level by expanding local recruitment. Most countries need to upgrade considerably their pre-service teacher training capacity, and the cost of adding many more teachers to meet the rising demand will require a quantum increase in education budgets. Better trained teachers will be essential to meeting even minimum quality requirements.

Unfortunately, national government and international donor attention is only now beginning to turn to secondary education and the question of what happens to the successful graduates of primary education.

Some countries (among them Malawi and Uganda) have announced a commitment to universal secondary education with neither the resources nor infrastructure to make this commitment a reality in the short run. Many others, indeed virtually all of the countries on this list, are dealing with the problems of a growing educated but unemployed generation for whom most options -- unemployment, informal employment, crime or migration/emigration -- are unattractive. This will pose a profound challenge for these countries and their education system going forward.

Among the most pressing issues facing these countries, their governments and the donor countries and institutions seeking to partner with them to expand the education base are three that deserve special attention.

**Private schools.** The first is the growing role of private schools in many of these countries, including *Brazil, Gambia, Malawi* and *Pakistan*, and the implications for the public school system. In *Gambia*, for example, secondary education is mostly provided by the private sector. There are now 33 senior secondary schools: 2 are funded directly through the government budget, and 16 are religious schools which receive an annual grant from the government to cover academic staff salaries. The rest are private schools.

The policy implications of an under-resourced public secondary system and an unregulated private secondary system are considerable -- issues of access inequality, unregulated quality, competition for human and other resources, oversight of the curriculum -- to name only a few. The legal status of private schools (ranging from elite "preparatory" institutions to informal community or religious programs) varies enormously. Private schools are prohibited in *Cuba* and *Sri Lanka*. In countries such as *Algeria, Tanzania* or *Morocco*, they serve a miniscule proportion of the total school population. In countries such as *Pakistan, Zimbabwe* and *Chile*, they may account for up to 40-50 percent of the school age populations. In some countries, *Chile* and *Malawi* among them, the government subsidizes private schools. In some countries, private schooling is largely run by religious and non-profit voluntary agencies; in others, it is mainly a commercial venture. How the public and private sectors work together to ensure that the bulk of the students who complete primary school have the opportunity to continue to a quality secondary education is a major outstanding issue. A good place to start is with the Ministry of Education, which should enforce quality standards for all schools in a country, public and private, since private schools need to be looked upon as integral components of the entire country's educational program.

**The lack of jobs.** The second issue is the tension between a secondary school system that points students toward ever higher education levels and a secondary system geared to the demands of employers. The 2007 World Development Report estimated that 1.2 billion young people will be entering the labor force over the coming decade. While the overall youth population grew by 10.5% over the last 10 years (to over 1.1 billion in 2003), youth employment (15-24) grew by only 0.2%. The implications of a large unemployed and underemployed youth population are obvious for the economy (a drag) and society (tension). What are the implications for the education system?

In virtually every poor country in the world, including the "high growth, high potential" countries, there is a serious disconnect between the education system and the job market. For the most part, the governments have focused on getting children into school and keeping them there. While a minority of students are actually able to complete secondary and only a handful go on to university, most systems are geared to this progression. It is only recently that the crisis of educated unemployed youth, frustrated by their inability to get ahead and get married and increasingly disaffected, has begun to attract serious attention. Social entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and other labor market-relevant programs as well as

formal school to work programs are being tried on a pilot basis in countries as varied as *Bangladesh*, *Honduras* and *Malawi*. But many of these programs are outside the formal education system, meaning that the student likely has already dropped out. Finding ways to make secondary education relevant to the demands of the job market, without turning the formal educational system into a vocational training program which is rarely successful, will be a major challenge in the years ahead.

**Conflict.** A third major issue is the possibility, and in some cases the likelihood, that civil conflict may undermine the educational progress that has been made and rob youth of the secondary education that they would otherwise be likely to receive. At a minimum, civil war causes disruption to classroom activity; more often, the intimidation of teachers, destruction of schools and uprooting of families deprive children of an education, often for many years. The experience of countries such as *Togo* and *Chad* make this abundantly clear, as both countries are still dealing with the legacies of war and civil unrest. The civil war which began in 2002 in *Cote d'Ivoire* destroyed the country and its education system. Before the civil conflict, 31% of girls and 49% of boys completed primary school; after the civil conflict, only 14% of girls and 18% of boys completed primary (EPDC)<sup>9</sup>. In fact, the discrimination against girls and outright sexual harassment during and after the conflict has resulted in a situation where almost one-third of the 66% of the population which drops out of primary and secondary school is attributable to pregnancies.

Conflict has some predictable consequences: the physical infrastructure of the school system will be in disrepair, since schools are often targeted or taken over by combatants. Teachers will have disappeared (targeted during wartime or disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS which thrives in wartime), and little or no new recruitment and training will have taken place during the conflict. And the size of the population requiring schooling will have grown even larger: in addition to each new cohort of school age children there is a group of children who lost out on schooling during the conflict and must now catch up.

The challenges which countries emerging from conflict face are, in fact, so daunting that in a few cases it is difficult to feel optimistic that their earlier (pre conflict) successes in expanding access to primary education can possibly be rekindled in the years ahead. *Chad*, *Comoros*, *Cote d'Ivoire* and *Togo* are all countries which, even if they could qualify for and benefit from the Fast Track Initiative, will need to run very fast just to keep up.

## CONCLUSION

We are witnessing the largest population of potential secondary students the world has ever seen, and the largest it will ever see, now that birth rates have begun to decline. The challenges, as discussed above, are great. We know, of course, that secondary education is more expensive than primary. It requires additional resources (including donor resources), facilities, trained staff, and administrative coordination than currently exists, and more than was required for the drive for universal primary education. It is well worth taking a very hard look at the policies and strategies that fueled the fastest increase in school attainment the world has ever seen, and consider how they may be adapted to the challenge ahead. Failing this challenge is not an option.

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<sup>9</sup> The data EPDC used to make the projections cited in *Window on the Future. 2025* predate the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire, and this country may no longer be on a "high growth, high potential trajectory, unfortunately.