

Social protection and poverty reduction

Despite the positive economic growth path projected for Africa, the possibility of further global shocks coupled with persistent risks for households make proactive social policies – especially heavy investment in social protection – of critical importance. Successful social protection strategies abound in Africa, such as the old age pension in South Africa and Lesotho, a national health insurance scheme in Ghana, a home-grown school feeding program in Kenya, a productive safety-net program in Ethiopia, and a public works and unconditional cash transfer scheme in Rwanda.

Social protection should not be seen as a “hand-out,” but rather as a long-term investment, with regular budgetary allocations. Indeed, it accounts for about 11 percent of the state budget in Algeria. Those mechanisms that suffer from fewer disincentive effects tend to have a significant impact on poverty reduction and human development. A comprehensive approach based on a combination of one or more of the following elements has proven to be successful in many countries: productivity-based, labor-based, trade-based, and transfer-based interventions. South–South cooperation can also play an important role through experience sharing, transferability of lessons, and relevant technical assistance in promoting human development-oriented social protection policies and programs.

Social protection engenders social cohesion and empowers women, especially when it is targeted at female children and at enhancing the household levels of consumption. Income transfer enhances women’s participation in decision-making at home, allowing the benefits to be channeled to sending children to school and accessing medical

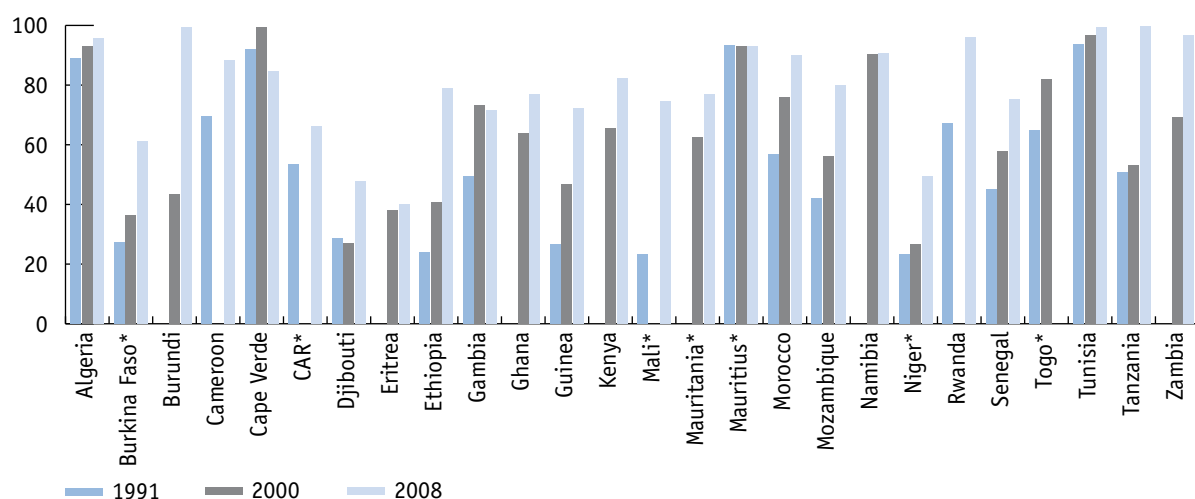
services. In this way, gender-sensitive interventions produce positive multiplier effects, especially for girls’ education, child and maternal health, and the economic empowerment of women. Specific interventions for child nutrition and youth employment also have positive effects on the other MDGs.

Strong political will, institutional and administrative capacity, financial sustainability, and affordability are critical to the success of social protection schemes in Africa. (See also Section III of this report, which focuses on social protection and its role in accelerating progress toward the MDGs in Africa.)

GOAL 2: ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Enrollment in primary education has continued to rise, reaching 89 percent in the developing world. However, the pace of progress is insufficient to ensure that, by 2015, all girls and boys in developing countries will complete a full course of primary schooling. Nonetheless, Africa has made tremendous strides toward achieving universal primary education, increasing its net enrollment rate from 65 percent in 1999 to 83 percent in 2008. Indeed, this is the MDG where African countries have made the most progress (*Figure 11*). While a majority of African countries are set to achieve universal primary enrollment by the target date, far fewer countries are expected to meet the goals for primary completion rates and young adult literacy rates. Education beyond primary school is though also critical to ensure sustained progress toward other goals such as full employment, poverty reduction, and health-related MDGs.

Figure 11: Progress in net enrollment in primary education for selected African countries, 1991 and 2008/2009 (%)



Source: Compiled from UNSD data (updated in August 2010).

Key: * 2009 data.

Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

Indicator 2.1: Net enrollment in primary education

Most African countries have registered a significant improvement in net enrollment in primary education. Of the 36 African countries with data for 2008/2009, a total of 16²⁷ have achieved net enrollment ratios of over 90 percent. Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Madagascar, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia have already reached or even surpassed the minimum target, which is to achieve 95 percent net enrollment rate by 2015. Benin, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, South

Africa, and Togo, recorded a 5 to 10 percent achievement gap for this target (*Figure 12*). The other countries are also moving on a positive track to achieve this target but further actions are needed to speed up the process. Ten countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Tanzania) improved their net enrollment rates by more than 25 percentage points between 1991 and 2008 (*Figure 11*). The improvement in enrollment rates was driven by specific public interventions underpinned by resolute political will to achieve universal primary education. School feeding, increased budgetary allocations to education, and cash transfers to poor households were among the factors that contributed to this positive trend (see *Box 2*).

While the majority of African countries are on track to achieve this MDG, some countries still lag far

27 Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Egypt, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia.

Box 2: Success in primary education enrollment

The political focus of primary education and its related implementation have placed Africa on track to achieve full enrollment by 2015. A significant number of African countries have excelled in this regard through committed policy interventions and adequate resource allocations.

Ethiopia had a low initial net enrollment rate (50 percent in 1990), but this now stands at 86.5 percent (2009/2010). This robust progress is based on, among other measures, the construction of classrooms: 16,000 in 2004 and 25,000 in 2008/09, of which 80 percent are in rural areas. In addition, education is emphasized in public policies and prioritized in public spending.

Egypt attained even higher net enrollment rates in primary education, from 83 percent in 1995 to 90 percent in 2008, underpinned by early childhood development projects, cash transfers to poor families to encourage children's retention in schools, and the launch of girl-friendly schools.

Another interesting case is **Togo**. In response to a lack of public funds, families and communities became directly involved in the running of schools. In the poorest region (Savanes), most of the schools are entirely funded by rural households, which includes building classrooms and paying teachers' wages. As a consequence, the net enrollment rate increased from 67 percent in 1990 to 87 percent in 2008. At the same time, the country was able to achieve a gender index of 0.95 in primary education.

Sources: Ethiopia, Egypt and Togo *National MDG Progress Reports 2010*.

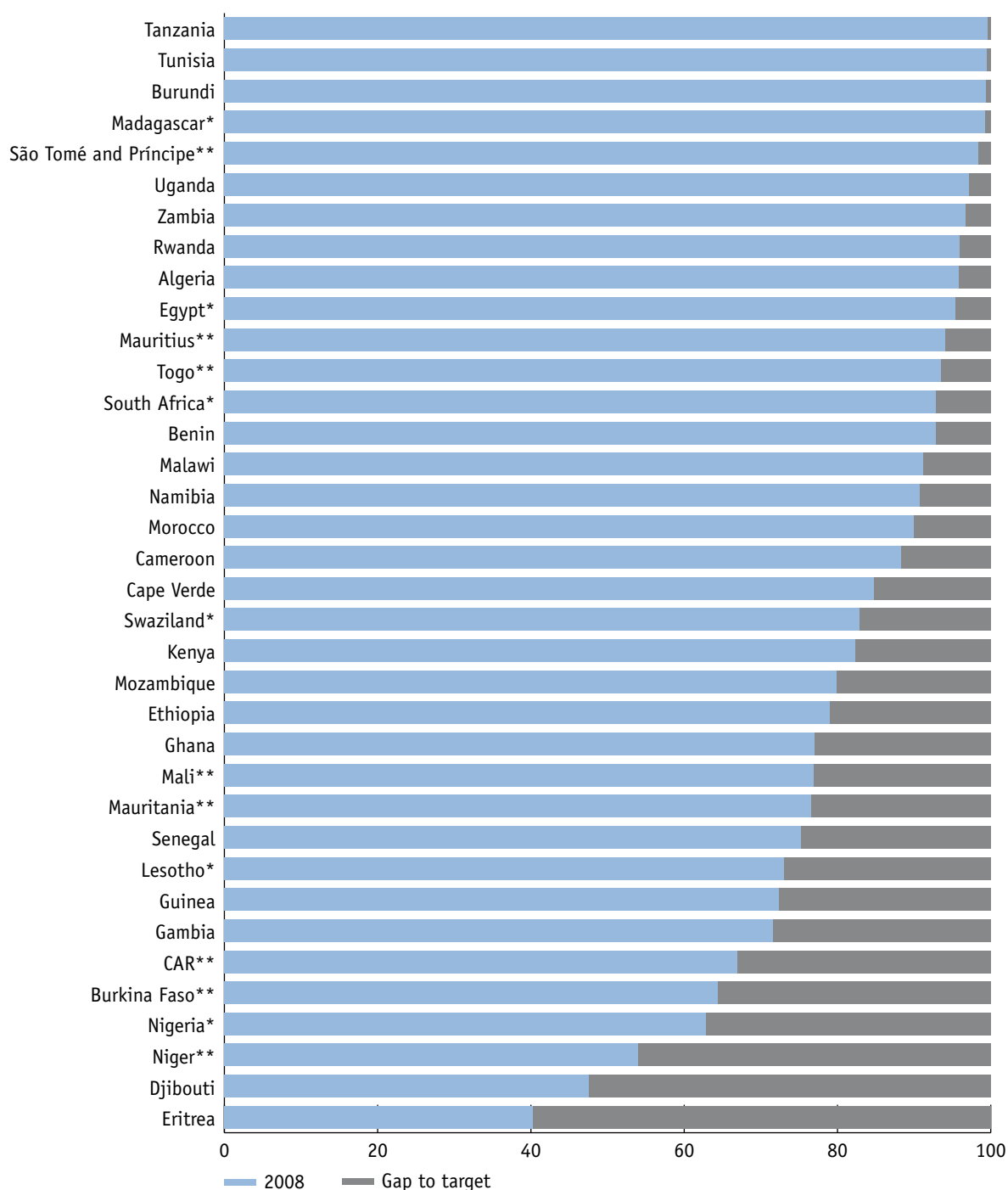
behind in the enrollment targets, and have made little progress over several years. This is the case, for example, in the Central African Republic, where the net enrollment ratio remains at 66.9 percent, compared to 53.4 percent in 1991. Djibouti and Eritrea also lag behind on this indicator, registering below 50 percent net enrollment ratios.

However, a number of countries with initially very low net enrollment ratios have made remarkable progress, even though they are unlikely to achieve universal primary education by the target date of 2015. In Burkina Faso, for example, the net enrollment ratio soared from 27.3 percent in 1991 to 64.4 percent in 2008. Likewise, Ethiopia's rate increased from 24 percent in 1991 to 86.5 percent in 2009 (see *Box 2*). The Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, and Niger, while all still below 90 percent enrollment ratio, have witnessed improvements of over 20 percentage

points, and in some cases up to 50 percentage points, since 1991.

The progress of most countries, whether they have achieved over 90 percent enrollment or are still struggling around 75 percent, indicates the necessity of a continued focus on primary school education. It remains to be seen what the effects of improved primary school enrollment will be; in fact, 2015 may be too soon to observe the outcomes. In order for countries to advance the progress they have made in education, there must be adequate planning to improve the quality of primary school education and to scale up enrollment rates beyond primary school. As more African countries raise their primary school enrollment rate, resources have to keep pace to ensure improved primary completion rates and adult literacy rates.

Figure 12: Gap to net enrollment target in primary education for selected African countries, 2008



Key: *2007 data. **2209 data.

Source: Compiled from UNSD report (updated in August 2010).

In terms of budgetary allocations to the education subsector, only a few African countries provide free primary education and free ancillary items such as uniforms, books, etc. The need for households to fund schooling accentuates inequities in access to primary education. Indeed, in 27 African countries there are no legal guarantees of free schooling (UNESCO, 2009) and no clear link between educational expenditure and primary enrollment. The monetary funding allocated is not the only criteria, as is evident from Botswana and Mauritius (*Figure 13*). It is the quantum of resource allocation together with spending efficiency that results in higher enrollment in primary education.

Indicator 2.2: Primary completion rate

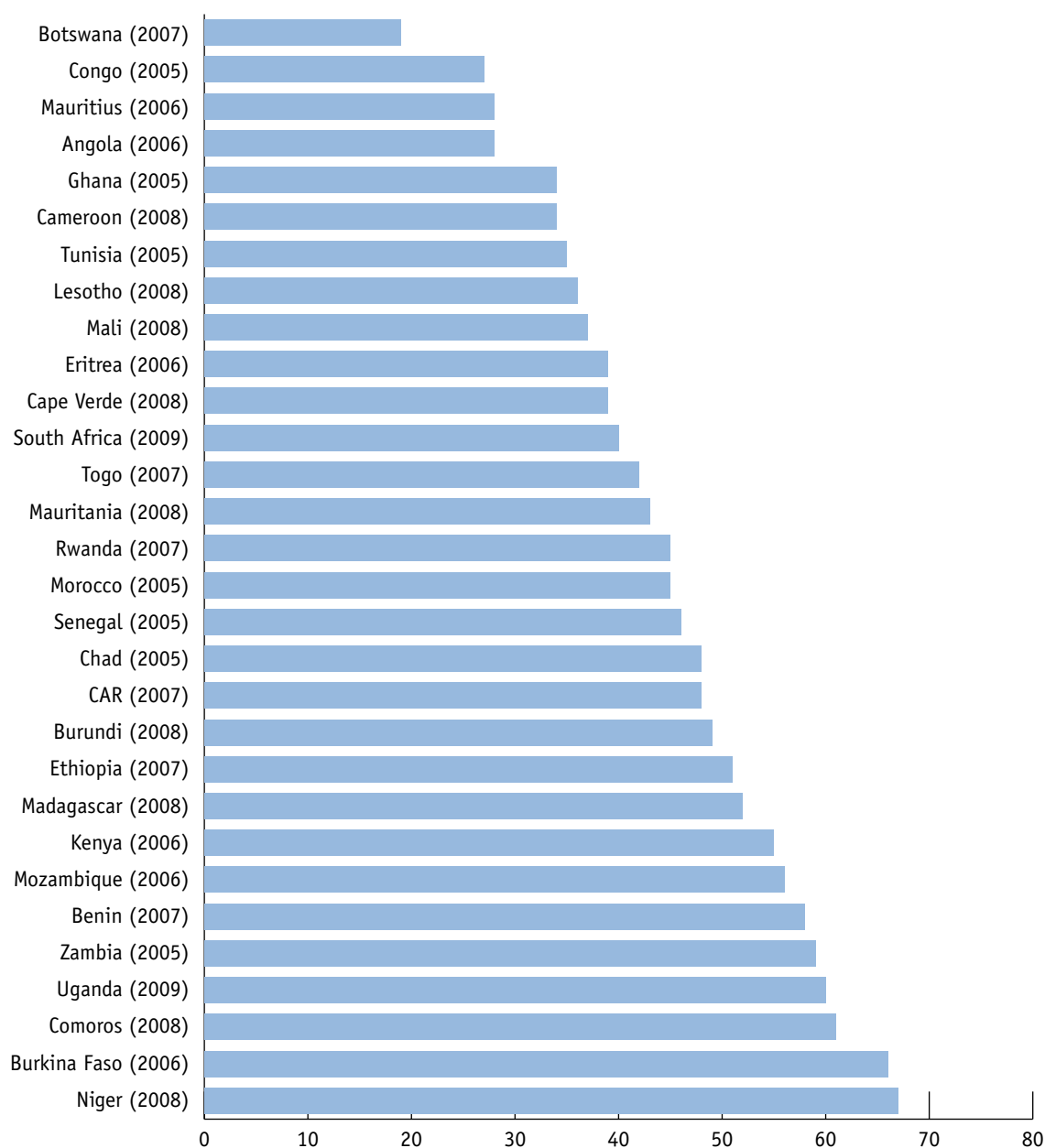
Despite good performance by the majority of African countries toward universal primary school enrollment, this progress has yet to translate into commensurate primary completion rates. *Figure 14* summarizes evidence on net enrollment and completion rates for selected African countries, with 2008 data for both indicators. Few countries have improved their rates since 2007, and some countries such as Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Namibia, and Tunisia have evidenced some decline in their primary completion rate since 2007. Furthermore, the trends toward primary completion are, for the most part, worse than last year. The slow and in some cases regressive trend is driven by a number of factors. First, in many African countries, the primary school entry age is higher than the formal age required. This increases peer pressure on older students to enter the labor market prior to completing the primary school cycle (ECA, 2005). Second, a major setback in Africa is the unequal access to education services, which affects low-income households, weakens retention and learning outcomes, undermines

the quality of education, and increases grade repetition.²⁸ In North Africa, the percentage of children out of school improved from 3 percent in 1999 to 2 percent in 2008. However, in the rest of Africa the percentage of children out of school grew marginally from 43 percent in 1999 to 46 percent in 2008. This means that there were 31 million children who were school-aged but not enrolled in school²⁹ in Africa (excluding North Africa).

On the other hand, a number of countries have made excellent progress toward higher primary completion rates. Benin increased its completion rate from 22.1 percent in 1991 to 65.1 percent in 2008. Cameroon evidenced a remarkable 17 percentage point increase from a 55.5 percent completion rate in 2007 to 72.7 percent in 2008. Comoros, Mozambique, Rwanda, and The Sudan have also shown strong improvements of over 10 percentage points for this indicator over the past several years. Relative to 1991, Algeria, Benin, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, and Mozambique have also made significant progress. However, seven countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi, CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Niger) recorded a completion rate of below 50 percent in 2008 (*Figure 15*).

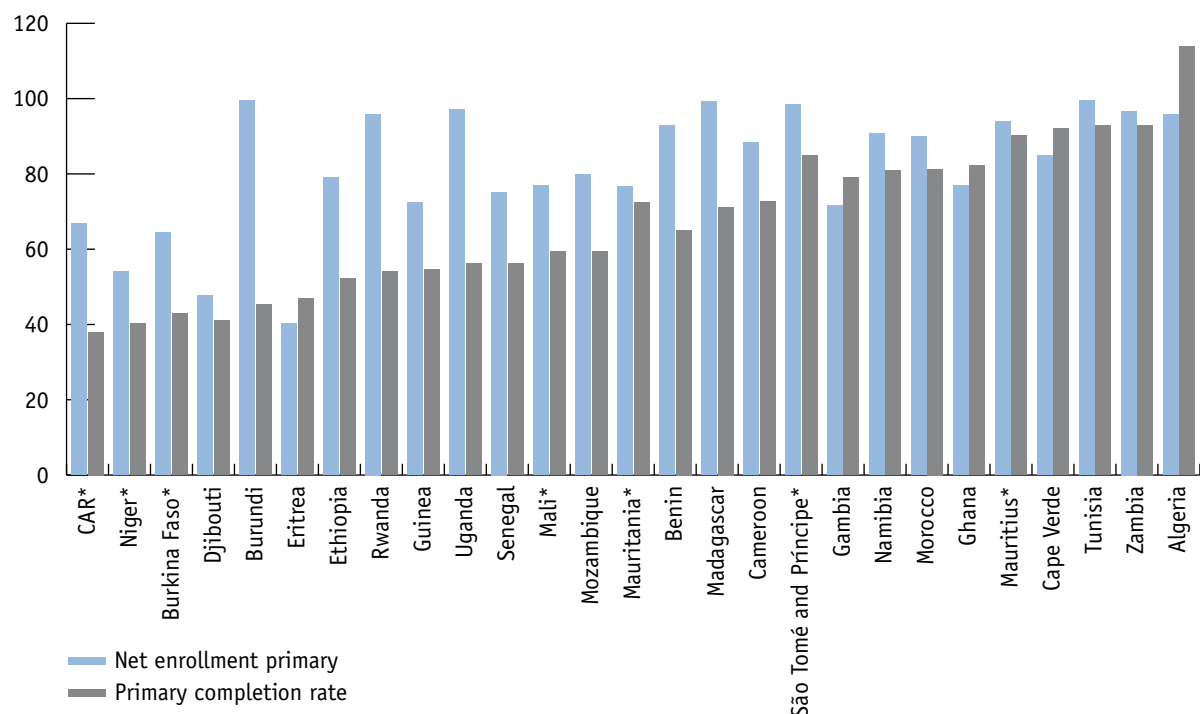
²⁸ UNICEF and UNESCO (2011).

²⁹ UN (2010).

Figure 13: Primary education expenditure as % of total educational expenditure

Source: Compiled from UNESCO (2010).

Figure 14: Primary education enrollment and completion rates for selected African countries, 2008



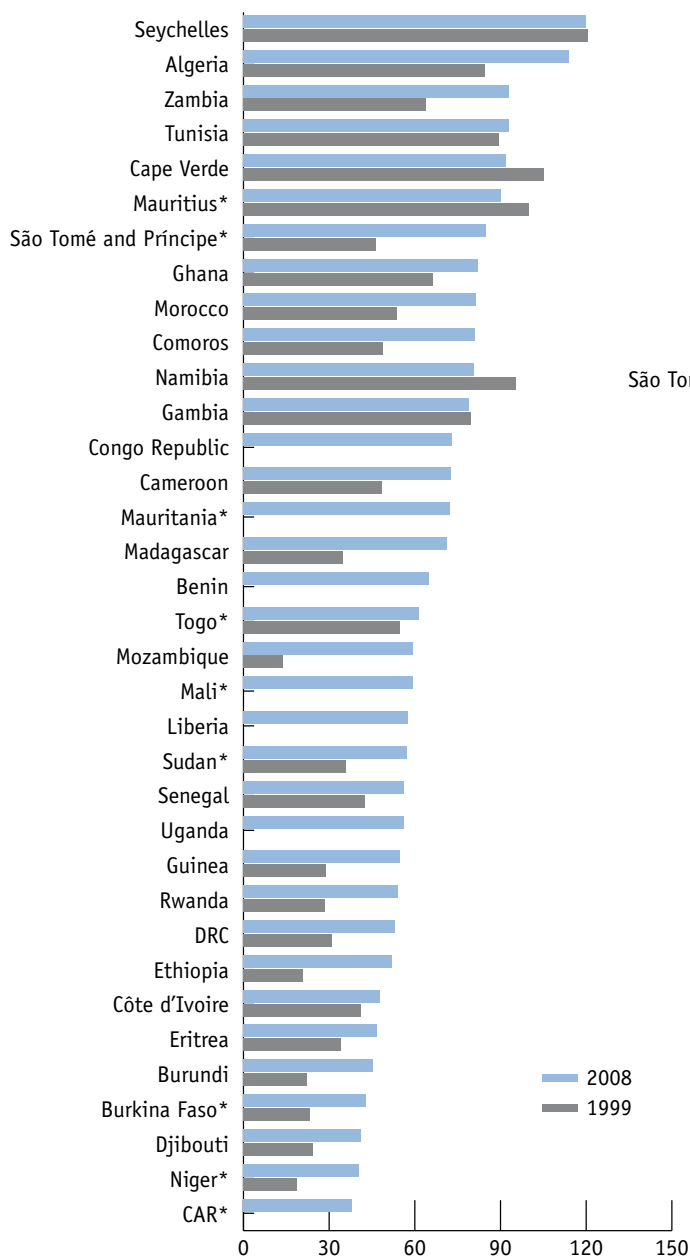
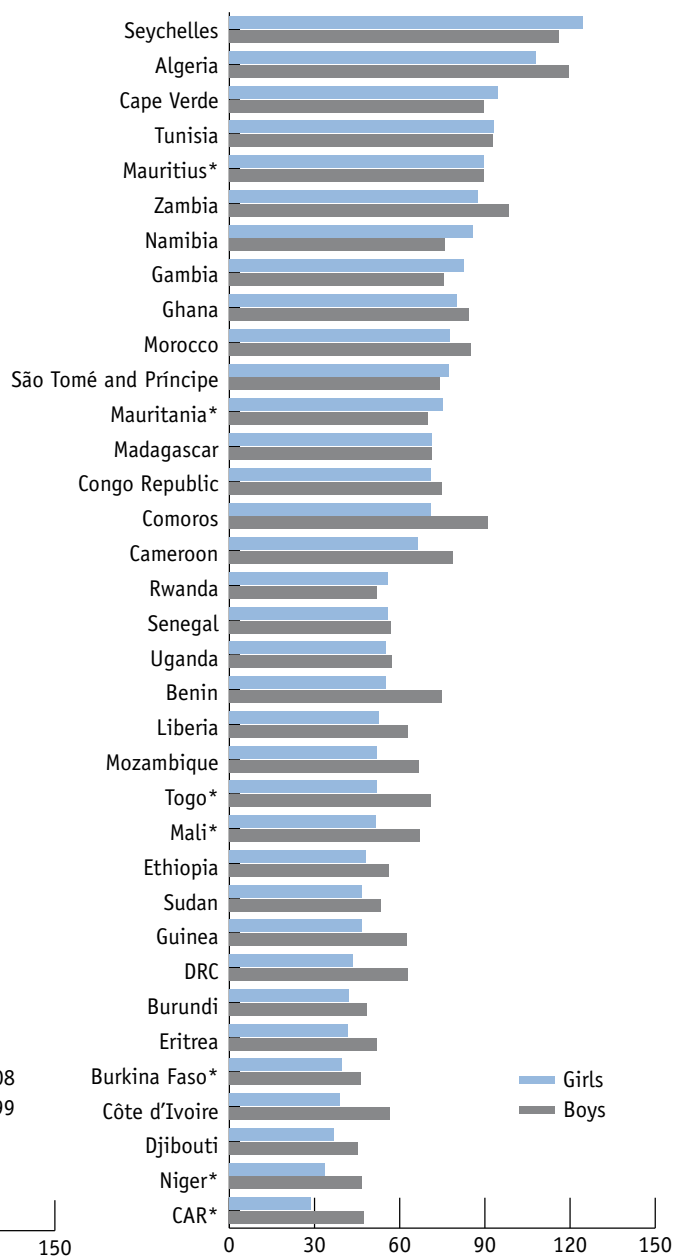
Source: Compiled from UNSD data (updated in August 2010).

Key: *data for 2009.

Analysis of data disaggregated by sex shows that in 14 countries,³⁰ the completion rates of boys surpassed that of girls by more than 10 percentage points in 2008. On the other hand, in others (i.e., Cape Verde, The Gambia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, and Tunisia), the girls' completion rate was slightly higher than that of boys during the same period. Similar to enrollment trends, completion rates are skewed towards higher-income households, urban populations, and boys rather

than girls. In fact, girls in the poorest 20 percent of households are three times more likely to be out of school than girls in the highest-income group (UN, 2010). Moreover, household data from 42 countries show that rural children are twice as likely to be out of school as children living in urban areas (UN, 2010). In addition, the quality of education proxied by teacher–pupil ratios at 1:45 has remained extremely low on the continent and the supply of qualified teachers – estimated at a gap of over 3 million – is clearly insufficient to meet demand.

30 Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, CAR, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Eritrea, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, and Zambia.

Figure 15: Primary completion rate for selected African countries (%)**15a: Both sexes, 1999 and 2008****15b: Disaggregated by sex, 2008**

Source: Compiled from UNSD data (updated in August 2010).

Key: *2009 data; **1991 data

Indicator 2.3: Literacy rate of 15- to 25-year-olds

The goal of increasing adult literacy by 50 percent is unlikely to be achieved by 2015. Literacy rates show a similar trend to primary completion rates. As expected, countries that have high primary completion rates also have better literacy rates for young adults. In addition, a gender imbalance persists in many African countries (*Figure 16*). Most countries have more or less stagnant literacy rates, with only three countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Mozambique) showing any improvement over the past several years. Whereas many countries record literacy rates above 75 percent, only 15 countries have reached 90 percent, and most of these had reached that high level by 1991.

Countries with literacy rates below 75 percent have made little progress in recent years. Sierra Leone's literacy rate is currently just 55.7 percent, compared to 47.9 percent in 2004. Chad has the lowest literacy rate at 45.4 percent, which is a small improvement from 37.6 percent in 2000. Ethiopia has remained at 49.9 percent literacy since 2004. Whereas these same countries have shown improvements in net enrollment ratios, the lack of progress toward literacy demonstrates the often poor quality of primary school education. With few exceptions, such as Lesotho and Liberia, literacy rates generally tend to be biased in favor of men.³¹

Despite the efforts of governments and partners, there are still 153 million illiterate adults in Africa today. This represents 20 percent of the 759 million people globally who are illiterate. Moreover, of the

illiterate adults in Africa, two-thirds are women. Some African governments, through the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment, have taken positive steps to address the problem, which has yet to command the attention it deserves.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

African countries have shown good overall progress in gender equality and the empowerment of women in recent years. The ratio of girls to boys in primary education is approaching parity in almost every country, and the proportion of women in African national parliaments continued its upward trend in 2010. However, additional commitments are needed to maintain and fast-track progress, as few countries have achieved gender parity in secondary or tertiary education, and the majority of countries still have a small minority of women in national parliaments.

Furthermore, promoting gender equality and empowering women must be integrated in other MDGs, such as reducing poverty, improving child and maternal health, and combating major diseases, which all require a special focus on women.

In order to fast-track progress related to gender, there need to be laws and policies in place that make long-term commitments to empower females of all ages, irrespective of their occupational status. Such policies will help to ensure that gender equality remains a top priority post-2015. Since gender issues affect all segments of the society, involving males in programs, clubs, social networks, and organizational activities that target females is also recommended.

31 Botswana, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritius, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.