

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

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

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.

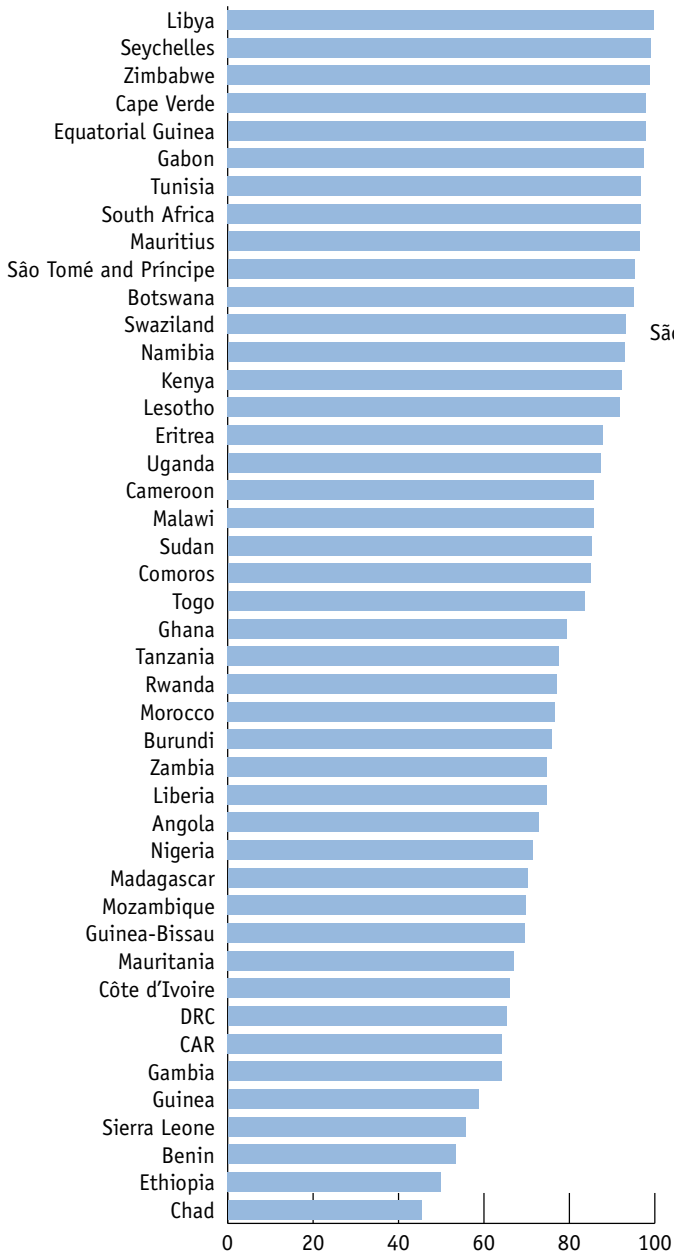
GOAL 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

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.

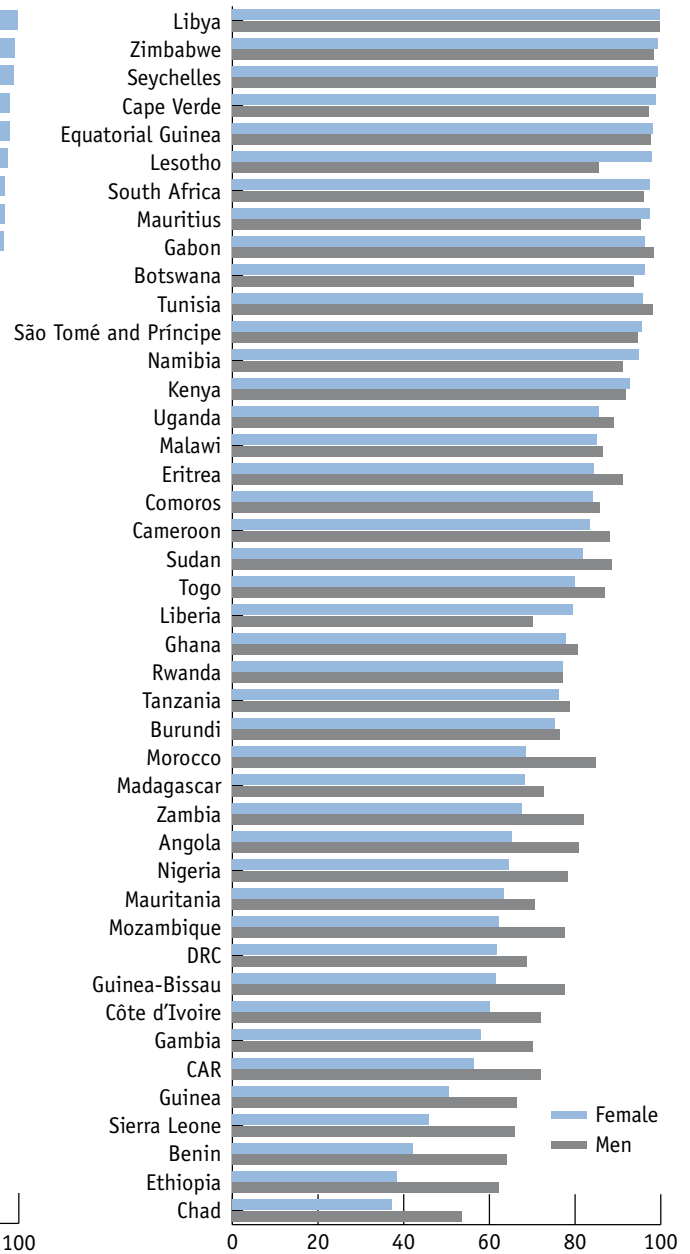
Furthermore, promoting gender equality and empowering women must be integrated in other MDGs, such as reducing poverty, improving child and maternal health, and combating major diseases, which all require a special focus on women.

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.

Figure 16:
(a) Literacy rate both sexes, 2008 (%)

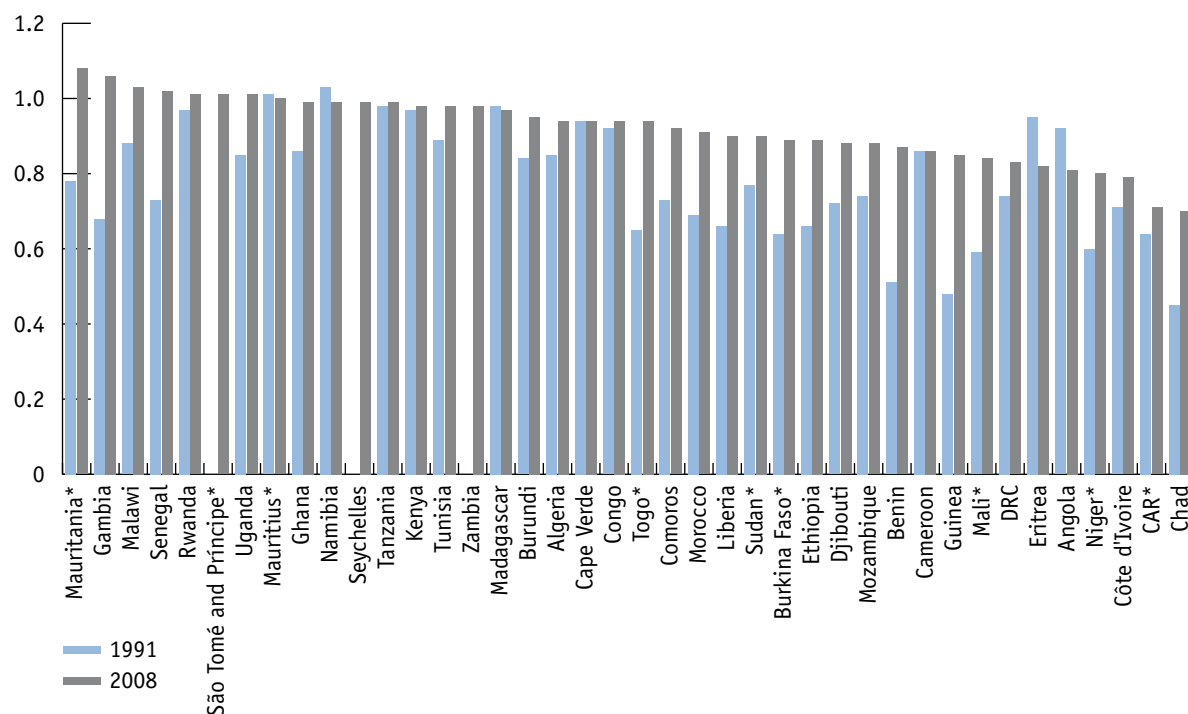


(b) Literacy rate disaggregated by sex, 2008 (%)



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

Figure 17: Gender Parity Index in primary level enrollment in selected African countries, 1991 and 2008



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

Key: * data for 2009.

Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015

Indicator 3.1: Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education

Primary education

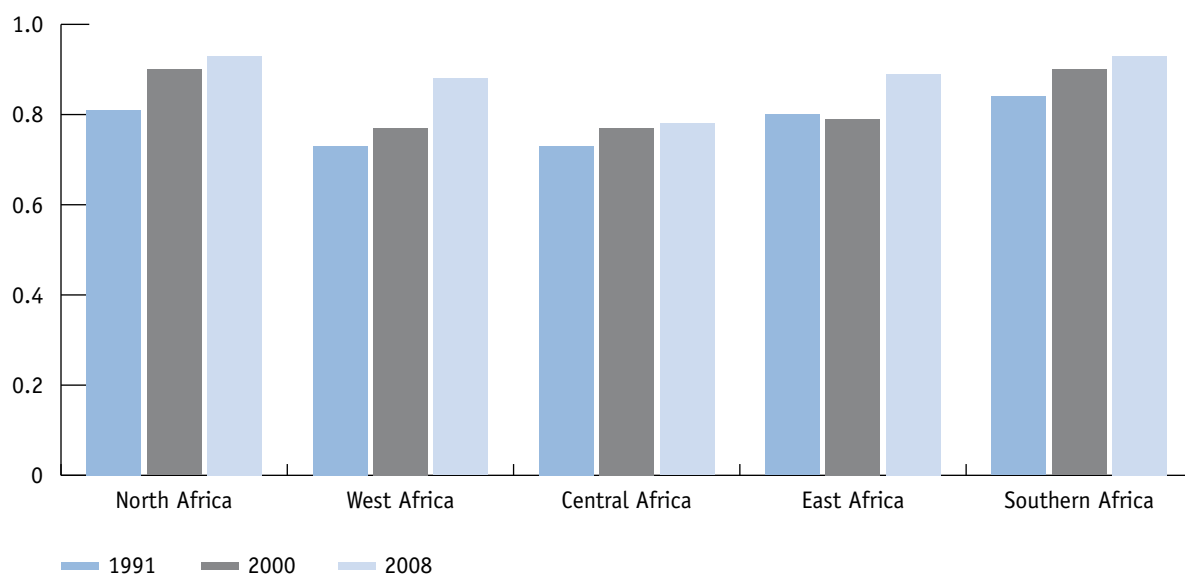
Although recent initiatives have promoted girls' enrollment, especially at the primary school level, the data show that by 2008, parity between boys and girls had not yet been achieved in Africa (excluding North Africa). Overall, there were 91 girls enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys, and

only 84 girls enrolled in junior secondary school for every 100 boys. Despite scaled-up policies and funding for girls' education, major challenges remain, such as gendered poverty and traditional and cultural practices that tend to favor boys.³²

In Africa, school fees represent a major constraint to girls' enrollment in schools. In countries where state education is free, the number of girls in schools tends to be higher.³³ Where boys may already be favored to go to school, school fees pose an additional constraint to girls' access to education.

³² UNICEF and UNESCO (2011).

³³ UN (2010).

Figure 18: Gender Parity Index in primary education by African subregion, 1991–2008

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

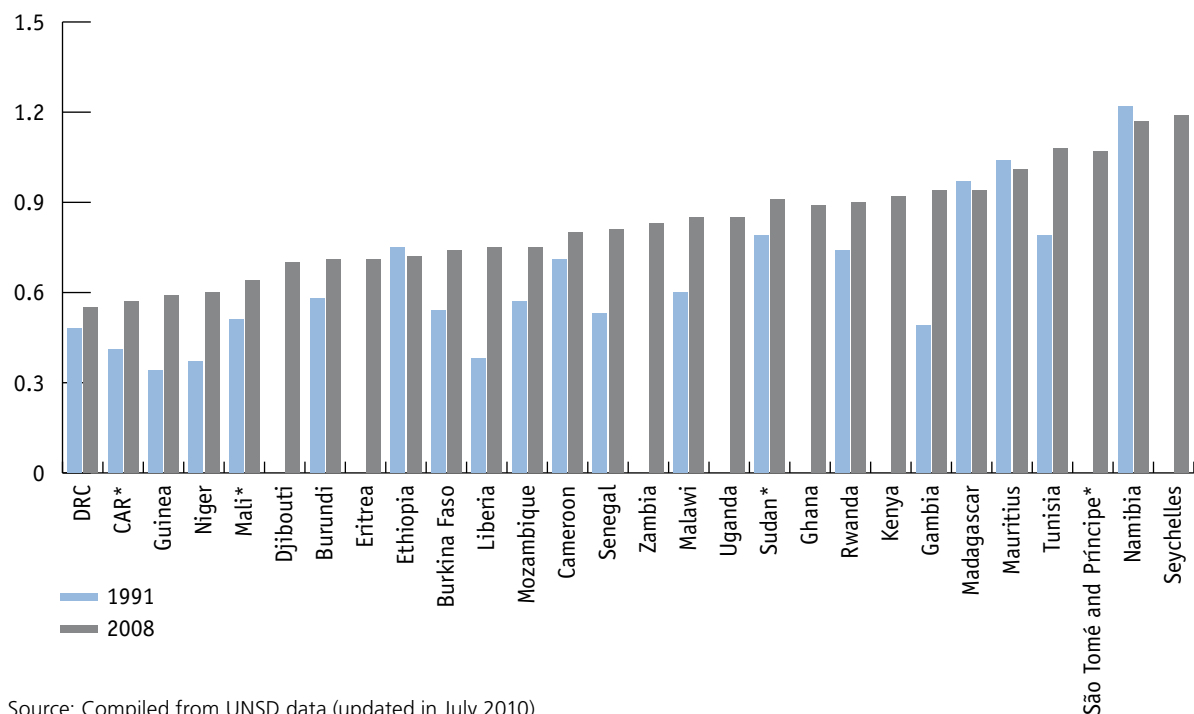
Of the 37 countries with available data, analysis of the Gender Parity Index (GPI) at primary education level between 1991 and 2008 shows that most African countries will achieve gender parity at the primary education level by 2015. Seventeen countries³⁴ are approaching parity with a score of 90 and above in the year 2008 (*Figure 17*). In fact, Malawi, Mauritania, São Tomé and Príncipe, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, and Uganda scored a GPI of slightly more than 1.0, indicating a higher enrollment of girls than boys in primary school in these countries. Thus the emerging policy challenge in such countries is to increase boys' enrollment in primary education to ensure true gender equality. Benin, The Gambia, and Guinea reduced gender disparity in primary education the most between

1991–2008, by more than 0.35 points. At the other end of the spectrum, the gender gap in primary school increased in Angola and Eritrea over the same timeframe. No changes were recorded for Cameroon and Cape Verde between 1991 and 2009 for this indicator. But overall, given current trends, achieving gender parity in primary education is still possible for most African countries by 2015.

Figure 18 summarizes the performance of Africa's subregions toward gender parity in primary level enrollment. Overall, the African subregions have been showing positive growth in GPI in primary education. West Africa registered the most progress, followed by North Africa and East Africa during the period 1991–2008. However, progress was slower in Central and Southern Africa.

34 Algeria, Burundi, Cape Verde, Comoros, Congo Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Seychelles, The Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, and Zambia.

Figure 19: Gender Parity Index in secondary level enrollment for selected African countries, 1991 and 2008



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

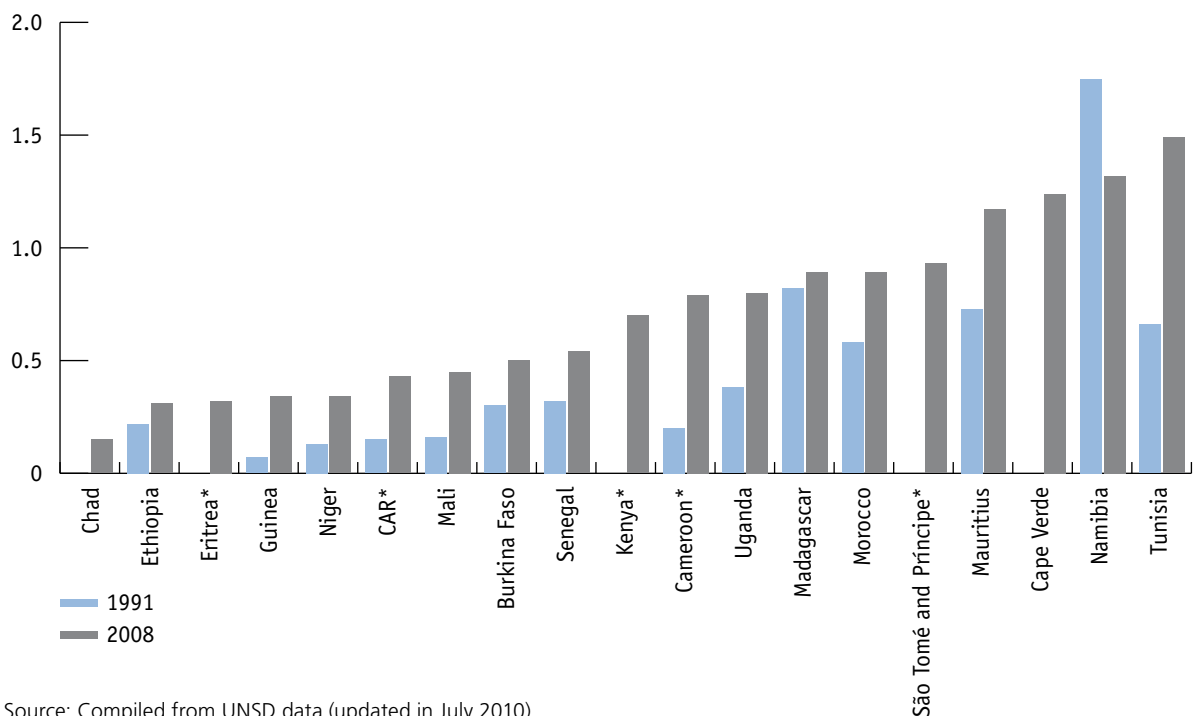
Key: * data for 2009.

Secondary education

The impressive improvement in gender parity in primary education enrollment is not reflected at the secondary level, where a significant gap still exists. Of the 29 African countries with available data, Mauritius, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, and Tunisia slightly surpassed gender parity in the period 1991–2008/09 (Figure 19), registering a GPI above 1.0, which means they have a greater ratio of girls than boys enrolled at secondary level. Countries such as The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Niger, Senegal, and Tunisia significantly reduced the gender gap in secondary enrollment by between 25 and 45 percentage points

from 1991–2008. However, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Namibia recorded a slightly higher gender gap in secondary education in 2008 compared to 1991. Overall, it is unlikely that African countries will reach the target of gender parity in secondary education by 2015, if current trends continue.

Figure 20: Gender Parity Index in tertiary education for selected African countries, 1991 and 2008



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

Key: * 2009 data.

Box 3: Goal 3 – Achieving gender equality in South Africa

Gender equality is a constitutional imperative in South Africa. The government has therefore introduced a range of policies, laws, programs and mechanisms that specifically address the needs of women and girls.

In terms of Indicator 3.1, the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education is 0.96, 1.05, and 1.26 respectively (2009 data). In other words, there are more girls than boys in secondary and tertiary education. In terms of Indicator 3.2 (share of women in wage employment in the non/agricultural sector) the figure was 45 percent in 2009, a marginal increase from 43 percent in 1996. Progress is much clearer regarding Indicator 3.3 (proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament), which stood at 44 percent female participation in 2009 compared to 25 percent in 1994. Altogether, South Africa has performed so well that the country has reached most of the MDG gender-related targets. Of course, there is still room for improvement, especially in the area of violence against women. Nevertheless one can conclude that South Africa remains committed to tackling gender inequality.

Source: *South Africa National MDG Report, 2010.*

Tertiary education

Progress towards gender parity in tertiary education is also slow. Of the 19 countries for which data are available for 2008/2009, Cape Verde (1.24), Mauritius (1.17), Namibia (1.32), and Tunisia (1.49) surpassed gender parity, having more girls than boys enrolled in tertiary education. The present challenge for these countries is to increase the ratio of boys' enrollment, so as to achieve true gender parity in tertiary education. As with primary school enrollment, which has shown similar trends, it is necessary for governments to be aware of this emerging issue and where necessary to implement corrective policy actions.

Of the 14 countries for which data were available for both 1991 and 2008, Cameroon, Mauritius, Tunisia, and Uganda recorded noticeable progress in reducing gender disparity in tertiary education (*Figure 20*). Eight³⁵ countries registered a GPI of less than 0.50 in tertiary education in 2008. With the majority of African countries failing to reach a GPI of 0.90 in 2008, and many still struggling to reach a level of 0.50, it is highly unlikely that African countries will attain this target by 2015 if current trends continue.

Indicator 3.2: Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

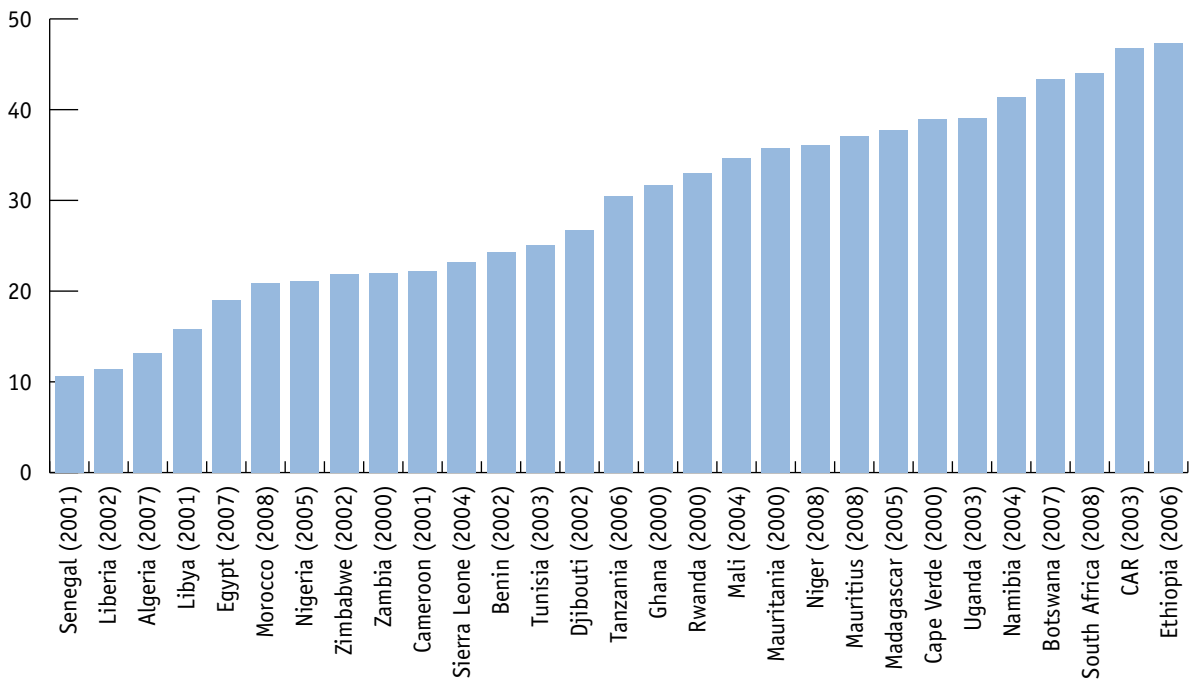
Tracking progress for this indicator is problematic due to a lack of data. Consequently, the analysis has been based on the most recent data available for each country (*Figure 21*). Surveys that measure the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector are rarely

conducted. In fact, most countries only have data on this indicator for a single year, which makes it impossible to track an individual country's progress. Furthermore, since countries' most recent data cover different years (ranging from 2000 to 2008), there is a lack of comparability which makes it impossible to monitor different countries' progress.

Nevertheless, it can be said that Africa's overall performance on this indicator has been disappointing. For the continent as a whole, less than 50 percent of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector is undertaken by women. Ethiopia reported the highest share (47.3 percent) in 2006 and is thus considered to be the best performer for this indicator. This might be due to the Ethiopian government's special focus on small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) as an effective means of creating job opportunities for women.

It is likely that the financial crisis of 2007/08 also contributed to a surge in informal employment, as a result of job losses in the formal sector. In some developing countries, over 80 percent of workers have informal jobs – as owners of informal-sector businesses or as contributing family workers or employees. Such jobs are highly vulnerable, lacking written contracts or social security benefits (this applies also to subcontracted workers operating from home and domestic services workers). In most African countries, women are over-represented in informal employment. (See also Section III of this report on social protection as a means to address the vulnerability of informal employment.)

35 Burkina Faso, CAR, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, and Niger.

Figure 21: Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

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

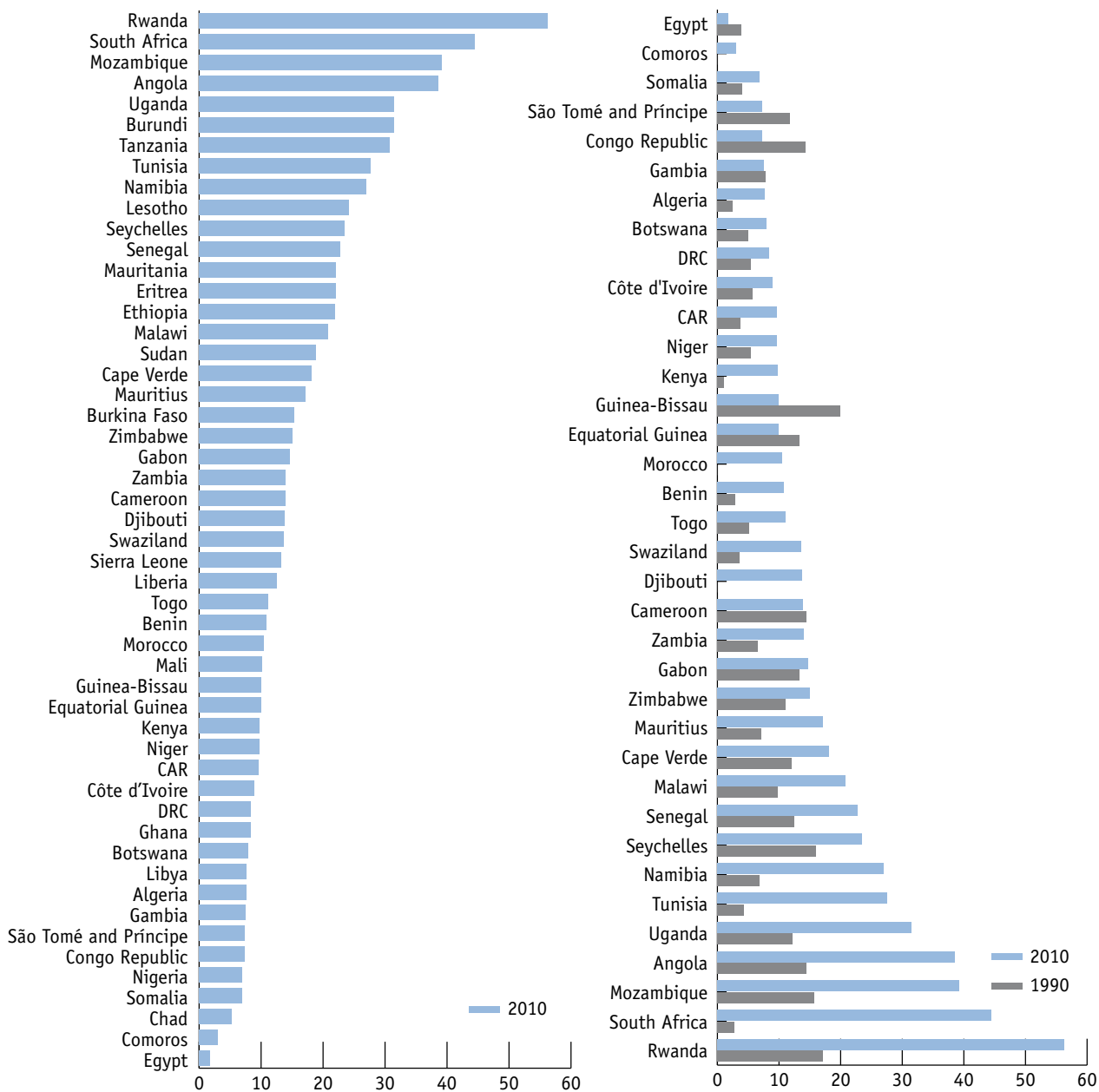
Indicator 3.3: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments

It is encouraging that data on the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments were available for all 53 African countries in 2010. Women's representation in national parliaments has improved in a number of African countries. The best performers in 2010 were: Rwanda (56 percent), South Africa (45 percent), Mozambique (39 percent), Angola (39 percent), Uganda (31.5 percent), Burundi (31.4 percent), and Tanzania (30.7 percent). Of the 36 African countries with data for the base year of 1990 and for 2010, over 80 percent (29 countries) increased the proportion of national parliamentary seats represented by women over this time span (Figure 22). The greatest progress between 1990 and 2010 was recorded

by Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Tunisia. In South Africa's elections of 2009, women took 44 percent of seats in the lower-house, placing the country third in terms of global ranking for this indicator, after Rwanda and Sweden (UN, 2010). Women's progress in national governments is clearly shown in their attainment of the following high positions in recent years: President of the National Assembly in both South Africa and Lesotho; President of the Senate in Swaziland and Zimbabwe; Speaker of the National House of Assembly in Nigeria; and President in Liberia.³⁶

³⁶ www.escueladefeminismo.org/IMG/pdf/models.pdf

Figure 22: Percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments, 1990 and 2010



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

However, seven countries (Cameroon, Congo Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe) recorded a decline in the number of women in parliament between 1990 and 2010. Furthermore, in 2010 there were 17 countries³⁷ with less than 10 percent of women's representation, with Egypt and Comoros as the worst performers (1.8 and 3.0 percent representation respectively). Women's participation in the executive, judicial, traditional, and other public spheres is low across the majority of the countries, with only 29 percent of women holding positions as senior officials or senior managers.³⁸ Overall though, Africa's progress toward achieving gender parity in the national parliaments is very encouraging. In order to ensure continued gains in this and other public spheres, governments should institutionalize a minimum quota of women parliamentarians, while also addressing challenges such as cultural norms and traditional institutions. This will ensure that governments continue to strive for gender parity in public life beyond 2015.

GOAL 4: REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), almost 90 percent of all child deaths are attributable to just six conditions: neonatal causes, pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, measles, and HIV/AIDS. Progress to reach MDG 4 (reducing under-five mortality by two-thirds from 1990 to 2015), will require universal coverage with the following key effective and affordable interventions: care for newborns and their mothers; infant and young child feeding programs; vaccines; prevention and case management of diarrhea, pneumonia and sepsis; malaria control; and prevention and care of HIV and AIDS. It is believed

37 Algeria, Botswana, CAR, Chad, Comoros, Congo Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Egypt, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Somalia.

38 UN (2010).

that these interventions could reduce the number of child deaths by more than half, particularly in countries where child mortality is high.³⁹

Generating accurate estimates of under-five mortality poses a considerable challenge because of the limited availability of high-quality data for many developing countries. New estimates at the global level, by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME), show that of the 31 countries recording an under-five mortality rate (U5MR) of at least 100 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009, 30 were in Africa. The global U5MR has declined by almost one-third over 20 years, from 89 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 60 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009. However, progress in some regions – notably Africa (excluding North Africa), Southern Asia, and Oceania – is insufficient to meet the Goal (IGME, 2010).

Overall there has been some progress in the three indicators tracking the achievements of countries towards MDG 4. Despite these achievements, and due to the fact that most child deaths are preventable or treatable, African countries should revitalize comprehensive and integrated efforts against the main diseases that cause child mortality within the framework of strengthening health systems and ensuring a quality continuum of care.

Target 4.A: – Reduce by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015, the mortality rate among children under five years old

Indicator 4.1 – Under-five mortality rate (U5MR)

Africa recorded a decline in U5MR from 165 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 118 deaths per

39 UN (2010).